

By John Roberts, Bowls Victoria Umpiring Committee Chairman

Unfortunately, there have been a too many times recently when complaints have been made, in particular regarding inappropriate language on our greens and, less frequently, aggressive threats and behaviours by players.

We do not need this in our great game. It's not only other players that can be offended but also spectators and alike.

What can umpires and officials do?

Bowls Australia developed what are called [instantaneous penalties](#) which are part of Bowls Victoria's Rules for Competition, under Rule 1.5 - Penalties.

It asks that every BV affiliated Member undertakes to conduct themselves in a polite and sportsmanlike manner when participating in any bowls event anywhere in Australia.

What can an umpire do on these such occasions?

To our officials I would always suggest that a warning be given through the Side Manager in particular in regard to obscene and offensive language.

Usually this is enough to curtail the tongues. However, the Rule (1.5.1) is clear.

If the Umpire, on appeal by the Controlling Body, a Side Manager, a Skip or an Opponent, or by observation, in their opinion decides that a breach of any Law or Rule or any action by a Player at any BV bowls event including:

- * acts in an abusive, threatening or intimidating manner towards any person,
- * uses obscene, offensive, abusive, threatening or intimidating language towards any person,
- * acts in an unsportsmanlike manner,
- * threatens any person with physical violence or assault,
- * assaults any person,
- * acts in a manner likely to bring the sport of bowls into disrepute,
- * acts in a manner likely to bring Bowls Victoria into disrepute,

then, the end shall be immediately regarded as completed and the Opponent of the offender shall be awarded as many shots as there are bowls in use by the Opponent in singles or opposing Team in a Team game.

In pennant, that's an eight!

Upon a second such offence by the same Player in the same game, the Umpire shall award the game to the Opponent/s and shall forward a written detailed report about the incident to the Controlling Body within seven (7) days of the incident.

If the incident occurs between ends the last played end will be adjusted as prescribed. This penalty will not apply to the last end of the match as the match is deemed to be then completed.

Serious offences may also be subject to police action.

A good umpire is authoritative and not authoritarian, common sense should prevail. Like in all sports a good umpire is rarely noticed. **Players, please watch your language.**