



# Scottish Disability Sport

**8 Nations and Parasport Event  
Gold Coast Commonwealth Games Qualification & Test Event**

**Broadbeach Bowls Club  
Gold Coast, Australia**

**29 – 13 June 2017**

## **Event Report**

**Scotland Team Manager: Gary Fraser**



## Contents

Section	Description	Page Number
1.	Scotland Team Selection	2
2.	Preparations in Scotland	3
3.	Preparations in Australia	3-4
4.	Player Selection	4
5.	Organisation of Tournament	5
6.	Classification	5
7.	Accommodation	6
8.	Travel and Transport	6-7
9.	Team Kit/Accessories	7
10.	Bowls Scotland Partnership	8
11.	Results & Conclusion	9-10

## 1. Scotland Team Selection

- Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) re-wrote the section policies for the National Para Bowls Squad, whilst simultaneously developing selection criteria for a Commonwealth games Extended Squad.
- SDS made the decision to select directors based on a specific selection criteria, therefore eradicating players choosing their own. This is unprecedented in para bowls but there was a collective agreement that we needed the best directors to be in place to increase performance levels and the chances of medal success. Identifying partnerships and combinations has been a key role for the coaching team.
- An increased training programme was set at Falkirk Indoor Bowling Club for each squad in unison, as well as some joint training sessions. The methodology was to monitor all players, so that we could move players between squads, depending on performances at training. Furthermore, some competitions, such as the Home Nations Championships, require a wider pool of players and this was identified as the ideal way to benchmark and monitor team dynamics. This has been well received by the players.
- In the 8 months leading into the 8 Nations and Parasport Event SDS identified several competitions in order to test the players, as well as experimentation with player combinations, positional change and director rotation. These events included:
  - East Lothian Indoor BC ProAM Triples
  - Bowls Scotland Regional Academy triples
  - Pairs and triples test match against the Scottish Young Bowling Association
  - The Home Nations International, Newport Wales
  - SDS/SIBA Indoor Championships
- Superbowl data analysis was introduced to the programme and utilised as a selection and coaching tool. This has been used in both training and competition.
- Players took part in a series of skills tests and practice matches which allowed the Head Coach and Coaching Team to assess player potential, attitude, commitment and skill. In addition, players took part in a series of triples and pairs matches against each other.
- SDS decided that it was best to differentiate between 'coaches' and 'directors' due to the selection process for directors. Those who wanted to be considered for a director role would be involved in the process, whereas the coaches would be responsible for supporting the entire squad. This has been a difficult transition but one that is now being welcomed.
- SDS now has several high quality coaches and assessors, and from the group, we identified a Head Coach and four additional coaches to work across the team. All coaches, would also be responsible for assessing our players and opponents on Superbowl, as well as being involved in the player & director selection process.
- Six players with a physical disability, four players with a visual impairment and four directors were selected to represent Scotland at the 8 Nations and Parasport Event, as well as securing qualification for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

## 2. Preparations in Scotland

- Following the final team selection we received the unfortunate news that Martin Hunter, the 2015 B7 World Champion, wouldn't be able to travel due to a family situation which was huge blow in our preparations. However, we had named reserves, and fortunately Barbara McMillan was able to take her place in the team. This did cause additional challenges in flight changes and kit sizes but these hurdles were overcome.
- A trip of this magnitude always requires a player contribution, however, given its significance to the Commonwealth Games all players selected received a **sportscotland** Athlete Performance Award (SAPA) of £500.00. This reduced the cost significantly and was budgeted in. Furthermore, SDS made the decision to offer each player and coach a Per Diem of £30.00 in advance of the trip, allowing people to manage their own meals. This also eradicated the administration that comes with receipts and expense claims.
- A further two sessions were arranged and scheduled for the team to finalise their preparations.
  - One of these sessions was a joint day with the Bowls Scotland High Performance Squad, which helped build that 'One Team' ethos before heading to Australia and ultimately the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in 2018. This also incorporated the Clean Sport 2 UK Anti-Doping training, delivered by Fiona McNeilly.
  - The other session gave us the opportunity to invite our Performance Nutritionist from the **sportscotland** Institute of Sport, Rachel Stentiford, to deliver a workshop on travel planning, acclimatisation and nutrition.
- SDS applied for Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUE's), on behalf of five of our players, via World Bowls at the cost of £50.00 per person.

## 3. Preparations in Australia

- The team arrived early on Tuesday 30 May and after some challenges with the wrong bus turning up we arrived at the accommodation. Upon arrival, our SIS Nutritionist had ordered us a grocery shop with basic supplies such as milk, bread, tea, coffee, cereal, cereal bars, fruit and water. This was divided between apartments and was well received, particularly after the travel demands.
- The decision was taken prior to travel to allow a flexible approach on that first day, so that players could get used to their surroundings, their flatmates and to acclimatise. As it happened, the staff and all players were keen to get across to the bowling club in order to identify their bowls (that were pre ordered). Furthermore, players were allowed on the available greens to practice and chop and change their bowls until comfortable. There was also a Trans-Tasman bowls event taking place in which we could spectate. All this was good preparation in order to understand the playing conditions.
- We had arranged four days of practice prior to the competition starting on Sunday 4 June. However, the allocation at Broadbeach Bowls Club was limited each day, due to the fact that Trans-Tasman was being played. Therefore, we decided to organise further practice at Musgrave Hill Bowls Club – the official training venue for the Gold Coast 2018. The club was approximately 20 minutes. This was useful in many ways, including: team building, change of

scenery etc. Importantly, it allowed for continued practice on the fast surfaces. Scottish Disability Sport chose to do this, whereas Bowls Scotland were happy with the green time. It is noteworthy, that their players compete regularly in the Southern-Hemisphere, and that is one of the differences between our programmes. It was recognised that we had to prepare our players in the best possible way, and therefore, it was the correct decision.

- On Saturday 3 June we were scheduled extended practice on the Broadbeach greens and the Team Manager took the opportunity to organise a competitive training match with Australia. This was an ideal way to get players into a mind-set for competition. In addition, we could test ourselves against the favourite for the competition.

#### **4. Player selection**

- Scotland were fortunate to have two B6/B7/B8 Open Triples and two B2/B3 Mixed Pairs teams competing in the event. This allowed for us to test all of our players in these conditions against the likely Commonwealth Games 2018 opponents. However, only one triple and one pair could earn the points for Scotland in the competition.
- The Team Manager and the coaching staff took the decision not to name the teams until we could see how all players adapted to the conditions, prior to the competition starting. Players were tested in various positions and all data was recorded on Super Bowl. Directors were rotated between visually impaired players and general attitude and behaviour was monitored throughout. Following this detailed four day analysis, we were comfortable with our choice of B2/B3 Mixed pair and their Directors. However, it was more complicated selecting the B6/B7/B8 Open Triple.
- After all our analysis was taken into consideration it was clear that the two standout players were our B6's – Billy Allan & Mike Nicol - and the consensus was that we wanted to play them together in the same triple. However, this would leave the second team without a B6, which could be problematic as the rules state that each Open Triple must include one B6 player. The decision was to approach the organisers to allow our second team to consist of three B7 players, with the argument being, that they wouldn't be playing for points in the competition anyway.
- Gary Fraser (Team Manager), Bob Dick (Head Coach), along with Rhona Howie (Bowls Scotland Team Manager) attended the Team Managers meeting and made our proposal. Although it was considered, there was opposition from the other nations, and although the organisers took our point, they decided to stick to the agreed format. As a result, we had to decide which B6 to play within the first triple and in the end, opted for Mike Nicol. The decision was based on that he could play across all three positions, needed to be tested under pressure and he was the better performer out of the two players during training.
- We announced the teams prior to our training match against Australia. There were notable disappointments from players and directors, and one player in particular, took it worse than the rest. However, he got over the disappointment in time for the competition starting.

## 5. Organisation of the Tournament

- Firstly, in the lead up to the event, the organisers and Broadbeach Bowls Club were extremely accommodating in relation to practice time. They adopted a flexible approach and were happy for us to use any free greens as much as required. This was useful, as players were able to do some solo practice.
- The club were also happy for us to utilise their stock of bowls, if required, throughout the duration and even allowed us to remove them from the facility to practice with at Musgrave Hill Bowls Club. Of course, this was not required once the competition officially started.
- The 8 Nations and Para Sport Event was a fully inclusive competition and from that point of view it couldn't be faulted. Mainstream bowlers and para bowlers were side by side on the rinks in a high performance event.
- The schedule was difficult, whereby, para bowlers were expected to play over three days, with the final day having three matches in a row. The three matches in a row situation was raised prior to flying out to Australia but the organisers said that they were guided by the International Bowls for the Disabled (IBD). This would be a difficult schedule for our players to fulfil. It was felt more time could be give between matches, particularly on the final day of play,
- It was suggested that the start time of each day would be brought forward by 15 minutes each day to allow adequate time for trial ends for the visually impaired players. However, this caused a great deal of confusion as it didn't correlate with the paperwork that was issued.
- The results were emailed to the Team Manager every evening, including the league table. It was also displayed on the noticeboards. This was thorough and well received.

## 6. Classification

- The Performance Bowls Group took the decision to ensure all players with a physical disability, who did not have 'Permanent' status, would present for international classification at the Home Nations Championships in April, prior to the event in Australia. Furthermore, following advice from the IBD, all our performance bowlers with a visual impairment were all re-tested prior to travel. The guidance is that visually impaired players should renew their documentation within six months of competing in an international competition. The fact that we have a robust system in place via Glasgow Caledonia University, we were confident that our players will have no issue.
- There were no classification concerns during the 8 Nations and Para Sport Event.

## 7. Accommodation

- Scottish Disability Sport worked in partnership with Bowls Scotland in order to travel as one team to the event. As a result, the accommodation was booked through Rhona Howie (Bowls Scotland High Performance Manager) and she selected the Oceana Apartments on Broadbeach due to previous experiences.

<http://www.oceanabroadbeach.com/>

- The accommodation itself was in a prime location, with the bowling club visible from the window, meaning players could easily get to the venue without the need for additional transport. This was ideal for our bowlers and afforded the opportunity for a more relaxed preparation on completion days, without the unnecessary travel that often occurs. Players and staff were able to go back and forth with ease. Furthermore, the beach was close by and local amenities were within walking distance.
- The self-catering option was a concern for the management team as we were unsure how the players would cope with having to cater for themselves before and after competition. However, there were no issues whatsoever and the feedback received indicates that this is by far the best option, allowing for more flexibility. In addition, it also added a sense of team building as each flat would buy shopping and prepare meals together. In one apartment, the players took turns in preparing an evening meal for the group. The added support from our SIS Nutritionist helped massively.
- Due to the Per Diem offered in advance, players and staff had the autonomy to eat in or out for breakfast, lunch or dinner.
- There was no accessibility concerns and we had pre-arranged two shower chairs in advance, as these did not come as standard. The apartments were spacious, offered lots of manoeuvrability as well as balcony for outside space.
- Unfortunately, SDS were charged a small cleaning fee from two of our four apartments due to items being left in the fridge and a stain being left on the carpet. This was recouped by the occupants and an apology sent, on behalf of SDS and the Para Bowls Squad, to the accommodation manager.
- All staff at the hotel were incredibly helpful and went out of their way to ensure the needs of the Scotland Team were catered for, this could not be faulted.

## 8. Travel and Transport

- The flights were booked through Emirates by and independent travel company, Thorne Travel, who are a travel partner of Bowls Scotland. All this was booked via Rhona Howie at Bowls Scotland. However, there was additional communication between SDS and Thorne Travel regarding some of the requirements of our para bowlers. This was useful as it saved us going through a 'middle man'.

- We arranged assistance for eight of our ten bowlers at all airports and it was easier to arrange this directly. We had some issues around the reasoning for this and had to supply details of each individual's impairment and legitimate reasoning for this support. Eventually this was cleared and helped the players enormously from a performance perspective.
- Thorne Travel were great to deal with and they also attended to the Glasgow Airport on departure to ensure everything ran smoothly.
- Rhona Howie also arranged transfer by bus to and from the airport and was in constant communication with SDS in making the bookings, with accessibility being key. However, upon arrival in Brisbane, the wrong bus was sent – a 12 seater for an overall team of 40+! Whilst sorting this out with the bus company the Bowls Scotland men (and coaches) took the 12 seater, leaving the women and para bowlers to wait for the additional bus. I'm not sure who made this decision but on hindsight, it would have made more sense for the para bowlers, or at least those with more mobility challenges, to have travelled in this smaller bus.
- An additional bus arrived after 30 minutes but wasn't accessible. One of our players required support from coaches to access the bus, which worked out fine. However, if we had any fulltime wheelchair users in the group this wouldn't have been possible.
- The return transport on departure consisted of two smaller buses which were accessible with a step. However, there was no room for luggage, as the small trailer couldn't accommodate all the suitcases. The only solution was to fill the aisles with bags, which was far from ideal. Nobody complained and we arrived safely at Brisbane Airport.

## **9. Team Kit / Accessories**

- All Scotland team clothing was provided by Fusion, which is the kit partner for Bowls Scotland. It was decided that all SDS national squad kit would be the same as the Bowls Scotland Players and this had been put in motion for the Home Nations Championships in April. All players already had two playing shirts, a training shirt and a soft shell jacket. However, the selected players, directors and coaching staff traveling to Australia received additional kit, including: tracksuit bottoms, travel shirt, training shirt, playing shirt, hoody, shorts and a rain jacket.
- Scotland played in shorts and playing top in the main, with tracksuit bottoms being used when temperatures dropped. No whites were worn.
- All players and staff travelled in tracksuit bottoms, travel shirts and hoody.
- The kit is of excellent quality and provided a real sense of identity and unity as one team. Furthermore, this kit will be reused at further Home Nations test events, as well as the training camp prior to the Commonwealth Games in 2018.
- SDS purchased fridge magnets and keyrings to hand over to our international opponents.

## 10. Bowls Scotland Partnership

- SDS has been working with Bowls Scotland over a number of months in the lead up to this trip and the partnerships at performance level is good and improving. Rhona Howie, High Performance Manager, at Bowls Scotland is an excellent ambassador for inclusive sport, given her experience in curling. With Rhona being nominated (and supported by SDS) as Bowls Team Manager for the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, she has been proactive in trying to understand our programme and get to know the players. This has been well received and gives us piece of mind for the management of our para bowls at the Games.
- An inclusive high performance bowls event, other than the Commonwealth Games, is unprecedented, and this was the first time a joint Bowls Scotland/SDS squad had travelled together and shared the same accommodation. This was successful and Rhona had a huge part to play in ensuring this happened. Our players did appreciate this.
- Obviously with two different organisations coming together with differing programmes and ideologies, there are teething problems. One of the gripes from our side was there are clearly three distinct groups: Men, Women and Para bowlers. This was the same at the Glasgow 2014 Games and is more down to history and culture than anything. There was a lot of interaction between these groups, particularly nearer the end of the trip. I believe, there needs to be some education around para bowls for the mainstream players – this may improve as the profile grows. In addition, there were some instances where players (and coaches) made the Team Manager aware of Bowls Scotland players not acknowledging us around the bowling club and accommodation. This should be put down to the personalities of some of their players, which is difficult to change.
- We arranged a joint meal one evening before the competition started as a team building exercise. This was rather fabricated and people did sit in their groups – although this is human nature. The other challenge we had was that Bowls Scotland decided to pay for this meal for their whole group, on top of their Per Diem. Our budget doesn't allow for this to become commonplace but we did make an exception on this instance, in order to have parity.
- In summary, the partnership is improving but there is still a lot of work to be done if a successful transition to Bowls Scotland is to happen. The key improvement needs to be a one team ethos and I am not even sure that this fully exists between the Men and Women. Looking at the Australian team, it is clear to see that Scotland are miles away from this culture.

## 11. Results and Conclusions

- The quality of performance from the Scottish Team was mixed, but at the same time, provided an invaluable exercise ahead of the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. The selection choices we made (and there were some big decisions) in relation to the physically disabled triple backfired in a sense as they finished in 5<sup>th</sup> place. However, it must be noted, that they convincingly beat our second team during the competition. These decisions were all justified based on previous training and competitions. One thing that can't be measured is handling pressure on the big occasion as major events are few and far between. It was clear that several suffered in this regard and work needs to be done with our SIS Sports Programme Team.
- The success of the visually impaired mixed pair and the choice of directors was a success, and a **silver medal** was a great result and something to build on. They were defeated by Australia in the final who will be the heavy favourites for Commonwealth gold. It is worth noting that they played Australia twice and were closer to them in the final getting beat 22-10.
- The management team and coaches are now much clearer in relation to the players we have in our programme, which puts us in a good position ahead of the Games next year. The event was a great success, especially considering the bigger picture.

### Selections for the 8 Nations & Paraspport Event 2017

Scotland Team 1	
B6/B7/B8 Open triple	B2/B3 Mixed Pair
Barbara McMillen (Lead)	Irene Edgar (Lead) & David Thomas (Director)
Garry Brown (Second)	Robert Barr (Skip) & Sarah Jane Ewing (Director)
Mike Nicol (Skip)	

Scotland Team 2	
B6/B7/B8 Open triple	B2/B3 Mixed Pair
Billy Allan (Lead)	Maria Spencer (Lead) & Ron McArthur (Director)
John Wardrope (Second)	Billy Edgar (Skip) & Christine Morrow (Director)
Michael Simpson (Skip)	

Mixed Pairs			Open Triple		
Team	Points	Shot Diff	Team	Points	Shot Diff
Australia	15	67	New Zealand	15	56
Scotland	9	4	Australia	12	43
New Zealand	9	-7	Wales	9	-16
Wales	6	-7	England	3	-3
England	3	-8	Scotland	3	-25
Malaysia	3	-49	Malaysia	3	-55

\*Top two played in the division played in the final and third and fourth played off for the bronze medal.

- The passion and commitment of the whole team came across throughout the Championships. Every member of the team should be especially proud of their achievements. It was particularly pleasing to have such a positive performances across all four teams, with several never having competed at this level.
- It must be noted that had it not been for the outstanding support and guidance provided by both the Head Coach and the team of coaches before, during and after this would not have been such a successful trip for the Scotland team. Their contributions throughout were fantastic and not only provided a wealth of bowls experience and knowledge but served as a brilliant link between the bowlers and coaches. They all need to be highly commended for their efforts.
- From a management perspective it was very apparent that there was excellent unity amongst the whole of the Scotland team. None more so than during competition itself when players were frequently seen supporting each other across all the greens. Off the green it is clear to see the camaraderie amongst the group which bodes well. The competition for places is strong and there is a mutual respect for each other, especially those who are new to the programme.
- Overall the coaching team did a fantastic job and all were happy to help out where possible even during non coaching jobs. They have been involved with all high performance workshops and have clearly taken notice of the additional things that make a difference at performance level. Their willingness to interact across the whole team helped ensure a very positive feeling throughout.

*Scottish Disability Sport carried out a survey across all players and directors who attended the 8 Nations and Para Sport Event asking some key questions. The response rate was 12 from 14 and the feedback can be found in appendix 1. This will be used in order to shape our programme and improve on future international travel.*