

# Disability Bowls in Scotland

This fact sheet provides an overview of disability bowls in Scotland. The factsheet also provides useful contacts for learners and improvers, potential volunteers, coaches and officials.

## History of Disability Bowls

Bowls is a game of skill, precision and tactical awareness, appropriate for players of all ages and abilities. Bowls inspires teamwork and quality communication between participants. Bowls encourages community engagement and has clearly defined pathways to performance and excellence.



Up to and including the 1996 Games in Atlanta, bowls was part of the Paralympic programme. Stricter qualifying criteria and a reduction in the number of nations and players resulted in a change of status for the sport within the Paralympic family. The member nations of IPC Bowls then voted unanimously to form a new independent International Federation with greater control over the future of bowls. In 2005 in Australia, International Bowls for the Disabled (IBD) was incorporated.

For Scotland, Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) is the member organisation of IBD. Scotland has progressed from finishing third at the IBD World Championships in Australia to second four years later in 2011 in South

Africa. The 2015 IBD World Championships were held in Wellington, New Zealand where Scotland place second in the medal table. Scotland are bidding to host the 2020 IBD World Championships

Scotland won triples gold for physically disabled para sport bowlers at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002 and pairs silver for visually impaired

bowlers at the Games in Glasgow in 2014.

SDS and Bowls Scotland have for many years been involved in encouraging players with disabilities to participate and compete in discrete and inclusive bowls settings. SDS Branch and Scottish championships have been around since the 70s and the Scottish disability bowls squad was formed in preparation for the World Championships in Kuala Lumpur. Scotland's leading disability bowlers benefit from all that SDS and Bowls Scotland have to offer in coaching, competition and development.

Different groups of bowlers with specific impairments have over the years established their own clubs in mainstream club facilities. Clubs for bowlers who use a wheelchair or have a visual impairment have been the most successful.

Bowls Scotland has appointed Regional Managers in specific areas of the country and their presence will add value to the coaching, club and competition opportunities already promoted by SDS Branches and Regional Managers. The challenge for Scotland is to keep pace with the Commonwealth para sport playing nations of the world in particular as the performance arm of the sport reaches new levels with every major international tournament. Glasgow 2014 was a success for Scotland's para sport bowlers but the Gold Coast in 2018 will necessitate a raising of the performance bar yet again.



## Disability Bowls Classification

Classification provides a structure for fair competition in disability bowls. Eligible participants have a limitation, loss of body function or structure (impairment) that leads to a competitive disadvantage in mainstream bowls

The SDS classification system combines physically disabled and visually impaired bowlers in one class, in most instances. The system provides separate classes for bowlers who use a wheelchair, bowlers who have a learning disability or intellectual impairment and bowlers who are totally blind.



The SDS classes are as follows:

- Class 1—totally blind bowlers: B1.
- Class 2—bowlers who use a wheelchair and have good arms, hands and trunk
- Class 3—bowlers who use a wheelchair but have weakness in arms/trunk
- Class 4/5—bowlers who are ambulant and not restricted by their physical

impairment during delivery, plus B3 bowlers. Men 4, women 5.

- Class 6/7—bowlers who are ambulant and restricted in their bowling arm, trunk or have balance difficulties plus B2 bowlers. Men 6, women 7.
- Class 8/9—ambulant bowlers with a learning disability. Men 8, women 9.
- The International Bowls for the Disabled (IBD) classification system for players with physical impairments (B5-B6) and bowlers with a visual impairment (B1-B4) is structured as follows:
  - Class B1: No light perception in either eye up to light perception but no recognition of hand movements at any distance or in any direction.
  - Class B2: From the ability to recognise hand movements up to a visual acuity of 2/60 (Snellen chart\*).
  - Class B3: From a visual acuity of better than 2/60 (Snellen chart) up to a visual acuity of 6/60.
  - Class B4: A visual acuity of better than 6/60 (Snellen) up to a visual acuity of worse than 6/24 (Snellen) and/or a significantly reduced visual field of 20 degrees or less. The player has the option of being guided by a sighted director.





- Class B5: Ambulant and wheelchair bowlers with restricted grip and upper body limb function, poor balance and co-ordination, unable to bowl a full length jack. A splinting device for bowlers with limited grip/release hand function may be used (separate from a bowling arm).
- Class B6: Ambulant and wheelchair bowlers with reduced balance function (loss of 5 points or more) but able bowl a full length jack.
- Class B7: Ambulant and wheelchair bowlers with minor balance problems (loss of less than 5 points).
- Class B8: Ambulant and wheelchair bowlers, who have a permanent and irreversible disability, have lost 10 points on the bench test, but have no noticeable impairment of function.

\*A Snellen chart is an eye chart used by eye care professionals and others to measure visual acuity.

## Disability Bowls Workshop

This SDS/Bowls Scotland workshop concentrates on lawn and indoor bowls for players with a physical, visual or learning disability. Coaching bowlers with different impairments, officiating and classification are the topics covered by the team of experienced tutors. The workshop will be of interest to mainstream bowls coaches or leaders (16+) providing disability bowls opportunities in a discrete setting.

## Helpful Resources/Workshops

## IBBA Coaching Video

This video is a coaching resource for those working with blind and visually impaired bowlers. Produced by an IBBA (International Blind Bowls Association) panel of experts, this resource covers all aspects of coaching blind and visually impaired bowlers.

IBBA YouTube link: <http://tinyurl.com/m58tuyj>

SABB YouTube link: <http://tinyurl.com/n7bl2lt>

## Coach Education

Bowls Scotland is currently developing a coach education programme for disability bowls.

## Bowls Coaching Manual

A manual has been produced by the SDS Head Coach on how to coach physically disabled players. For further details contact Scottish Disability Sport: [admin@scottishdisabilitysport.com](mailto:admin@scottishdisabilitysport.com).

## SABB Coaching Manual

This SABB (Scottish Association of Blind Bowlers) resource is included in the mainstream coaching manual and will shortly feature as part of the overall assessment for the mainstream coaching course.



## Disability Carpet Bowls Workshop

Carpet bowls has been widely promoted by SDS for almost four decades. The game is viewed as a development sport for lawn and indoor bowls. This SDS workshop offers delegates an introduction to carpet bowls for players with physical, sensory or learning disabilities. The tutor will cover classification, rules, equipment and local and national pathways. Delivery styles and positioning for seated and standing players will be

addressed. The workshop is interactive and part theory and practice. Delegates will experience simple plays, practices and rules interpretation.

## Facts—Disability Bowls

Bowls was included on the Paralympic Games programme of sports up to and including the Games in Atlanta in 1996. SDS Hall of Fame member David Heddle MBE from Fraserburgh was the last Scottish Paralympic bowls medallist.

The International Blind Bowls Association (IBBA) World Championships were held in Worthing in July 2013. Scottish bowlers won one gold medal and three bronze medals.

The pan disability Scottish Disability Sport bowls team selected, prepared and co-ordinated by SDS progressed from third place at the IBD World Championships in Australia to runners-up four years later in 2011 in South Africa.

For visually impaired bowlers a string is run through the middle of the rink to assist players to position themselves centrally for their delivery.

B1-B3 bowlers all play with a sighted director who acts as their “eyes” on the green and describes where the jack and bowls lie and which shots to play.

Snellen charts used to measure visual acuity are named after the Dutch ophthalmologist Hermann Snellen who developed the chart in 1862.

Bowls were originally made from a material called lignum vitae, a dense wood giving rise to the term “woods”. Bowls are now typically made of a hard plastic composite material.

## Leading Players

Kevin Wallace (Clackmannanshire) 2011 B7 World Champion and bronze medal pairs winner with Michael Simpson (Fife)

Irene Edgar (Saltcoats)

2013 B2 double bronze medallist at IBBA World Championships. Glasgow 2014 silver medallist with Robert Conway (Glasgow)

Maria Spencer (Fife) 2011 World Champion in single hand bowls in South Africa

## Disability Bowls Competitions

SDS currently organises the following national bowls events: SDS Carpet Bowls Championships; SDS Inter Area Test Match for Bowlers with a Learning Disability; SDS Lawn Bowls Championships; specific SDS Branches organise indoor area bowls competitions.

IBD World Championships every four years—2011 South Africa and 2015 New Zealand.

IBBA World Championships every four years—2013 England.

Para sport bowls was included in the Commonwealth Games in Manchester 2002, Glasgow 2014 and will again be included in the Australian Gold Coast in 2018.

## Key Contacts

Scottish Disability Sport –  
[www.scottishdisabilitysport.com](http://www.scottishdisabilitysport.com)

## Key Websites

International Bowls for the Disabled -  
[www.interdisabledbowls.org/](http://www.interdisabledbowls.org/)

International Blind Bowls Association -  
[www.blindbowls.org/](http://www.blindbowls.org/)

Scottish Association of blind bowlers –  
[www.scottishblindbowlers.org.uk/](http://www.scottishblindbowlers.org.uk/)

Bowls Scotland - [www.bowlsscotland.com/](http://www.bowlsscotland.com/)

Scottish Indoor Bowling Association—  
[www.bowls-siba.co.uk/](http://www.bowls-siba.co.uk/)

