

## **Introduction**

Running a successful twilight bowls competition can be a fantastic way to engage members, attract new players, and foster a sense of community within your club. This document provides a set of best practices to guide you through organising a thriving twilight competition during the summer.

## **Timing**

1. Seasonal considerations:
  - a. Aim to run the twilight competition during the warmer months of the year, typically from late spring to early autumn. To maximise opportunities, you can run one or two competitions. One pre-Christmas (Nov/Dec) and another post-Christmas (Feb/Mar), taking advantage of the longer daylight hours and pleasant weather.
2. Schedule:
  - a. Consider hosting the competition on a weekday evening to attract participants after work. Monday to Thursday evenings tend to be popular as they offer a mid-week break and don't conflict with other weekend plans.
  - b. Run the competition weekly or bi-weekly to maintain momentum and keep participants engaged throughout the summer season.
  - c. Keep the competition between 4 – 6 playing days long.
3. Start and end times:
  - a. Begin the games in the late afternoon, around 6pm, to accommodate working individuals. Ensuring that there is enough daylight to complete the games comfortably, aiming to finish by 7:30pm.
  - b. It is ideal to ensure the games finish within 75 to 90 minutes, and there is food available, with the bar open for players and supporters to enjoy a meal and a drink afterwards (this is also a good opportunity to make more revenue).
4. Food offerings
  - a. Food is an attraction and can keep people at the club after the bowls have finished.
  - b. This could be in the form of simple sausage sizzles that are either included in the registration fee or are in addition too.
  - c. If your club does not have a kitchen, you can partner with local hospitality businesses to deliver meals or bring in food trucks to sell meals.

## **Competition Structure**

1. Team requirements
  - a. Aim for a minimum of 10 teams to ensure a competitive and social atmosphere. Adjust this number based on the size and capacity of your club.
  - b. Teams made up of 3 players (playing triples) is the most common among other already established twilight competitions.
2. Game format.
  - a. Try and avoid playing more than one game each night as the focus of a twilight league is for members of your community to get together at their local club, play bowls and enjoy the atmosphere.
  - b. Most popular format is Bowls3Five. This allows for quick games keeping participants engaged throughout the competition.
  - c. Depending on the number of team entries, find a competition structure that allows for each team to play one another. E.g. If you have a 5-week competition and 18 teams entered, break 18 teams into 3 pools (6 teams in each pool) and play each

- other once. The winner of each pool will be the team who has the most points at the end of the 5 weeks.
- d. Creating pools give you the option to place teams of similar abilities against each other, making each team's overall experience more enjoyable.
3. Registrations
    - a. Make the registration process as easy as possible, and ensure you capture all players data.
    - b. Ensure that it is done digitally, and an easy way to do this is by taking registrations through Bowlshub or if preferred something like Google Forms or Jotform.
    - c. Link registration pages to your clubs website.
  4. Draws
    - a. Once you have captured the registrations, ensure that the draw, standings, and results are digitally displayed and promoted via the website and social platforms.
    - b. There are a few options, you can use templated draws through excel, and then publish these online in a PDF format.
    - c. The preferred option, is that you capture registrations through Bowlshub and then generate the draw, manage the competition through the platform. This means that you as the administrator and the customer have a one-stop shop for everything competition related including communicating things like cancellations or changes.
  5. Bowls
    - a. It is recommended to always use coloured bowls for your twilight competitions. Having coloured bowls helps bring a fun and bright energy to your competition.
  6. Music
    - a. Music playing during your twilight competition is highly recommended. The presence of music helps to lift the social environment, making the evening more enjoyable and relaxing for everyone.

### **Financial Considerations:**

1. Entry fees
  - a. Determine a reasonable entry fee per team. Factor in the cost of green fees, equipment, and any additional expenses. A ballpark figure could be \$180-\$250 per team, depending on the scale and prizes.
  - b. Consider how you are going to collect fees.
    - i. Is entire team fee required prior to the beginning of the competition?
    - ii. Can individuals enter without a team and the club place then in a team?
    - iii. Do players arrive at the club and pay via cash or eftpos on the night before play? A pay for play model.
  - c. Does the entry fee include food, a drink or both? If supplying dinner, you can build this into your entry price or have it separate.
2. Prizes
  - a. Allocate a portion of the entry fees to exciting prizes for the winning team, best individual performances, or even a "best-dressed" team. Prizes can include club memberships, vouchers for local businesses, or bowls-related merchandise.
  - b. Make sure you add prizes to promotional material to entice possible new teams to enter.
3. Budget and Resourcing
  - a. When planning your twilight competitions make sure you have a set budget. Break down all the things you will need and add costs to them – this can include staffing costs for a person to run the competition, cost of prizes, bowls etc..

Having a budget will help with funding applications and general spending from the club throughout the season.

- b. Staff and volunteers. – who runs the competition
  - i. It is recommended to have a dedicated person to oversee running the competition from the planning stages to the opening of the club on twilight night. This person can be paid, or a volunteer.
  - ii. Volunteers can be used during the evening to help host your twilight teams, offer coaching advice during the competitions too. Make sure your volunteers are supported to feel apart of the club. That their work doesn't go unnoticed. This could be in the way of vouchers, or other club discounts.

### **Funding Opportunities**

1. Bowls Auckland Project Fund
  - a. This fund is available to assist clubs who are not quite ready for a full-time manager, the Project Fund has been established to support clubs who want to evolve, grow, and align strategically with Bowls Auckland to ultimately delivery better experiences to more people within your community.
  - b. Clubs can apply for up to \$5,000 to fund a new twilight competition run by your club.
2. Blue Waters Community Trust
  - a. Clubs can apply to Blue Waters Community Trust for funding to purchase new sets of bowls for a twilight league.
  - b. Blue waters meet monthly to discuss each application for funding.
3. Bowls New Zealand
  - a. To help incentivise New Zealand's bowling clubs to establish a Twilight Bowls league, Bowls New Zealand will provide a start-up package. There are two categories they offer.
    - i. Clubs starting a new Twilight Bowls League will be receive \$500 (plus GST) and a prize pack of giveaways.
    - ii. Clubs rebranding their current league to Twilight Bowls will receive \$250 (plus GST) and a prize pack of giveaways.
  - b. The offer from New Zealand Bowls is only available for the first year of your twilight competition to help with then initial start up cost.

### **Marketing and Promotion**

1. Online presence
  - a. Utilise your club's website and social media platforms to promote the twilight competition. Regularly update these channels with engaging content, such as photos, participant testimonials, and updates on standings.
  - b. Build and maintain a user-friendly website with information on events, schedules, competition registration, and membership details.
2. Local Partnerships
  - a. Collaborate with local schools, community centers, businesses, and other sporting clubs to spread the word. Consider offering discounts for referrals or partnering with local business for sponsorship opportunities.
  - b. Attend local community events to promote your club.

3. Promotional Material
  - a. Design eye-catching flyers and posters to distribute within the club and local community. Emphasize the social and fun aspects of the competition.
  - b. Create and include QR codes onto promotional materials (flyers) which direct people to your clubs website or social media pages.
  - c. Canva is a great tool that can help you create professional looking posters. It offers a range of different templates and designs to make your posters, flyers, social media posts look engaging and encourage people to stop and look at what you are advertising.
  - d. Bowls Auckland can help assist clubs with setting up a club Canva profile.
4. Member referral incentives
  - a. Encourage existing members to recruit new teams by offering incentives such as discounted entry fees, or exclusive club benefits.
5. Membership Packages
  - a. Create affordable and flexible membership packages specifically tailored for social bowlers.

### **Communication**

1. Regular Updates
  - a. Keep participants informed through regular updates via email, social media, or the club's bulletin board. Include information about upcoming games, results, and any social events associated with the competition.
2. Feedback Mechanism
  - a. Establish a feedback mechanism (survey monkey, JotForm.. etc) to gather input from participants. This can help identify areas for improvement and ensure the competition meets the expectations of the participants.

**Follow Up Considerations**

1. Twilight Bowls enables clubs to engage with new communities, which is fantastic. Clubs should be exploring ways to ensure players are offered follow up engagement opportunities put simply, ways to attract them back to the club (outside Twilight).
2. Be creative here, and ask the players what they would like, bowling clubs have various opportunities such as corporate days, events etc. make sure your twilight players know what is available.
3. Think about delivering a couple of 'family day's, for example on a Sunday afternoon, with all Twilight players invited, offer free coaching, a roll-up, BBQ, music etc...
4. Induction nights for possible new members to come along to. This event doesn't have to involve playing bowls but an event to introduce your club to possible new members. Showing people around the club, introducing the President/club manager to possible new members.
5. Ensure that you collect their email addresses and add them to your newsletter database (make sure you follow the privacy act, by allowing an 'opt-out' option).

These are just a few best practise ideas to help your club establish a twilight competition. Always keeping in mind, the purpose of a twilight competition – to create a vibrant and enjoyable competition that enhances the club's sense of community and attracts new members.