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**FUNCTIONS OF THE COACH**

Your function as a coach is to assist and encourage the visually impaired bowler in every possible way. You must act together as a team to attain the correct**grass**and**weight** and to plan your tactics. Always compliment your player on a good shot or valiant attempt.

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However, when your player delivers a bad bowl, you must determine whether it was because of a bad delivery or his lack of judgement, or whether you were at fault.  Maybe you have given him the wrong line, **grass**, or incorrect information. If the bowler delivers to your foot and his bowl ends up **narrow** or**wide**, it means that your foot is in the WRONG place.

Don't tell him that he was wide or narrow as it is not up to the blind person to correct his grass. Tell him that YOU were standing in the wrong place and you will try to make a correction on his next bowl.

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**GUIDING THE BLIND**  
Establish how your blind bowler prefers to be guided, usually by  holding your elbow or by placing a hand on your shoulder. Remember to always guide the person from in front of them, especially when going up or down stairs or through a doorway. Always be aware of possible obstacles or dangers and concentrate on ensuring their safety at all times.  
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**ONTO THE GREEN**  
On the way to the **bowling green**, make sure to take note of uneven surfaces and avoid white boundary pegs and rink numbers which are dotted around the green. When you reach the edge of the green you will descend first and then take both your player's hands and guide them safely down onto the playing surface.

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**INDEPENDENCE**  
The bowler must carry his bowls to and from the green and unpack them on arrival and repack them at the end of the game. This is but one example of how the player is encouraged to do things on his own and act independently wherever possible.

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**​PLACEMENT OF THE MAT**  
Before bowling commences, it is the duty of the**coach (director)** to place the mat on top of the middle of the string which runs down the centre of the rink, at least two metres away from the **ditch**.

You must ensure that the **mat** is always square at a ninety degree angle, with the string and is centred. A crooked mat makes it difficult for the director to orientate the bowler with any consistency and affects finding the correct path (or **grass**) to the jack.

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**TACTICAL PLOY**  
The mat can be brought forward as a tactical ploy to try to confuse the opponent. As the player relies on knowing the exact distance of the jack in order to regulate the **weight**, (the force employed to deliver the bowl), the coach must ensure that he gives his player an accurate assessment.

This is done by pacing out metres from the TWO METRE MARK to where the mat has been placed. You then subtract the number of metres that you have paced from the distance of the jack as indicated by the**distance markers​** on the side ditch of the bowling green. For example, if the mat has been brought forward five metres and the distance markers indicate 29 metres, you will tell your player that the jack is at 24 metres.

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**​ON THE MAT**  
Lead your player to the mat and make sure that he takes up a constant position on it. Very often, the bowler will feel the **centre string** and the front edge of the mat, and adjust his feet accordingly. You will VERBALLY fine-tune his stance to achieve what you believe to be the correct position and angle of the feet. Variance of the position on the mat will affect the player's ability to find the right line (grass) to the jack.

To avoid your player fumbling for his bowl, move the bowl with your foot till it makes contact with his foot. It is then simple for him to pick up his bowl with ease.

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**CORRECT BIAS**  
You must always check that your bowler is holding the bowl with the correct bias ( for either the forehand or backhand, (the big insignia on the bowl must always face outwards). There is usually a plastic marker stuck onto the bowl to indicate the "big" and "small" rings.  If your player rolls a wrong bias,  the bowl  WILL GO IN THE WRONG DIRECTION and will be wasted (it is not replayable) and you will be to blame.

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**​ABOUT "GIVING GRASS"**  
Once you have given your player what you consider to be the correct grass (line), ensure that the bowl does not hit your foot, as it is not replayable. This is done by simply lifting the foot which is in danger of being hit. Don't try to jump away as this is, very often, not successful.

If your bowler has delivered the bowl to the grass that you have indicated and it proves to be the wrong line, it simply means that you have given your player the WRONG grass. It is pointless you telling him that his line is too"wide"or "narrow" as it is NOT up to the blind bowler to adjust his grass. Tell him that you erred with the grass and that you will attempt to correct it with the next bowl.

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**​TAKING GRASS FOR THE TOTALLY BLIND BOWLER-CATEGORY B1**  
The totally blind bowler is usually coached from the front, and as he cannot see where the director is standing, relies on good orientation on the mat and directional guidance by the coach's voice. The coach, in turn, must talk while the player is preparing to play and ensure that his voice is directly over the player's intended line to the jack. The coach's feet must be apart so the bowl can pass through them without him having to alter his position at the time of delivery.

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**CONSTANT DISTANCE**  
It is also essential that the coach paces out and stands at a constant distance from the player (normally between 2 and 5 metres). Varying the distance between coach and player will result in a different line to the jack and inconsistency in **taking grass**.

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**COACHING FROM BEHIND**  
There is a recent trend to coach the B1 player from behind. In this instance, the coach stands directly behind the bowlers arm and the player takes practice swings. This enables the coach to see the exact intended line and to adjust it verbally should it be necessary. Two of the three medal winners at the last World Bowls in Melbourne were coached from behind.  
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**TAKING GRASS FOR THE PARTIALLY SIGHTED BOWLER**  
In recent years it has become the norm  to front-coach partially sighted bowlers - B2,B3, and B4.(see sight categories).  There is no doubt that coaching from the front has increased the proficiency of these bowlers, as the coach can indicate with his foot what he believes to be the correct grass.

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**INACCURATE METHOD**  
Many coaches stand with their legs apart, where the bowler is expected to bowl between them. I feel that this is an INACCURATE way of "giving grass". A variable aiming point of some 50 centimetres between the feet can make a potential difference of possibly landing  metres wider or narrower at the head when the bowl comes to rest.

We also see coaches indicating grass with only one foot placed horizontal to the bowler. While this is preferable to the open-leg method, it still leaves an aiming target of some 20-30 centimetres.  Some coaches using this method ask their bowlers to bowl past the front of their shoe. If this can be achieved  on a consistent basis, it is a suitable method.

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**THE BEST METHOD**  
I believe that the best method is to stand with one foot FACING your bowler. where he has a front-on vision of only your toes - a very narrow and accurate aiming point. As soon as the bowl has been delivered you need only to lift the relevant foot and let the bowl pass underneath it.

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**SUDDEN MOVEMENTS DISTRACT**  
Too often we see a coach indicating the grass and moving away while the bowler is delivering. ANY DRASTIC MOVEMENT DURING DELIVERY CAN DISTRACT THE PARTIALLY SIGHTED BOWLER.

It is also essential that the coach paces out and stands at a CONSTANT distance from the player (normally between 2 and 5 metres). Varying the distance between coach and player will result in a different line to the jack and inconsistency in "taking grass".  
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​**DESCRIBING THE "HEAD" - CLOCK METHOD "**  
"Head"= is the terminology given to any number of played bowls and the jack  
The blind or visually impaired bowler is told by his coach where all the bowls that have been played have come to rest in relation to the jack, by using the "clock method". By taking the jack as the centre of an imaginary clock you describe the position  where the bowl has come to rest e.g. your bowl is one metre away at four o'clock. By using this system, the player can accurately build an imaginary picture of the "head.

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**FROM BEHIND THE HEAD**  
The twelve o'clock position is past the jack from the direction of the mat. Please note: when you are standing behind the head (as in a pairs game), you are actually standing at twelve o'clock but, when you look at the head from that position, it appears that you are standing at 6 o'clock. Any information that you might give must be based on the clock from an imaginary vantage point FROM THE MAT.  
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**​WEIGHT CONTROL**  
Generally, the most difficult aspect of the game of bowls is with how much force ("weight") the bowl is delivered in order for it to reach its desired target. As the visually impaired bowler cannot see the kitty, this becomes even more difficult.

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**DISTANCE MARKERS**  
To compensate for this, distance markers are placed every two metres from 23 to 33 metres, on the right or left banks of the bowling green, so that the coach can give the bowler a fairly accurate distance of the jack from the mat. According to the given distance the bowler will regulate his weight control.

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**HEAVY OR SHORT**  
When the bowl goes through the head (too "heavy") or lands before it (too "short"), the coach must determine whether the bowler's delivery was as it should be. If so, the player must be given an accurate as possible assessment of how short or heavy the bowl is so that he can either add on or decrease weight with his next delivery e.g. "you were 80 centimetres short".

It is important to note that, for distance,  you must guauge the distance to an imaginary line level with the jack. For instance, if the bowl comes to rest a metre away at 9 o'clock, the weight is perfect and it is only the grass that needs adjusting.

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**ACCURATE PICTURE**  
If the bowl is well delivered you need to give your player an accurate picture of where his bowl has come to rest so that he can make the necessary adjustment. Don't try to make him feel better by giving him a lesser distance as you will be doing him a disservice. He is trying to adjust according to your information.

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**A BAD DELIVERY**  
If the delivery of the bowl has been faulty, it is pointless to try to correct the next bowl accordingly. For example, if the player stood up too quickly after delivery, his bowl will probably end up "short". If you tell your player that he finished two metres short he will try to add on two metres and, with a good delivery, will probably end up two metres past the head!  
If the delivery has been bad, tell your player to forget about that bowl and just to concentrate on the required distance with his next one.  
​ **​VACATING THE MAT IMMEDIATELY**  
Immediately after the player has delivered his bowl, the director must take him off the mat to a position on the side where he can  quietly explain to the player where his bowl has come to rest, using the "clock method". By promptly vacating the mat, the opponent can start his preparation to bowl thus speeding up the game.

Too often, one sees a coach standing metres up the green watching the progress of the bowl till it comes to rest while his player is left stranded on the mat. His explanation to his player afterwards as to what happened to his bowl interferes with the concentration of the opponent who is preparing to bowl. VACATE THE MAT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BOWL HAS BEEN DELIVERED.  
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**​ODDITIES OF THE GREEN AND INCLEMENT WEATHER**  
Sometimes the rink that you are playing on may not run true. If a particular "hand", (side of the green), is holding out or whipping across and not bending properly, you should suggest to your player that he should preferably play the other hand, even if it appears that the right shot is on the bad hand. It is your job to quickly assess the vagaries of the green and make suggestions accordingly. ON A BAD RINK TRY NOT TO PLAY THE BAD HAND.

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**THE WIND**  
The wind can make a difference to the necessary grass and weight. If you have a cross-wind blowing from left to right you will need to take more grass on the backhand and less on the forehand and visa versa if the wind is blowing from right to left.

With a back wind, the player is likely to be "heavy" and run past the jack. Counter this by assessing the power of the wind and effectively adjusting the distance of the head.(e.g. if the jack is at 25 metres tell your player to play to 23). Similarly, with a front wind you need to suggest a longer distance, e.g.27 metres. Fine tune the imaginary distance till you get it right.























