

The Elm Park Jack Newsletter – opening that never was edition



The clubhouse is empty and the greens quiet

No Opening Day today

April 26, 2020 will go down as a quiet day in the history of the 105-year-old Kerrisdale Lawn Bowling Club.

Opening Day for the Elm Park club came and went without as much as a single bowl thrown for perhaps the first time in the history of B.C.'s longest standing bowls club.



Hyack Mixed Triples

There may have been a few of us, who secretly kept our fingers crossed that, against all odds, bowls might somehow return to normal sooner than later. But, it was pretty much preordained that this was not to be your typical season, when the Vancouver & District Bowls Association postponed its spring AGM and put off printing its 2020 handbook last month.

Since then, we have missed the first-of-the-season men's triples tournament in Maple Ridge and coming up on the second week of May, the lawn bowling season was set to kick off, in earnest, with competitions all over the Lower Mainland, including the popular Hyack Mixed Triples in New Westminster mid month.

For the time being, all V&D men's, women's and mixed tournaments, as well as all

provincial and national competitions, including the always enjoyable B.C. Week festivities, remain cancelled.

Could getting back on the green be far off?

It is easy in these extraordinary COVID-19 times to follow orders and stay at home and hope for the worst to pass before expecting to get back to the green and toss a few bowls.

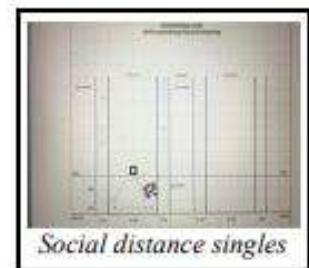
But not everyone has been sitting idly by while keeping safe at home.



David Smith

Kerrisdale Lawn Bowling Club treasurer David Smith came up with some interesting ideas on how lawn bowls could be played out in these days of social distancing and that he hopes will get us back on the greens again a whole lot sooner than later.

Rather than sit on his hands while self isolating at home, David got to work, sharpened his pencil and put to paper, nine pages of detailed notes, including diagrams, on how single, pairs, and even triples bowls, could be played while still respecting the new rules for physical distancing.



Social distance singles

David passed on his work to Bowls BC and the Vancouver & District Lawn Bowling Association with the expectation that some of his ideas could be put forward as a blueprint for safe lawn bowling, when and if, restrictions are to be lifted.

What's happening now?

All is not entirely lost.

As we read this newsletter, many in the lawn bowling community are working hard behind the scenes with government, health and sport organization officials to get us back to our active pursuits.



Plans are being made

Late last month, Bowls BC held a board meeting and though BOWLING IS CLOSED until further notice, that is certainly not the final word on the subject.

Sport bodies, as well as bowls organizations, have been informed that work on a process back to some kind of normalcy is ongoing at the higher levels.

Rob Newman, president and CEO of Sport BC, which represents more than 60 sport organizations, including Bowls BC, said in an online CBC article, that Sport BC has asked all of its members to submit a return-to-sport strategy to health authorities for approval when that time comes.

It would appear, that time is approaching. On Wednesday, May 6, BC premier John Horgan

announced the province's first phase to get back to work would commence the week of May 10. That would suggest outdoor activities cannot be far behind.

That process, as earlier mentioned by Newman, would entail a documented three-step plan of action.

Earlier in April, provincial health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, reportedly told recreation and sports organizations that she is open to input on establishing rules for sports that take into account necessary health measures.



Bowls as we knew it

Two public golf courses in Vancouver have subsequently opened, with some restrictions, as of May 1.

The initial plan, currently on the table, includes practice and player development subject to approval by viaSport, the Ministry of Health and Provincial Health Officer.

There is also likely to be involvement from Sport Canada and Bowls Canada, so with these levels of bureaucracy having input into the decision making, no quick decision should be expected, nor what government easing of restrictions might look like. But an opening, in some fashion, cannot be far down the road.

The two other plans in the three-step process that are to follow will include local and provincial competitions, subject to the proper documentation in place and subsequent government approval.

But, whatever happens in the future, lawn bowling is surely to be different, in some form, from what we had been used to.



“The way we view traditional sport in the past is going to change,” said Newman, in the online CBC article, adding members will almost certainly need a “hybrid approach” that incorporates health measures into their game.

The colour purple

Club colours may not be a topic of much interest to lawn bowlers, who for the most part, have been used to donning traditional whites for most competitions.



Showing their colours

While Vancouver & District and Bowls BC allow colours to be worn in formal events, they can be quite strict on just what the similarity of that attire can look like.

Trying to find out what colours neighbouring bowls club identify with should be a simple thing but, in reality, the answers are not as easily found as one might think.

West Point Grey bowlers are often seen wearing the Cambridge pale blue polo shirts, while members of Granville Park appear to prefer the darker Oxford blue.

I also recently learned anectodly that the true club colour for members at Stanley Park is the

colour green. However, I have not yet see anyone from that club so attired.

So, it comes of some interest to learn how Kerrisdale came to settle on its present purple and gold kit.

Early investigation into past club records revealed that blue and yellow were originally selected as Kerrisdale's official club colours.

But according to information supplied through life member and two-time club president Nancy Bednard, the actual Kerrisdale club colours were gold with blue detail.

Club member and past president John Aveline was able to provide further clarity on this question of club colours.

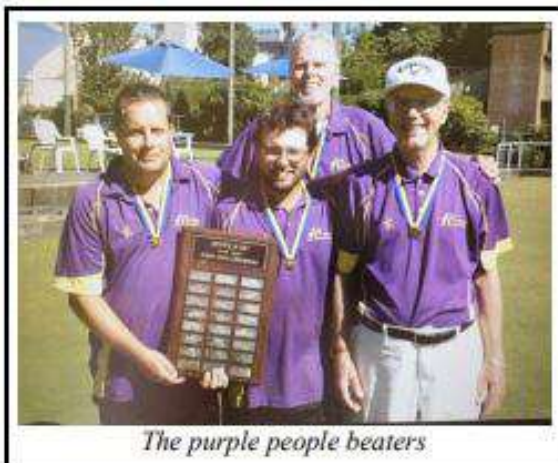
Perhaps five years or so before John moved to Vancouver in 1994, V&D clubs had assembled together to formalize club colours, so there would be no conflicts between groups.



But, according to John, the clubs, as a whole, failed to follow through on the idea and most continued to wear white tops, with perhaps an identifying club logo added.

By the end of the 1990s, creating club shirts was becoming increasingly popular with individual clubs. However, in the decade since initially choosing their colours, few clubs could remember what those colours were, or that a meeting had ever happened. As a result, clubs generally picked the colours they liked, with blue being a popular choice.

Kerrisdale was among the few Lower Mainland clubs that remained true to their original colour scheme.



But, in the years that followed 2005, when time came to reorder shirts, a consensus on what shade of gold the jersey should take proved a constant subject of debate. There was also the similarity of Kerrisdale's colours to that of BC's provincial team.

A decision was finally made around the 2013 season to choose a distinctive colour that would clearly identify Kerrisdale members. A working group was put together with Kukri sportswear and handed the task. The result of that alliance was Kerrisdale's current purple and gold colours.

Interestingly, the purple jersey had an auspicious beginning on the competitive circuit with James MacGowan and then relative newcomer Jon Braun, who later in the year went on to share in winning the 2014 national men's pairs title, defeating Barrie Brown and Jack Green in an all Kerrisdale provincial final.

Up to that point, Kerrisdale had not had any real presence at the provincials in the past three decades, said John, adding, "It gave the shirts quite the debut."

Last year, as we all remember, we went back to a predominantly white top with the detailed purple and gold swoosh.

The times they are a changing

With this sudden upheaval in our lives brought on by the world-wide pandemic, all of us have had more time, than perhaps what may be usual, to reflect on our world and how we will go forward when the worst of this is behind us.

There has also been ample opportunity to examine our game of bowls - what works, and what could be changed for the better.

Before all this fear of a coronavirus took over our mindset, top of mind for many Kerrisdale club members had been how to increase our registration in an age of dwindling subscriptions.



Some things won't change



Trevor Robinson

One idea that springs to mind is to set aside one day each week for a fun day/night, where convention and traditional matches can be set aside, in favour of a new way of bowling, perhaps an evening of Ultimate, including music, prizes and invitations to other clubs to join in the festivities.

Keeping that in mind, *Bowls International* magazine photographer and Irish news contributor, Trevor Robinson, had some interesting ideas on how to bring competitive lawn bowls into the new age.

Robinson wrote an opinion piece in the April bowls monthly periodical on the need for change after reporting on an international series involving four United Kingdom representative teams.

He described the competition as, "boring and predictable," and proceeded to suggest ideas on how to make bowls more appealing to general public.

Topping his list of suggestions was shortening the length of the game from 21 ends to playing three separate games of seven ends each, or of one hour and 20 minutes duration, over the course of the same day.

His reasoning was that shorter matches would spark more interest and involve all the teams and their supporters on the same day, in the same venue, and at the same time. The end result, he conjectured, would create more excitement for all involved.

Robinson also advocated for further departure from the notion of how things have always been done and not being afraid to lose the whites and embrace colours, as well.

"Have flags, songs and lots of noise," he wrote, in the *BI* article. "Such as, having music all day long."

Some food for thought for how we might try and attract a different demographic to the game, when we get the opportunity to return to the green.



Fun and games