

RESULTS OF 2015 SHORT MAT PLAYER SURVEY

This report summarizes the results of a December 2015 survey of the short mat players of the Oak Bay Lawn Bowling Club, who responded to a 14-question online survey.

Number of players responding: 37 out of a possible 51 = 72.5%

Q1. What games did you play in the 2015 Fall Session?

A Pairs	11
B pairs	21
C Singles	6
D Singles	7
Triples	27
Personal Bookings	8

Conclusion: The survey respondents represent a good cross section of our 51 players.

Q2. What is your favourite game?

	Singles	Pairs	Triples	Fours	Cutthroat	Total Responses
Favourite	2	27	7	0	1	37
2nd Favourite	5	9	17	1	3	35
3rd Favourite	5	0	4	6	14	29
4th Favourite	8	1	5	7	4	25
Least Favourite	11	0	0	14	4	29

Conclusion: 73% of the players chose Pairs as their favourite game, followed by Triples.

Q3. Triples Games: Do we need to increase the number of triples games?

(Choose all that apply.)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
Don't know and/or I do not play triples, so I have no view on this.	6	16%	12%
We should not schedule so many triples games in the popular 11:00 a.m. time slots; it makes it more difficult to schedule/re-schedule league games.	9	24%	18%
We should discontinue weekend triples games since they are so poorly attended.	13	35%	25%
We need two daytime triples games on the more popular days of the week.	18	49%	35%

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OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
We need a second evening triples game at some time during the week.	5	14%	10%
We should convert one or more of the triples games to fours, so that eight social players can enjoy the game, rather than limiting it to six.	11	30%	22%

Conclusion: There is a demand for more daytime triples games, though not overwhelming. This is easier to accommodate in the winter session than the fall session, which is shorter and typically has more league players. We should also consider the option of an advertised open personal booking, where a player makes a personal booking and request that it be advertised on the Triples Booking Sheet, inviting others to join in.

Q4. Fours Games: Should we introduce fours games in place of one or more of the daily triples games? (Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
No, I would not be interested in 8-person games.	25	68%	49%
Yes, we should experiment with one triples game a week being expanded to fours.	10	27%	20%
We should convert <u>all</u> the triples games to fours, so that more people can take part in the social games.	0	0%	0%
Don't know	2	5%	4%
TOTAL	37	100%	100%

Conclusion: More than 2/3 of the players are not interested in fours games. At best, there is some opinion that it is worth a limited trial.

Q5. Competitive Atmosphere: Do we need to tone down the competitive atmosphere of some of our league games? (Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
The games are too intense and over-competitive.	0	0%	0%

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OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
The games are too relaxed. I would like to see stricter observance of the rules. (e.g. visiting the head, foot-faults, measuring, etc.)	0	0%	0%
The atmosphere of the games I play in is about right/what I expect.	30	83%	81%
I am not a league player, so this question is not applicable to me.	6	17%	16%
TOTAL	36	100%	97%

Summary of Comments on Competitiveness (13 in all)

Thirteen players decided to comment on this issue. The authors may be easily identifiable if the comments appeared verbatim, so I will just summarize them.

The general flavour of the comments was that “things are OK in *my* division, but I hear terrible stories about the other guys! However, I have not necessarily actually experienced this myself.”

There was also an undercurrent of (Brave New World Style ☺) “I’m so glad I’m a ‘beta.’ Those alpha guys are so competitive. I’d rather win in B than lose in A.” which, when you think about it, is somewhat of a contradiction.

I followed up on one of the stronger comments; it turned out that although the “competitive players” cited were indeed short mat players, all the examples referred to the outdoor game, not to short mat incidents.

Some players simply hope to avoid games where the opponents are unevenly matched.

Conclusion: Looking over the result of the vote, one might judge this to be a fading issue. After all, everyone who voted said they were content! Most (but not all) of the negative comments appeared to be hearsay, rather than behavior actually experienced first-hand. Some comments from the “less competitive camp” seemed in themselves to exhibit a competitive attitude, i.e., a desire to win. But there’s nothing wrong with that; the very nature of any league implies *some* competition. If there was no interest in winning games, why are we keeping scores on every game and recording results?

Let’s just resolve that, in future, we will be “nice” to all our opponents (and our team mates!) and not get excited about any particular, wholly transient, arrangement of a group of bowls on the mat. “. . . whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.”

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Let's put this issue behind us and stop talking about it.

Q6. Mix of games: Should we change the mix of triples games, league games and tournaments? (Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
Favour league games: Meet the demand for competitive league games, and drop or reschedule some triples games.	13	41%	25%
Favour triples games: More daily triples games (two or more on some days) and limit the size of the leagues.	6	19%	12%
Favour tournaments: More tournaments, which would displace both triples and league games.	3	9%	18%
Don't know	9	28%	18%
Other (comment)	1	3%	2%
TOTAL	32	100%	63%

Comments on Mix of Games (1)

1. I favour league games first as we have more players that play pairs and not triples as those playing triples and not pairs. I still hope we have the most popular triple times scheduled as well as time for people to book the least popular times.

Conclusion: Twice as many votes for favouring pairs rather than favouring triples indicates that, if there are to be more triples games, they should not be at times of peak popularity. But, if extra triples were created at off-peak times, how well would they be attended?

Looking over past bookings, popularity of the various time slots waxes and wanes, so it is difficult to know what times will be most popular in the future.

Increasing the number of triples games might best be handled by private bookings. If you want another triples game at your favourite time, just book one and ask to have it put on the Triples Booking Sheet, inviting others to join you.

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Q7. Partnering: Should there be any rules about who can partner with who?

(Choose all that apply.)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
I wish my league was more balanced with teams of roughly equal ability.	13	37%	25%
I wouldn't mind being asked to partner with someone else.	9	26%	18%
I definitely want to continue to play with my long-term present partner.	7	20%	14%
Anyone should be able to partner with whomever they choose.	15	43%	29%
TOTAL	44	35	69%

Conclusion: With 43% of the votes in favour of players being able to partner with anyone they want, and 20% of the players saying they want (need?) to continue with their present long-term partner, it would be divisive to introduce any rules to force the breakup of partners.

Q8. Substitutes: Should we allow substitutes when a scheduled player is unavailable?

(Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
No substitutes should be allowed for any league game.	13	35%	25%
Substitutes should be allowed in pairs league games only, provided they are of an equal or lesser player rating than the player being replaced. Only one player of a pair could be substituted.	15	41%	29%
Substitutes should be allowed in both pairs and singles games.	2	5%	4%
Don't know.	6	16%	12%
TOTAL	36	97%	71%

Conclusion: The membership is almost equally divided on this issue. The best way to resolve it would be to have a short debate at the kickoff meeting, giving one or two players on opposite sides of the issue to briefly make their case, then take a vote – with a majority view prevailing.

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Q9. Personal Bookings: Do we need to make any changes in our policy on personal bookings?

(Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
Personal bookings should be allowed as often as anyone wants.	12	32%	24%
Personal bookings should be allowed, but there should be limits on bookings by one individual or group.	11	30%	22%
Personal bookings should not be allowed, because. . .	2	5%	4%
Don't know/I do not have a view	11	30%	22%
TOTAL	36	97%	71%

Comments on Personal Bookings (1)

1. Booking a personal time and then inviting individuals to play I feel is wrong. It locks up the rink so it may or may not be used. It gives the feeling of an Old Boy's club instead of an all-inclusive club. This is not what we want for our club.

Conclusion: The current de facto policy is that:

Personal bookings are allowed and, once booked, prevail over non-booked impromptu games. However, a personal booking can be bumped by a rescheduled league game, when that rescheduled game cannot otherwise find a suitable vacant time slot.

No more than one personal daytime booking per week per person; unlimited evening bookings from 5:00 p.m. No back-to-back bookings or bookings immediately before a triples game in which you are playing.

The membership is almost entirely in favour of allowing personal bookings. If you do want to play in a vacant time slot, you want to be assured before you arrive that the slot is not already being used by some other impromptu gathering of players.

The comment above, regarding “exclusivity”, is somewhat addressed by the introduction of the new drop-in sessions on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Also, we can further address the exclusivity concern by allowing the option of posting a personal booking as an extra triples game on the triples booking sheet, so that anyone can join in.

“Locking up the rink” happens as soon as *anyone* starts to play, whether it is a personal booking or not. If we don’t allow private bookings, more time slots will lie unused.

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Q10. Prize Money: Should prize money be abolished? (Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
We should continue to award prize money; it adds a bit of spice to the competition.	11	30%	22%
The prize money is irrelevant to me; I would have no objection if it were abolished for short mat leagues	23	62%	45%
Don't know and/or I am not a league player, so this question does not apply to me.	3	8%	6%
TOTAL	37	100%	73%

Conclusion: Although the vote might appear to favour abolition of prizes, what the majority are actually voted was that they would not object to abolition. The \$5 entry fee is not a monetary issue for anyone. If someone who wants to keep the prize money aspect of our leagues would also volunteer to collect the fees and administer the prizes, the practice could continue.

At the kickoff meeting January 2, we should first ask whether anyone is willing to collect the prize money. If such a person volunteers – so that administration is no longer an issue – then the meeting attendees should vote on whether we actually want to continue with prize money, or not.

Q11. Compulsory Promotion: Should players be required to move to a higher league when they win a session? (Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
Players who win their league ought to move up to give others a chance at the title, particularly if their existing league threatens to become too crowded.	17	46%	33%
Anyone should be able to register, and stay, in whatever league they want.	13	35%	25%
Don't know.	6	16%	12%
TOTAL	36	97%	71%

Conclusion: The players are divided on the Compulsory Promotion issue. The issue may be made obsolete by whatever decision we make on the next question regarding Splitting Leagues.

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Q12. Splitting Leagues: How should we split overcrowded leagues? (Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
If the number of players exceeds the maximum in any league, that league should be divided into two separate leagues, <u>based on player rankings.</u>	13	36%	25%
If the number of players exceeds the maximum in any league, that league should be divided into two with players <u>randomly assigned</u> to each half.	13	36%	25%
It should be first-come, first served for each league to the current limit of 12 teams per league.	3	8%	6%
Don't know	7	19%	14%
TOTAL	36	97%	71%

Conclusion: The membership is split on whether necessary reassignment to leagues by the organizers should be random, or based on player rankings. Bearing in mind responses to earlier questions, where players yearned for more balanced leagues, one solution is to simply register for “Pairs” or “Singles” and the organizers will assign competitors to as many leagues as required, based on player ratings, with a limit of 12 teams per league. (How to determine “player ratings” is an open issue.)

Q13. Leagues Organization: Should we reorganize the two pairs leagues and two singles leagues that we have now?

(Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
131. Two singles leagues and two pairs leagues (i.e. the current organization. Players choose their league(s). Leagues may become too large or too small.	4	11%	8%
132. One singles league and three pairs leagues of equal size. Players would not be able to choose their pairs league; they would be assigned to a league consistent with their combined player ratings.	15	41%	29%
133. Three pairs leagues of equal size and <u>no</u> singles league. Players would not be able to choose their league.	1	3%	2%
134. Individuals should register for the pairs competition and accept random pairing with another player. Leagues would be populated in order of registration, or based on combined player ratings.	5	14%	10%

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OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
135. Don't know.	8	22%	16%
136. I suggest another alternative . . .	3	8%	6%
TOTAL	36	97%	71%

Comments on Leagues Organization (3)

1. I like the idea that a knowledgeable person splits the pairs that are registered into two groups according to their standing. Singles - you could put a minimum (at least five pairs) in order to have a singles league.
2. #131 would end up the same that we have - just a name change. I like #134 better but I'm not sure of all the possible implications.
3. I would be in favour of #132 or #133 but I don't think that our club rating system for outdoor play should be the basis for short mat. We've had several novices this season who have been very competent in short mat and many seasoned bowlers that still find short mat a challenge.

Conclusion: The great majority of players would be content to have their league assigned to them, rather than choose their league. The majority want to keep the pairs leagues and one singles league.

For those who may be looking to play pairs, (the most popular game) but have no partner, we should consider an option to register as an individual who is prepared to accept an assigned partner.

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Q14. Scoring System: Which system of league game scoring do you favour? (Choose one)

OPTION	VOTES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS N=37	PERCENT OF MEMBERS N=51
Single set with tie breakers (most favourable scoring for stronger players.)	4	11%	8%
Single set, no tie breakers	9	24%	18%
Two separately scored sets with tie breakers	0	0%	0%
Two separately scored sets, with no tie breakers. (Most favourable scoring for weaker players.)	6	16%	12%
Don't know.	17	46%	33%
TOTAL	36	97%	71%

Conclusion: Almost half of the respondents did not answer this question – and there is divergence of opinion from those who did. It is probably best to stick with the current scoring systems, namely *Single Set No Tie Breakers* for A and B Pairs and *Two Sets No Tie Breakers* for D Singles, where the range of players will likely be most variable since we merged the two Singles leagues.

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