Western Province Bowls

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12 February 2024

WP Bowls Circular 2024-10

Flag, Muter and Trips League Survey

We have had several requests from clubs to reconsider the current competition calendar as it pertains to the balance of the season.

Holding district competitions during the Disability Nationals would be discriminatory to the visually impaired bowlers in our district, as well as to their Directors, the tournament organisers, assistants, technical officials, etc.

For those interested, further discussion on this point is included at the end of this circular.

There are, therefore, three viable options available for the completion of the league season.

We ask all clubs to urgently canvass their membership and provide feedback on their preferred option by **18:00 on Wednesday**.

We do realise that this does not give you much time, but the complaints from some quarters are endless, and one of the options would mean a huge amount of organisation by Saturday. Please make the effort to canvass your members as quickly as possible.

The Executive Committee will discuss the votes received and release the final decision on Thursday morning.

Option 1. Keep the Status Quo

Don't change anything and keep the current calendar which is in place. There is a delay between Round 7 and Rounds 8, 9 & the finals.

For ease of reference:

Round 5	Saturday 17 February
Round 6	Saturday 24 February
Round 7	Saturday 2 March
Round 8	Saturday 18 May
Round 9	Sunday 19 May
Finals	Saturday 25 May

Western Province Bowls Association | NPO 080-192
President: G van Milligen | **Vice:** M Douglas | **Treasurer:** J Calvert | **Executive:** M Gibbs, T Harland, M Kirsten, J Schmidt, E Ferreira, S Fourie
Finance: D Vermeulen | **M & M Manager:** T Bright | **Administration**: C Nurrish | **Competitions**: B Eksteen

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Option 2. Play Two Games a Day

Two league games are played this Saturday, and on each of the next two Saturdays, to finish the season. On the last Saturday, the division winners would need to change venues for the second game.

This would mean:

Rounds 5 & 6 (single venue per section)	Saturday 17 February
Rounds 7 & 8 (single venue per section)	Saturday 24 February
Round 9 (single venue per section)	Saturday 2 March (morning)
Finals (different venue from Round 9)	Saturday 2 March (afternoon)

Option 3. Play on Sundays and move Mixed Pairs

Swap the dates of the Mixed Pairs and the final rounds of league bowls. This would mean playing league bowls on a Sunday.

Round 5	Saturday 17 February
Round 6	Saturday 24 February
Round 7	Sunday 25 February
Round 8	Saturday 2 March
Round 9	Sunday 10 March
Finals	Sunday 24 March

This would also mean **Mixed Pairs** being changed as follows, with the first round on a Public Holiday at the end of a long weekend:

Round 1	Monday 1 May
Round 2	Saturday 18 May
Round 3	Sunday 19 May
Finals	Saturday 25 May

Please ensure you submit your members' choice by **18:00 on Wednesday** to **admin@wpbowls.co.za**

Regards,

Gerrit van Milligen
President

Competition Calendar Changes – Discussion and Explanation

As a committee, we acknowledge that we made a mistake with the initial release of the calendar, by not identifying the clash with the Disability and Youth Nationals. We should have identified this issue initially, and not had to amend the competition calendar for the season after it had been released.

We apologise to you, your members, and the entire district for this initial oversight.

We do believe that the amended calendar addresses this and is in the best interests of the sport of bowls, WP Bowls, and all our members and clubs.

Please take note of the following points.

Motivation for Changing the Calendar

We had a variety of input from Bowls South Africa, Visually Impaired Bowlers South Africa, and other interested parties. All the communication received used the BSA ruling as the basis for their requests for changes to be made to the calendar, but this was not the only motivation presented.

We felt a strong sense of outrage among many of the disabled bowlers. It was clear that they (and anyone who was assisting them) were being discriminated against by being denied the opportunity to play in either the Mixed Pairs or various league competitions.

After much correspondence, an email received on 22 January 2024, laying out the discrimination complaint, and pointing out how many members were being discriminated against, was received.

Points made included:

- The vision of Bowls SA (and a core marketing strategy of theirs) of bowls being a sport for all was not being catered for.
- Disabled bowlers (and the abled directors, administrators, markers, caterers, umpires, etc.) were being discriminated against, in contravention of the South African constitution.
- Far more people were affected than just the bowlers who will enter the disability nationals.
- The agreement between Bowls SA and all the districts that district competitions would not be held at the same time as National Competitions.

In terms of the calendar being discriminatory, representations were received on behalf of Visually Impaired Bowlers South Africa (VIBSA), International Blind Bowlers Association (IBBA) and the WP Bowls Standing Committee on Disability.

At this stage, a decision was made by the WP Executive that the points raised were valid, that we were in contravention of the agreement with Bowls SA, that the existing calendar could be seen to be discriminatory, and that amendments would have to be made.

Amended Calendar

The calendar was completely reworked to avoid any discrimination based on disability and a draft distributed to the WP Bowls Executive Committee. The process of debating and discussing the amendments was finalised and approved unanimously by the entire Executive Committee, and the circular with attachments was distributed.

We stand by this decision as being in the best interests of our sport, and in working towards a more inclusive, less discriminatory society.

Number of Members Affected

We do not have a comprehensive list of all members that would have been affected by the clashes on the previous WP competition calendar, but they include the following at a minimum:

Disability Nationals
Eddie van der Heiden (International Classifier and Player)
Pat Gordon (National Medical Classifier - Bergvliet)
Roy Peters (Bellville)
Jene McCourt (Helderberg)
Taz Bright (Helderberg)
Margie Palmer (Helderberg)
Victor Trew (Kraaifontein)
Princess Schroeder (Mowbray)
Graham Ward (VIBSA and IBBA President – Mowbray)
Abe Crouse (Mowbray)
Annas Coetzee (Stellenbosch)
Avril Davids (Mowbray)
Mark Douglas (WP Exco)
Gerrit van Milligen (WP Exco)
Volunteers and Technical Officials for Marking, Umpiring, Catering, Barkeeping, etc.

Youth Nationals
The final teams and managers have not been announced, but are likely to include most of the following, plus additional members.
Jenny Griffiths
Janet Schmidt
Wayne Schmidt
Kaitlin Niemand
Werner Langenhoven
Zandre Langenhoven
Ryan Truter
Jordané Castle
Divan Laubscher
Divan Joubert
Vigo Alves
Keane van Wyk
Thando Magwaca
William Neetling
Andries Hougaard
Gavin Matomane
Caitlin Cornelius
Hannah Havenga

Eddie Phillips
Justin Brink
Luandre Stipp

This does show the extent to which members would have been affected by the previous version of the calendar, and that it is far more than just a few members.

Player Availability

There are always issues with player availability on a calendar, and we understand that this can be hard to bear.

Many clubs do not have their first-choice bowlers available for league and other competitions throughout the competition season, for several reasons.

These include, amongst others:

- BSA Green Squad
- BSA Gold Squad
- BSA Camps
- BSA Coaches
- BSA Selectors
- BSA International Selection
- VIBSA International Selection

There is no way of guaranteeing a calendar which suits over 2500 bowlers.

The clubs who have lost their first-choice players for any of the reasons above over the years have had to accept the situation and rely on other club members.

In this regard, we acknowledge that some bowlers may have scheduled their annual leave for a time which now conflicts with the final rounds of the League season. We apologise to them but cannot imagine that this will be nearly as many bowlers as would have been affected by the discrimination that existed with the previous calendar.

Disability Nationals 2024

The Disability Nationals are being held in the WP Bowls District this year, at Helderberg and Somerset West Bowling Clubs. The means that there are a lot more WP Bowls members involved in making this major event a success than would be the case if it was being held in another district.

Member's Interests

We firmly believe that the decision to amend the WP Competition Calendar is in the best interest of the vast majority our members, and the only option to remove any discrimination from the calendar.

The decision was made through the application of logic and common sense.

We do trust and hope that you recognise that we have made the only possible decision in this regard and wish you luck and good bowling for the remained of the competition season.