

# The Skilful Art of Marking a Game

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**T**HERE GOES another summer with the blink of an eye. I am convinced they are getting shorter, even though this year, in most of the UK at least, we did enjoy some extended periods of warm sunshine. So, now we move indoors and at the end of this article is a box with some reminders about the fundamental differences in the laws of bowls indoors and outdoors that you should be aware of – but of course you should be aware of all the laws, shouldn't you!

## THE ART OF MARKING

This summer I have been taking the opportunity to watch some of the varying marking skills that have been on display during singles competitions. That is not to say that I haven't done so in the past but this year I had a particular interest in having a look at the standard that was out there. That's because, as National Development Officer for the English Umpires Association, I have been tasked with formalising a training programme, specifically for markers. Marking is a vital role and, whilst in the past we have consistently delivered some content in our umpire training programme, it is time to expand on it and make it more formal. It will be a key part of the development of our umpires but will also help those club members interested in learning a few more skills.

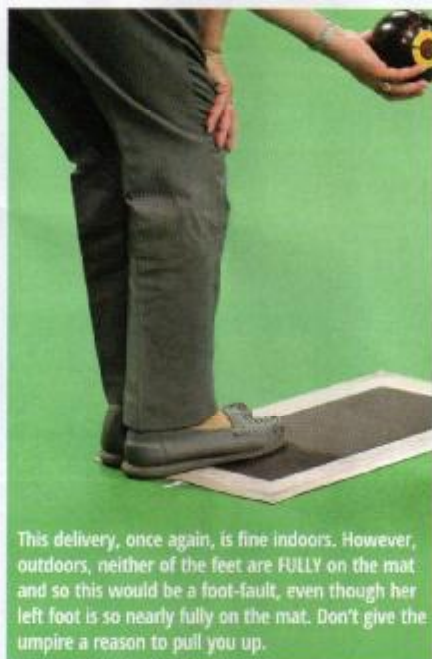
I was pleasantly surprised, on the one hand, by the high standard of marking shown at the major championships up to national level. On the other hand, I was also quite disappointed, and in some cases horrified by the simple mistakes and shoddy workmanship of officials at a more local level. Don't get me wrong, the same poor standards can be seen at higher levels as well but experience shines through in most cases.

## KNOWING THE BASICS

Looking at this from the very root of our sport, it got me thinking about how vital it is to have a marker that has at least the very basic knowledge of the way the game of singles should work. After all, it is not at all uncommon for club singles matches to be marked by spouses, best mates or club stalwarts. Of course, some of these individuals may well just be stepping on to the rink to centre the jack and to keep the score, and in many cases, that is pretty



It is completely legal indoors to have 'part' of your foot over the mat rather than the whole foot, whereas outdoors this would be counted as a foot fault. Thus, indoors, this stance is legal, but outdoors it is not.



This delivery, once again, is fine indoors. However, outdoors, neither of the feet are FULLY on the mat and so this would be a foot-fault, even though her left foot is so nearly fully on the mat. Don't give the umpire a reason to pull you up.

much all they need to do. But I find it such a shame that it should be that way. Marking is a skill, an art, and so much more than standing at the end of a rink centring a jack. There is that much more in fact that the EBUA dedicates a whole chapter of its umpires' training manual and almost half of the accompanying DVD just to marking skills. And now we are hoping to dedicate a whole course to it.

We cannot, of course, take away the sterling work that many willing club members and experienced officials do by running their own local marking courses at their clubs or in their counties; this is to be applauded and encouraged. However, it would be great to see a consistent message being delivered throughout the land – and indeed the world for that matter. I am hoping that within my own association,

the great foundation that my international colleague and predecessor, Andy Ewens, laid some years ago can be enhanced and we can maintain the high standard that was set back then. We need a standard message so that no matter which marker steps onto the green, the two singles players know what to expect and can play their game free from distractions and game changing errors caused by a neutral person.

If you are interested in learning the finer intricacies of the art of marking, why not contact your national umpires' association or local representatives to see what is on offer. In the very near future, those of you in England will see a new marker programme which will form the foundation of training of officials in our own association.

But, in the meantime, please see a list of things to remember with regard to the laws when you play indoors:

### Laws to remember going indoors, applicable to England only:

- The second should keep the scorecard in fours.
- There is no need to stand with one foot fully on the mat before you deliver a bowl or jack. Don't forget that the whole or part of one foot must be within the confines of the mat when you deliver.
- And finally, there are some subtle differences in the options available when bowls and jacks are displaced.
- Make sure you are familiar with the laws by purchasing a copy of the law book from your local club or from the indoor association. £3 is not too much to pay out to avoid the many disputes that can happen.