



# Questions answered



The summer is in full swing, but certainly got off to a shaky wet start in May in the UK. The waterproofs certainly got a good airing and wash and the greens took a little while to dry out. It is in these conditions that the questions come flooding in about groundsheets, sometimes rather unfortunately referred to as 'dumping mats'

**Above:** Groundsheets being used to protect a green

**Right:** There is a lot of misunderstanding about the use of groundsheets

There is a lot of misunderstanding surrounding their use and indeed their purpose. The use of groundsheets is covered by a specific law and is backed up by the option for National Governing Bodies to include domestic regulations on specific areas of their use – more on that shortly.

So, let's start with the basics, what is the groundsheet actually for? Simple answer, it is to protect an area of the green from damage caused by bowling on it. Knowing this will make the Laws clear in their intention.

Some of the detail comes from Definition C.12 which states:

*Groundsheet: a rectangular piece of canvas or other suitable fabric placed temporarily on the surface of the green to protect it from any damage caused as a result of a player delivering the jack or a bowl. The rear edge of the groundsheet must be placed at least two metres from the rear ditch and at least 25 metres from the front ditch (in line with the requirements for*

*placing the mat described in laws 6.1.1 and 6.1.5).*

I have highlighted a few words in that definition.

Temporarily means that it does not have to be in place for the start of the game, for the end of the game or for the whole game. It can be added at any time if damage becomes evident and similarly can be removed if the condition of the rink improves.

Rear edge: This should be obvious, but the rear edge of the groundsheet is

the edge nearest the ditch behind you when you stand on the mat.

In line with requirements for placing the mat; the rear edge of the groundsheet must be between the distances of two metres and 24 metres because these are the minimum and maximum distances the mat can be placed as mentioned in Law 6.1.1.

Law 6.1.5 provides us with a bit more detail as follows:

*6.1.5 If one or more groundsheets are to be used (outdoor play only),*



*the following will apply: 6.1.5.1 The Controlling Body must consult the nominated greenkeeper before deciding where the groundsheets will be placed. The position must be in line with definition C.12.*

It is the responsibility of the controlling body in consultation with the greenkeeper to decide where to place the groundsheets. If the greenkeeper decides that there are some areas of damage at different positions on each rink then the groundsheets should be placed in those positions. They do not all have to be in the same place on each rink.

*6.1.5.2 The controlling body can make the decision to use groundsheets either before the start of play or at any time during play.*

Confirms that they can be temporarily placed on the rink

*6.1.5.3 The groundsheets must be securely fastened to the surface of the green using flat-headed pins (or an equivalent) that do not stick up from the surface.*

They should be fixed so they don't blow away or move. Any pins used to secure them should not interfere with the running of a bowl.

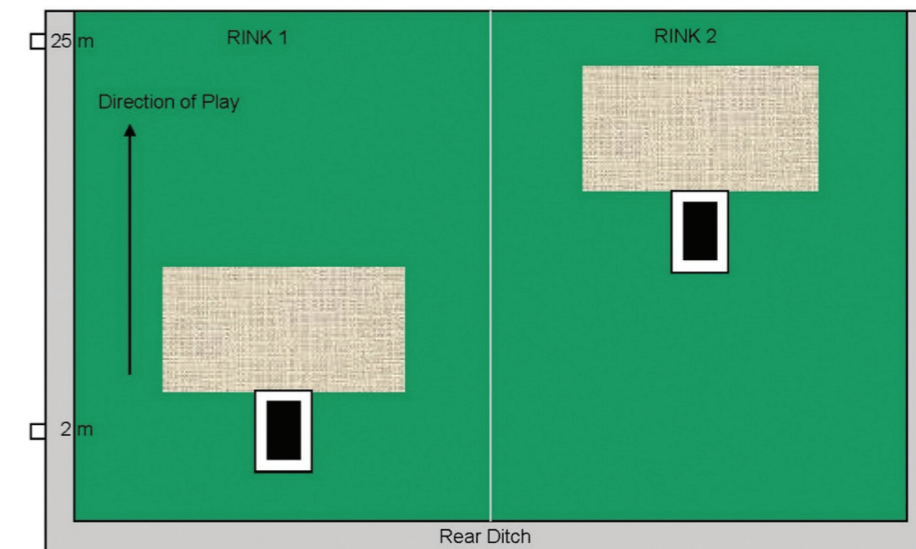
*6.1.5.4 The groundsheets must stay in the same position until the end of the game or until the controlling body decides that they are no longer needed.*

Again, confirms the temporary nature of their placement.

*6.1.5.5 The mat line must be placed on the rear edge of the groundsheet.*

This clarifies the reason for the rear edge of the groundsheet being at the minimum and maximum positions

## Law 6.1.5 - Position of Mats and Groundsheets



that the mat should be placed at. Importantly, the mat must be placed in the same position on every end when the groundsheet is used. I will leave it to you to decide if this will cause more damage to a wet green!

*6.1.5.6 For domestic play, member national authorities can decide the requirements for using portable groundsheets as an alternative to the fixed groundsheets mentioned in this law.*

Now this is an interesting one. Individual national bodies can decide to use portable groundsheets, i.e. ones that are lifted at carried to the other end of the rink at the completion of each end.

So, in summary, groundsheets are used to temporarily protect an area of the rink from damage. They must be fixed to the rink, or if a domestic regulation allows, can be portable. They can be any distance between two metres and 25 metres and this can vary per rink and the mat must be placed at the back edge of the groundsheet on every end in which they are used.

Let's hope the greens dry out enough to avoid their use.



**If you have any questions you would like answered in future articles, please do contact us at [Bowls International](http://BowlsInternational.com). Next month, I will reflect on the British Isles Championships at which I was officiating at the end of June.**

**Above:** A graphic showing position of mats and groundsheets.

## WHAT LAWS AND DOMESTIC REGULATIONS APPLY?

A question was posed online recently by my WBT colleague Dan Bluett which came about from an enquiry from a local club. This is a question based in England but can equally apply to other nations.

*You are contacted by the greenkeeper of a club that is hosting a Middleton Cup match at the weekend. The same club is also playing in and hosting a men's Top Club match on the same day in the morning. Some of the players from the home and visiting club in the Top Club match are also involved in the Middleton Cup match in the afternoon (playing for the same county).*

*Two queries: Are the players from the morning matches allowed to play on the same green in the afternoon and what advice can you give the greenkeeper to mitigate any issues between the players and events morning and afternoon?*

*(Caveat – due to green restrictions play is only available in one and the same direction for both events.)*

*What laws and domestic regulations apply?*

For those not familiar, the Middleton Cup is a national inter-county competition comprised of six rinks of fours. The Top Club is a national inter-club competition comprised of a side of 11 players. The

disciplines being two-bowl singles, four-bowl singles, four-bowl pairs, three-bowl triples and two-bowl fours.

We are faced with a scenario whereby some players, who are committed to both competitions, will be playing on the same green on the same day. Playing on the same green is certainly permitted but playing on the same rink may not be. In these competitions the draws are carried out just prior to the start of the games so that would avoid the penalty associated with Law 3.3.

*Law 3.3 If, after the draw for rinks has been made, a player in a competition of game plays on the same rink before the start of play on the day of the competition or game, that player will be disqualified.*

So, we turn to any domestic regulations which in this competition are set by Bowls England. They do indeed have a D.R. which states:

*In events under the jurisdiction of Bowls England, no player shall practice or play on the same rink on the same day (date).*

So that is pretty clear and therefore rather than risk a player playing on the same rink and relying on the luck of the draw, a suggestion to the greenkeeper to move the rink boundaries by a distance would be in order.

Great question which has certainly got some discussion going online, thank you Dan.