

Stanley Park Lawn Bowling Club

5 Basic Lessons for Novice Bowlers

In the winter of 2000, a small group of Stanley Park bowlers got together to create a coaching program for novices. The idea was to devise a program that would accomplish 3 basic goals:

- ❑ Teach novices the basic techniques of how to deliver a jack and a bowl
- ❑ Provide novices with enough information about the basic strategy, rules, and etiquette of bowls so that they would feel comfortable joining in organized games with other club members
- ❑ Provide novices with a setting in which they could meet other novices and a number of the club coaches so that they would feel welcome in the club

To accomplish these goals, the coaching committee devised 5 basic lessons that would be given to each novice, usually over the course of 5 different days. In addition, the coaches decided that having scheduled lesson times would help to create a cohort for the new bowlers which would not only enable them to meet other new bowlers, but would also help integrate them into the club since once the lessons were over, these times could be used by the novices for practice and friendly games. From the beginning, lessons were scheduled for Sunday mornings and Tuesday or Thursday evenings in order to accommodate the schedules of those novices who worked. For those who could not come on those days, coaching was available on a one on one basis.

In addition, the coaches work with other club volunteers – we call them coaching co-ordinators – who look after the administration side of the lessons. They welcome the new bowlers to each lesson, ensure that they check in, get the club bowls they use for lessons, are assigned a coach who will give them the appropriate lesson (we keep a card for each bowler that records the coach's comments on each lesson) and then prepare the refreshments for after the lesson. Without the efforts of both the coaches and the co-coordinators, our lessons would not run smoothly and our program would not work as well as it has.

In addition to the novice lessons, the coaching committee organizes other lessons for new bowlers, in particular, though all club members are welcome to attend. We routinely have a seminar on how to play singles – to prepare our novices to compete in the club and Vancouver and District novice tournaments. We have also organized seminars on how to be a lead, how to be a third, and how to be a skip. All include brief talks in the clubhouse followed by on green sessions in which the novices/bowlers play singles, or get a chance to try being a lead, third or skip.

The success of the program was noticeable in the first and subsequent years. Our retention rate for new members went up; our new bowlers were better trained and well prepared to enter organized games in the club; and most important, the novices and coaches alike enjoyed the lessons and a real camaraderie built up with the coaches and each successive class of novices. Each year, we host a novices party after the season is over, and every year the novices regard it as one of the high points of their first year of bowling.

Every year since 2000, the coaches and co-coordinators get together before the season starts to go over the lessons, to revise them based on feedback from the previous year, and to plan any additional activities for the year. It is very much a team approach and one which we believe works well. We are always open to new ideas and would welcome constructive comments on our program.