

MARKERS

In any Club Singles Championship be ready to do your share of marking; don't let "Dennis" do it all. Marking is to be done for you; you should do it for others.

If the Marker does not come up to requirements, it may have been a poor performance, but they probably did their best. If they are marking a match in which a friend is playing, the Marker must be absolutely impartial, must not applaud any shot, must not wriggle their body as the bowl of their friend wicks in or just misses a trail, or give any advice to either player, excepting to answer question accurately and concisely. And when you have won the match, do not fail to thank the Marker for their service and to invite them in for a refresher, for an hour and a half of standing under a hot sun evaporates considerable moisture from the body, which requires replacement.

THE ETIQUETTE OF MARKING

A good marker is not only an asset to a club, but they adds considerably to the enjoyment of the game by players and spectators alike, and the pity of it is that there are so few about.

COURTESY

It is not sufficiently appreciated that a singles match is essentially an elimination contest in which the players take the game seriously and therefore the marker should likewise accept and perform their duties in a serious manner. The game requires the players to exercise their maximum powers of concentration, and all they ask from a marker is their undivided attention, which should be given firstly as a matter of courtesy, secondly as an interesting study of the individual player's capabilities, and thirdly because it provides an opportunity for learning more about the game even if it be only what not to do.

STUDY

A good marker, in whom the players have complete confidence, materially contributes to the quality of their game. It is a much mistaken notion that anyone can undertake the duties. No novice should ever volunteer to mark a game until they is completely versed in the duties of a marker, as set out in the Laws, and even then not until they has carefully studied other markers and their actions. In the closing stages of an Association event, when markers are carefully selected, the novice will do well to particularly study these officials.

EXPERIENCE

A marker should be an experienced bowler and a good judge of distance. "Experienced" does not mean a very good bowler, as there are excellent markers who have never been first-class bowlers, but they have had experience in the game and have found the job a pleasant and interesting one, as it undoubtedly is.

Far too many markers are distracted by the spectators and their comments, but could they "hear" the thoughts of the players they would quickly realize where their "reputations" were going. In matches, other than club events, a marker is virtually "wished" upon the players, and their efficiency, or lack of it, becomes a reflection on the club management, for, to the players, the marker IS the club for the time being. This aspect is one that club

officials should remember, and should not hesitate to decline the services of non-competent volunteers.

The minimum requirement of a marker is that they shall know the duties as set out in the Laws, but few there are that fulfil even this standard. Fewer still are definite on what is meant by "jack high", yet the Laws contain an official definition, which clearly states what is meant in answer to this very frequent question.

Before proceeding to the Head End the Marker should extend the hand of friendship to both players and make themselves fully conversant with the ownership of the respective bowls. Certainly, in Association events and at least in club finals, the Marker should pay a compliment to the contestants by being correctly attired according to the Laws.

LOCATION

Before aligning the jack they should check whether the mat has been correctly laid. They should then retire to the position indicated in the Laws, until the first bowl has been delivered, and, during its course, proceed to alter the score board (if at that end) returning to their position in time to observe whether the bowl becomes a toucher. If possible a spectator should be asked to manipulate the score board, in which case they should be instructed not to do so during the period a player is on the mat prior to making a delivery. The exact position for a marker to stand is purposely not stated in the Laws, but the usual and generally acceptable position is from two to three metres (approximately 6 to 8 feet) behind the jack and two metres (approximately 6 feet) to one side, depending on the location of their shadow. Any extensive increase in these distances is undesirable as it involves a greater delay in answering a question.

A marker should remain motionless at their chosen spot with their attention and eyes fixed on the player whose turn it is to bowl so as to observe whether a question is asked, as quite frequently the question is not expressed in words, but in an action, such as holding an arm up indicating the question: "Am I the shot?" The marker's reply can then be given silently by an action (up or down) and in so doing no information is necessarily disclosed to the opponent unless they happens to observe the actions. In general a good marker is able to anticipate a likely question as the result of their own experience, plus the fact that they is sufficiently close to the head to know the position.

A marker must not move from their position except to observe whether a bowl is likely to become a toucher or to answer a question requiring a closer inspection. Under no circumstances whatsoever must they move, even by simply leaning over or turning sideways, to observe the head in order to satisfy their own curiosity or to anticipate a possible question. To move in any way is definitely contravening a Law as it gives an indication to the players of a possible change in the position that is not apparent to them. A marker must realise that the resultant effect of a bowl is not their concern, and any personal interest they may have in a player must not be shown. A biased marker is an anathema.

CONCENTRATION

It is somewhat surprising that so many players ask so few questions during a match and yet on reaching the head are so frequently heard to remark on the position being different from what they thought. Even if players have every confidence in their marker they become reluctant to ask a question if it involves a walk to the head by the marker because of the

time delay in getting an answer. Therefore it is very essential for the marker to be alert and adjacent to the head.

The only player entitled to ask a question is the one whose turn it is to bowl, but they does not necessarily have to be standing on the mat, as some markers seem to think. One other point that every marker should always remember is that an inefficient marker can frequently be justifiably blamed, by the loser, for the result of the game, and that is something to be avoided at all costs.

DON'TS

In conclusion, this brief treatise would be incomplete without setting out a few of the major "Don'ts" to be observed-

(1) Don't answer questions that are being asked in an adjacent rink. Concentration and attention to the man on the mat will prevent this happening.

(2) Don't say the shot is doubtful if it is not really so. Experience at judging distances is something that can be acquired by anyone, provided they will indulge in a little practice on their own. It is most disconcerting to be told it is "up and down" and then find your opponent is at least one or more without even a measure.

(3) Don't forget to immediately advise the player if a bowl falls over and alters the position after a question has been answered or an inspection of the head has been made by the player.

(4) Don't give a misleading answer to a badly-worded question. A marker is entitled to ask the player to restate or clarify their question to enable an intelligent answer to be given.

This particularly applies to such a question as: "Am I one down?" when they may be three down and to answer "Yes" or "No" is equally correct and incorrect, such a question is definitely a badly worded one. The proper form is: "Am I more than one down?" or "How many down am I?"

(5) Don't supplement your answer with information not asked for. Remember, every answer is common to both players and the questioner may not wish to gratuitously give information to their opponent. For instance, if asked to indicate which bowl is third shot, do so, but do not say whose bowl it is, or if asked whether the player is lying second shot, just say "Yes" or "No", but do not add that they is also third shot or some such similar information. The game provides ample scope for players to indulge in tactics to outwit each other, and the marker must be careful not to nullify their efforts.

(6) Arrange with the players before the match commences when they prefer touchers to be marked. The general practice is to mark a toucher immediately it has come to rest.

(7) Don't forget HOW to measure, as distinct from what to measure with. If you suspect A's bowl to be the nearer one, measure that first and then transfer to B's bowl, but on no account give an immediate decision, even if the answer be obvious. It is essential that the distance be transferred back to A's bowl so as to be quite sure that no movement has occurred. In the case of a really close measure, or where the players have previously measured, and a tie is a possibility, it is wise to repeat, at least once, the foregoing procedure before giving a decision. Immediately you have satisfied yourself as to the shot bowl, the best way to announce it is to move the winning bowl so that there can be no

misunderstanding. Apart from satisfying the contestants it is just as important that the spectators shall have witnessed a proper judgment.

(8) Don't, under any circumstances, suggest or invite a player to inspect the head. To do so implies inability to give a satisfactory answer.

AN ART

If good marking be not a science, it is at least an art that can be acquired by any bowler who has the desire to become proficient, and in so doing they will not only be increasing their own enjoyment of the game, but will be contributing substantially to the enjoyment of the players and spectators alike.

A MARKER'S OPPORTUNITY

In the previous remarks on Etiquette, three reasons were given as to why a Marker should concentrate on the game and players to the complete exclusion of any attention to the spectators. The only permissible exception to this is during the crossover when it is customary to advise spectators and score board attendants by holding up the number of fingers indicating the shots scored. The hand to hold up is the one on the same side of the scoreboard as the player's name who won the end.

The first reason, that of courtesy to the players, need not be further emphasized, but the second reason, which of studying an individual's capabilities, warrants expansion. There is ample opportunity to do this, but many Markers fail to avail themselves of it, preferring to either chat with spectators or sit on the bank or even do both of these objectionable things from a player's point of view.

OBSERVATION

Probably the first conclusion that a regular Marker will arrive at is that the winner of a given game is not necessarily the better player. This deduction is one that emerges from the fact that in so many ways the fortunes of the game can be adverse for one player and favor the other. A bowl that falls over against its bias, a lucky shot that was not even attempted, a puff of wind, or some irregularity in the green are some of many fortuitous circumstances that come readily to mind. All of which add up to the fact that it is not entirely without justification that it has been described as an unfair game. Not that any lover of the game would have it otherwise, these hazards help to provide the enjoyment, and what is more enjoyable than to have a victory over an admittedly better player-such events are not exceptional.

JUDGMENT

So we come to the first important lesson for a Marker to learn, that the capabilities of a player must not be judged by the result alone. Therefore, they must look elsewhere if they wish to honestly assess the ability of a player. The points upon which they should concentrate their attention are the delivery - is it smooth or does it wobble - is any attempt made to correct an error, of green or length, even an over correction indicates that the player knows their mistake - what type of shot is attempted, independent of the actual result, and bearing in mind that the head probably looks very different to the player - the occasions on which a question is asked and, equally important, the way it is asked as well as what is asked for. All these, together with other individual characteristics, will enable an

observant Marker to reasonably assess the relative abilities of the two players. The opportunity thus provided is an almost compelling reason why, in club competitions, those who undertake the duty of a selector should avail themselves of every occasion presented to them of acting as a Marker.

UNDERSTANDING

As for the third reason given, that of learning more about the game, this again is a matter requiring concentrated attention. To one who is a card player an understanding of the game of bowls is relatively simple on account of a similarity of combinations. The actual playing of a card is simple and, so, basically, is the delivery of a bowl. The correct card to play in a given set of circumstances requires experience that can only be obtained over a considerable period of time. Likewise the type of shot to play requires experience quite apart from the "know-how" of its delivery. There are virtually an infinitely unlimited number of card combinations and no hand or arrangement of associated hands ever repeats themselves. Likewise in bowls, there have never been two heads exactly alike although there are frequent repetitions of similar situations requiring virtually the same type of shot. Even identical circumstances can be dealt with in more than one way and in determining the best shot to play; it requires not only the ability of the player themselves but an assessment of the probabilities of error and the potentialities of the opponent.

ADVANTAGE

And that brings us back to the importance of studying the players for whom you have the honor to be their Marker. It is particularly important in your own club events because it is certain that sooner or later one, if not both, will be your own opponent. With the knowledge you can gain now, it could just give you sufficient advantage to win, even against someone you admit is generally a better player than yourself. The winning of such a game supplies a greater thrill and more lasting pleasure than any other type of play.

So make the most of the opportunity you are now enjoying.

A MARKER'S DUTIES

The game of lawn bowls has acquired a recognized international status; nevertheless, complete uniformity in the Laws does not exist. However, the general broad framework of all the various codes, within which the nature of the game is identified, is sufficiently alike to warrant acceptance by the International Bowls Board. This Board has its own set of laws and many national authorities adopt them in too. Others use a set that is regarded by them as being more complete and/or better suited for their local conditions. This particularly applies to Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, although they are all members of the I.B.B.

VARIATIONS

It would serve no good purpose to set out in detail the precise requirements of any or all of the various duties of a Marker. Even if they were to be given there is always the possibility of an alteration being made which would render the information either misleading or entirely wrong? Therefore, it becomes essential for a Marker to make themselves familiar with the particular code under which a game is being conducted, as well as any special local conditions governing the competition.

It might well be stressed that an international competition could be played under a set of laws that did not apply to the country in which the games are being played. However, in such a case the onus of providing a Marker with a copy of the exact duties expected of them then becomes the responsibility of the host country.

UNIFORMITY

Fortunately, many of the routine duties required are common to all codes and there is virtually no likelihood of them being varied so they can safely be listed as follows:-

Assisting to straighten the mat,

Aligning the jack,

Marking a toucher, or removing a prior chalk mark,

Removing a dead bowl,

Replacing a disturbance caused by them,

Answering questions of fact,

Recording the score,

Advising the players of each progress score,

Seeing that the score board is correct,

Handling the completed and signed score card to the proper authority,

In addition, the Marker must never forget that the main purpose for their presence is to assist the players to enjoy the game, as well as to facilitate the actual play, by only answering the questions asked by the player next entitled to bowl. This should be done quickly and accurately so as to avoid the necessity of the players having to make a personal inspection of the head.