



WESTERN
PROVINCE
BOWLS

Business Leagues

Guidelines for Clubs

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Objectives

- To assist clubs who are currently not hosting a Business League.
- To convert current Business League bowlers into social/competitive club bowlers.
- To start a Business League Play-off between clubs in zones at the end of each season.

Introduction

Running a Business League at clubs has shown itself to be a great way to introduce a range of new people to bowls and has been the initial introduction to bowls for many members.

An evening where the green is packed with non-bowlers socialising and having fun, with music playing in the background, is fantastic for any club. It gets better when you follow the bowls with a raffle, a small prize-giving, and boerie rolls for all.

This document is designed to provide an overview of how to get your own Business League up and running and will be updated on an ongoing basis as we get new ideas and refine systems and processes.

Why a Business League

It is not a secret that bowling membership is diminishing across the majority of our clubs. This is going to directly affect the future of our sport. Land rights, leases, housing projects are all becoming a public debate and these human rights demands are threatening the longevity of our clubs. If our clubs do not serve a recreational purpose to a larger number of our citizens, clubs that are utilizing prime property in many suburbs will be forced to close.

A successful Business League serves to increase membership, revenue, and feet through the door. Many of our bowling clubs in WP already have business leagues running very successfully. There have been many success stories from clubs around the country where membership has been low, revenues have been slow and such projects have assisted in saving the club.

For those clubs who are going to start the Business League process here are some guidelines and important aspects to consider.

Running a Business League

Management

This is not an easy task for any committee, but that is what this document is for – to assist your committee. Running a competition takes a lot of time and effort. The committee taking on this portfolio not only needs to be dedicated but also forward thinkers, capable of positively promoting the game to everybody who might step through the door.

This committee does not necessarily need to be your Club Executive. Players controlling finances, doing secretarial work, and running the club on other levels might already have their hands full. This is an opportunity for our development officers and coaches to get involved. The sub-committee will need to communicate effectively with the club Executive and keep sufficient records of players, sponsors, media releases, etc. to ensure an informed hand over after each competition.

Communication

Social media, newspaper bulletins, a door-to-door approach in the neighborhood have all proven effective in spreading the word amongst players and creating awareness within and outside of the club. It will be at the discretion of the individual clubs to determine how best to market their tournament. However, you will have the full support of the WP M&M Manager.

You can also use the data collected from your players in the tournament to keep participants informed of the social events happening during the year. The more they are encouraged to return the more welcome they will feel and hopefully move towards joining on a social or more permanent membership.

The Competition

Format

As a district we would like to host a Business League Play-off each year. The idea is to generate a competitive edge for these Business League bowlers with an opportunity for the winners to compete against Business League winners from other clubs/zones.

There are many clubs already running very successful business leagues and we obviously support you in continuing as you are. We would like to assist the other clubs. Please note there are no hard and fast rules, these are merely suggestions.

Entry fees, number of teams, number of players per team, etc. are all at the club's discretion. Factors such as the number of greens, interested players, available bowls, and size of the club house will all need to come into consideration. Date and time will also need to be discussed as extended business hours will need to be arranged by your club volunteers.

Some points for clubs:

- Look to recruit non-bowlers to come and play in the Business League.
- Host the tournament to a standard that is enticing to the new non-member.
- Play music.
- Identify the correct person to act as host/convenor at the tournament to welcome new players. Use the opportunity to deploy the younger members in your club that can network and socialize with them.
- Ensure bowls are clean and readily available.
- Don't compromise on the catering, please make it memorable for the right reasons.
- Ensure your bars are well stocked with ice and liquor for the duration of the tournament.
- Hygienic ablution facilities are imperative.
- Management should be clearly identifiable, friendly, and ready to assist.
- Present the game in a professional manner to non-bowlers.
- Forward the tournament results to WP Bowls M & M for assistance with social media posts, etc.
- Afford any Sponsors the opportunity to display and sell their products and services through the club.
- Clubs should take into consideration that the teams playing in this tournament are more diverse in culture and religion.
- It might be well received by teams going through to the zone play-off if the club sponsors their entry fee. It would be seen as a club that backs and supports them.
- Refrain from over-coaching and just let the teams play and enjoy themselves.

Funding

Businesses often sponsor their teams, so meals and green hire should be covered for the evening. But unlike the name of the tournament – teams can also consist of friends of bowlers, families, etc. It does not have to be a team from a company specifically.

Then it comes down to the prizes. Clubs are often surprised by the number of sponsors that come forward in tournaments such as these. In many clubs where this has been running for years, companies find themselves on a waiting list to get their name on a program or banner next to the green. Well-known businesses in the area often jump at the chance to supply a first-place prize. This is extremely rewarding for the clubs; however, many hours of hard work need to be put in before reaching this point.

Code of Conduct and Etiquette:

A professional and encouraging approach of the club members will determine how welcome new potential bowlers feel when arriving at the club for the first time. This is not a tournament where we need to enforce the rules and etiquette of bowls but rather to create a fun and relaxed atmosphere while allowing the bowls bug to bite. The organising committee and club members should be encouraged to guide new bowlers positively so that they feel comfortable while playing the sport.

Dress code

As this is a social event with the idea of rebranding the perception that it is a game for the older generation, clubs might need to relax their rules. The tournament should be as colourful and energised as possible. Naturally, footwear is an important consideration for our greens care so just remind players to wear flat shoes alternatively barefoot always creates a care-free environment.

Membership Options Following a Tournament

Each club needs to determine a definite recruitment strategy. This means that the club's Executive and all its members are on the same page. With our smaller clubs getting smaller, this might mean that clubs need to renew their previous way of thinking and perhaps look at changing their Constitutions.

A huge concern is that some clubs are running successful business leagues with very few players from these leagues being converted to members/competitive bowlers for the club. The business leagues are a huge revenue boost for the club which is always much needed. Now the next step is to move these players into more competitive leagues (initially tabs-in) and encourage the next group of "business-leaguer's" to sign up. This is where our coaches come in. They should be trying to identify the enthusiastic ones and encouraging them to join.

Ideas

Prizes for your Business Leagues can include vouchers for your club. For example, three months free social membership for the winner and a friend / a bar voucher / free coaching session. Then during this first experience of bowls and perhaps for a period thereafter allow new players to determine on their own whether this is a sport they would consider in the long-term, before rushing them into coaching, whites and affiliation.

From this league and the new potential players, clubs can investigate coaching clinics once or twice a week, encourage these new players to tab-in and learn from current members and invite them to fun days. Let them know about social events at your club and welcome them to join. New ideas like bringing a non-member to the club can be rewarded with a free entry into a lucky draw for example.

New ideas and initiatives are what we are looking for. What worked 50 years ago – worked then – new times, a fresh approach?

Requirements from the WP office

WP Bowls needs assistance from you and your club to grow our district, and the sport of bowls.

Feedback

Please provide WP Bowls with feedback after the tournament. Let us know what worked, what did not work, what you had to adapt, etc.? Can we adjust our above guidelines to assist other clubs?

Winners

If you provide us with details of the winners, how many competitors you had, and some photographs, we can add them to our Facebook page and help with your marketing and publicity.

Registration of Participants

For bowls to grow, we need to show the government departments and SASCO that we do have people using our clubs and greens on a regular basis. We also need to show that there are far more people involved in bowls than just the affiliated membership.

To this end we need to register the participants in your Business League as *Corporate Bowlers* on the BSA database. This does not affect their Novice status if they join as a Full Member but can help all the clubs in the district (and country).

WP Bowls has developed a form to assist you with this. It is the WP Bowls – Guest Affiliation Form, and a Word version is available to download from www.wpbowls.co.za. Navigate to *Club Resources > Forms and Downloads* to find it.

Registering your participants also helps hugely with attracting sponsors in the years to come as this is the sort of data they need.

Practical Steps

A Countdown

Three months before.

- Decide on dates for the competition and the type of meal you will be offering.
- Draw up a preliminary budget based on having a full field.
- Meet with the greenkeeper and discuss requirements.
- Meet with your Club Committee to discuss plans.
- Start the marketing process.
- Look for sponsors.
As an example, one sponsor per night provides prizes for the highest and second highest scoring teams and prizes for the raffle. Other prizes can include Best Dressed. Most Enthusiastic, Lowest Score, etc.
- Inform potential participants by mail that the next business league is imminent, and the invites will be in the mail soon.
- Provide club members with info and request their support.

Two months before

- Draw up an attractive and inviting flyer.
- Email it to your potential participants.
- Send it to all club members involved.
- Print one or more for your noticeboards.
- Post on any social media accounts you have.
- Depending on your area, look for places to put your posters up. This could be libraries, local businesses, etc.

Six weeks before

- Make telephone contacts with non-responsive companies (if you are not full).
- Anything short of 24 teams requires follow up.

One month before

- Organise a club member as the manager for each team.
- Draw up a list of all teams, with the manager, participants, and all contact details.
- Send the list to all the managers.
- Managers should telephone the team contact to introduce themselves and invite the team to practice if they wish.
- This list can also be sent to participants who may now arrange for practice days and times with their manager.
- Send the rules of the competition to all managers and participants (it is best to include it with the contact list).
- Ensure the list is attached to your club noticeboard.
- Post updates on social media, including the rules of the competition.

One week before

- Send the draw to the managers and all competitors.

On the day

- Make sure all your helpers know what their duties are before anyone arrives.
- Provide your braaiers and other helpers with a printout of times and duties.
- Be at the club early to welcome the teams.
- As teams arrive, they can go straight onto the greens to practice.
- It is not a good idea to bring them back into the clubhouse to give a welcome speech and introduce the laws. That is what the team managers are for.
- Start the games by ringing the bell at 17.45 if all teams have arrived.
- Print the results of the games and attach them to a visible point for all to see.
- These results should be emailed to all managers and participants the following.
- Ensure duties required by club members are being done.

Marketing

Starting a new Business League depends on your marketing efforts.

- You need to start by identifying business in the area who you can approach. It is best to start with the “soft” targets. Examples are Estate Agents, Attorneys, Motor vehicle dealerships, Manufacturers, Accountants, Golf Clubs and Doctors. You can normally ignore retailers as they cannot afford the time off for their staff.
- For the best response, pay these businesses a personal visit, with a pamphlet about your Business League in hand.
- Once you are up and running businesses will be contacting you to join in the fun. Going forward, you will have your existing participants. If you run a decent tournament most of them will reenter the following year.
- You can also make use of club members to spread the word to their family, friends, other social organisations, workplaces, etc.
- It is not worth relying on social media to build a new tournament, but it is an effective tool to spread the word so don’t forget to post details on all your accounts.

Assistance Required

The more club members you can get to assist you with the tournament, the better it will run, and the more successful it will be.

- **Manager for each team**

This person will be the contact for the team for the duration of the competition. Their duties include:

- Introduce themselves to their team shortly after the invitations have been sent.
- Invite their team to come and practise at the club from about three weeks before.
- Be at the club at prearranged times to provide their team with bowls.
- Show their team the basics - but do not be pedantic about rules. These folk participate for enjoyment and it's up to the managers to make their team members feel at home. There are players who may wish to join your club – so set the scene for a happy relationship. Flat shoes or barefoot is important. Also not sitting on banks.
- Return all equipment used after the games.

- **Bowls Helpers**

They need to ensure you have sufficient bowls available for all the team members. Managers can loan their set of bowls (of 4) but you will need an additional set per team.

- **Barmen**

Having enough bar staff on duty is imperative. You don't want the participants to have a bad time queuing for drinks, and this is a prime opportunity to capitalize on the increased turnover.

- **Raffle Tickets**

1 person selling raffle tickets (raffle value R800 x 4= R3200). Raffles priced at R10 for 3 numbers. Price and format can change depending on the prizes being offered.

- **Braaiers**

At least 2 persons braaiing the wors for boerewors rolls.

- **Kitchen Helpers**

Make sure you have enough people to look after the following:

- Cutting and buttering the rolls and assisting afterwards at the braai to hand out the boerie rolls.
- Making a delicious sauce for the boerie rolls.
- Collecting the boerewors and bread rolls in advance!
- Selling tickets for extra boerie rolls

- **Registration**

Two persons to attend to registrations and attendance. Hand out score cards (which will reflect rink no and opposition no for next game) and boerie tickets (five to the manager- one per team member, one per manager).

- **Sponsor Organiser**
You should allocate at least one person the job of finding sponsors for the competition. Ideally you want one sponsor each evening i.e. 4 sponsors minimum. You are also looking for raffle prizes. This gets easier and easier for established tournaments!
- **Scoring**
One person should be allocated to do the scoring, preferably with an assistant. Scores for the evening should be available soon after games have ended to keep everyone interested.
- **Music**
Make sure you have someone who knows their music looking after this. Good music at a decent volume is essential to keeping everyone in a good mood!
- **Cleaning**
You need to ensure that the venue remains in good condition, and someone regularly checks on the ablutions. Keeping them in a clean and healthy state is very important.
- **Main Organiser**
Your motor car may be well looked after, be mechanically sound and be all shiny and beautiful but if it doesn't have a driver, it is not going anywhere. Similarly, if your business league does not have a driver, it's not going anywhere.

Greens

- Prearrange with your greenkeeper for the rinks to be laid out with required equipment.
- Do not supply water – competitors must support the bar.
- If you have too many teams, look at stringing the greens for one extra rink. Try not to turn away excess teams if you can possibly accommodate them.
- Arrange for rubbish bins on each green.
- Ensure outside areas are clean and well maintained.

Suggested Rules & Format

- Competition runs over 4 weeks (Thursdays are preferable as it is a build up to the weekend and does not impinge on other sporting events which happen over the weekend).
- 2 games of 6 ends per night.
- The bowl nearest the jack scores 3 points. The next nearest scores 2 points, and the third nearest 1 point.
- Ensure the two cards per rink add up to 36 points.
- Manager should keep scores on the board and card.
- If you find team scores are very close introduce the fourth bowl to score 4.3.2.1 in the next game.
- Mark a 4m mark on the rink for the automatic placing of the white ball. This distance will avoid too many bowls landing in the ditch and help protect your 2m marks.
- Use the allocated rink for practicing beforehand and practise in the same direction as the game play.

- Have one Trial End at start of first game of the evening.
- The team with the most points after 4 evenings will have their name engraved on the cup.
- The draws will be done on a strength versus strength basis. Even the first game where possible.
- The months of February and March are ideal as the light is good until 8pm. If you have lights, the dates are easily changed.
- As this competition is intended for new and inexperienced bowlers, the use of experienced bowlers in teams (particularly those who are members or recent members of a bowling club) is not permitted.

Managers

- The managers are the key to success if you want to maximise the number of participants who become members and continue with bowls.
- Managers keep their team advised on what is happening, look after them on the night, keep them motivated, and assist with anything they don't understand.
- Provide all the necessary information to the managers well before time.
- Managers should have a list of the duties expected of them, with all the necessary details.
- Stay on contact with the team after the tournament and invite them to come to practices or other social events at the club.
- It is worth repeating - the managers form the key role in making the tournament a success.

Invitations

- Invitations should be sent to prospective teams at least two months or more in advance. If your competition is being held in Feb, send the invites in November.
- Have a cutoff date one month before the competition starts. This gives time to advise your team managers who their teams are and the teams to know who their managers are (with contact details. This also gives the organiser time to find extra teams if necessary.
- The flyer should be accompanied by a friendly covering letter.

Communication

Communication is an essential part of the success of a competition.

- Tell the competitors who will be participating a week or two before the competition starts.
- Send the competitors the draw a week before.
- Send the competitors the games results and team positions one day after each evenings games.
- Include sponsor information with each communication. Sponsors must get the advertising due to them so work hard to promote them whenever possible.
- Allow competitors and sponsors to advertise as much as they want around the greens and inside the clubhouse. Examples are banners, flyers, teardrops, etc. It also adds to the ambience.

Costs

These costs are based on the Helderberg Business League in 2023.

- **Boerie Rolls**
 - These cost approximately R15 per player.
Catering for 36 teams, each with 4 players and a manager, takes the total cost to just under R11 000.
 - You can make extra boerie rolls and sell them to supporters and hungry participants. This should bring in around R2000 net income over the tournament.

- **Thank You!**
 - It is a good idea to have a thank you evening for the helpers afterwards. For example, a Fish 'n Chips thank you evening for helpers after the event. This costs approximately R2000.

- **Bar**
 - The major profit for the competition is derived from bar profits. With a turnover of R15 000 per evening over 4 weeks, you are making a profit of R30 000.
 - The normal markup in the bar should be around 100%. Do not increase the normal club prices for the competition as you may upset the competitors who are generally well informed about your club.
 - Make sure you have enough bar staff on hand so there are no queues.
 - Consider having one person attending to supplementing stock for the fridges and cleaning up during the evening.
 - Obtain supplementary stock one week before. Ensure sufficient stock to accommodate the extra demand.
 - Brandy and coke can be very profitable. Buy coke in 2 litre bottles.
 - Have trays available at the bar counter for players to carry orders for their team.

- **Entry Fees**
 - An entry fee of around R70 per player per evening equates to a team fee of R1120 for the entire tournament. This is R40 320 for a club with 3 greens.

- **Net Income**

Going through the above figures should make it clear that a 3 green club can expect to make almost R60 000 profit for the tournament, before prizes are paid out. Besides all the other benefits, this is a major financial boost for any club.

Special mention and a huge thank you to Rob Dinnie for his input. Much of the content of this document is based on his work at Helderberg.