World Bowls Laws Advisory Group decision on Laws 37.1.3 and 37.1.5.3

In August 2022 the above two new laws were introduced to the Laws of the Sport Crystal Mark Fourth Edition. They were designed to penalise a player who deliberately displaced their own teams bowl on its original course or lifted a bowl at rest to allow one of their own team's bowls to pass.

Despite a clarification document published on the World Bowls Website in September 2022, it has become very clear from communications that the two laws have caused a great deal of confusion and have resulted in games being forfeited incorrectly following players innocently stopping bowls from entering the ditch.

Furthermore, the management of a side game and the resulting penalty after a team has been disqualified has also caused a great deal of confusion with MNAs and domestic Controlling Bodies.

Concern has been around the severe penalty of forfeiting the game and clarity in the wording of the law itself. Recommendations have been received to reduce the severity of the forfeit to penalising with shot deductions. This approach would be inconsistent with any other law and was not felt to be a suitable solution. Penalties have always existed for the displacement of a bowl by its own team players but at the time of the 2021 Laws review these penalties were not felt to be severe enough for what is considered an act of "cheating".

Having considered several options to improve the intent of these two laws, the World Bowls Laws Advisory Group have concluded and recommended to the Board of World Bowls to rescind them. The numbering of Law 37.1.4 will remain untouched until the next review of the Laws.

The changes to the Laws are summarised as follows:

~~37.1.3 If a bowl in its original course is deliberately displaced or stopped by a member of the team that delivered the bowl, the defaulting team will forfeit the game to their opponent.~~

37.1.4 Displacement of a bowl in motion.

37.1.4.1 If a bowl in motion is displaced by a player and it has not disturbed the head after it is displaced, the opposing skip or the opponent in Singles must choose whether to:

37.1.4.1.1 place the bowl where the player believes it would have come to rest; or

37.1.4.1.2 declare the end dead.

37.1.4.2 If a bowl in motion is displaced by a player and it has disturbed the head after it is displaced, the opposing skip or the opponent in Singles must choose whether to:

37.1.4.2.1 place the bowl where the player believes it would have come to rest and replace any part of the head disturbed after the displacement; or

37.1.4.2.2 declare the end dead.

37.1.5 Displacement of a bowl at rest.

37.1.5.1 If a bowl at rest or a toucher in the ditch is displaced by a player and it has not disturbed the head after it is displaced, the opponent must put the bowl back to its former position.

37.1.5.2 If a bowl at rest or a toucher in the ditch is displaced by a player and it has disturbed the head after it is displaced, the opponent must put the bowl back to its former position and replace any part of the head disturbed after the displacement.

~~37.1.5.3 If a player lifts a bowl at rest on their rink to allow their team's bowl in its original course to pass, the defaulting team will forfeit the game to their opponent.~~

The World Bowls Board, following a recommendation from the World Bowls Laws Advisory Group, have agreed to rescind Laws 37.1.3 and 37.1.5.3 with immediate effect.