Nicholas Soames Trophy Detailed Rules (Updated February 2026)

Rule 1 Entries

1a) Each club may enter one or two teams. Any member of a club can play in a particular match and in any position but once a member has appeared for one team he or she may not appear for the other team from that club. In order to bring the number of entries up to a manageable total the organiser may invite one or more teams to enter a third team.

1b) Depending on the number of entrants the competition will be played on either a league or knock out basis. The exact format will be announced once all entry forms are received. This will include a timetable of matches with deadlines.

1c) Matches will normally be played on the evening of the designated Monday shown in the timetable but may be played at an earlier date if both teams agree. Matches should normally start at 6 pm (5.30 in August) although home clubs should make reasonable allowances for the travelling time for visiting clubs. If some players are delayed those present may start at 6 o'clock with the latecomers commencing play as soon as possible.

1d) If due to weather or other circumstances the Home Club plan to put down Groundsheets they should inform the visiting Captain by 3 pm on the day of the match. Groundsheets must be laid down in accordance with the rules of Bowls (section C 12 of the forward and Law 6).

1e) Normally the only acceptable reason for a postponement beyond the deadline for the round is one caused by weather. In this circumstance the re-arranged fixture must be played on a future Monday or another date if both Captains agree. The home team should inform the Organiser when the match will be played. If a postponement is required for any other reason the matter should be referred to the Organiser who will make a decision and be as helpful as possible.

Rule 2 Playing Format

2a) The matches will be played on an Australian Pairs format in teams of three pairs. Teams will bowl alternately with a toss on each rink for the mat before the first end. No trial ends will be played but only one shot will be awarded on each of the first two ends.

2b) There will be 18 ends but before play begins Captains may agree to play a shortened match taking into account weather or light however all pairings must play a minimum of 12 ends. Each team must include three of each sex who can play in any combination. Any dead ends will not be replayed but the team causing the end to become dead will concede two shots to the other side.

2c) Before the start of the match a draw will take place to determine which pairs play each other and a second draw will be made to select which rinks will be used by each pairing (from those made available by the home team). These draws will be made by the visiting captain

2d) On the first end in each team, player A will bowl the first two woods of his/her team. Player B will bowl all 4 of his/her woods. Finally player A will bowl his/her final two woods. On the second end the two players will reverse roles with B bowling the first two, A the next 4, and B the final two. This procedure then repeats itself for the remaining ends.

2e) Players who are badged AND who have played for a County in a match against another County, or another representative side, during the last three seasons (i.e. 2023 or later) are ineligible for this competition. Other badged players or players who are not yet badged but have played for their County in the last thee years, may play provided that a team of six contains no more than one such player.

2f) Dress code is Greys/Club Colours except for the final which is Whites/Club Colours.

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Rule 3 Points & Results

3a) Points will be awarded on the basis of two points per rink over 18 ends and two points for the overall shot score. Thus a maximum of 8 points are available from each match (2 x 3 = 6 + 2 = 8).

3b) In the event of a team being able, for whatever reason, to field only two pairs the match will proceed with two rinks. The 2 points on the third rink will be awarded to the other club as well as a five shot advantage. In the event of one team being able to field only one pair or failing to arrive for the match at all then all 10 points and fifteen shots will be awarded to the other team unless the other club agrees to reschedule the match within the permitted time-scale.

3c) If for whatever reason the match is abandoned before all pairings have completed 12 ends it must be replayed within one week. If due to weather or another exceptional reason a match is abandoned after all pairings have completed 12 ends, and if both captains agree, then the result will stand as if the full eighteen ends had been played. All completed ends to count.

3d) In a knock out match (including the final) in the event of the points score being equal at 4 each then the match will be decided by one extra end played on the rink where normal play finished last.

3e) A results sheet must be signed by a member of each of the competing clubs and returned to the organiser within three days of the match. There is no need to forward individual rink score sheets.

3f) The early stages of the competition will normally be in a league format and be won by the team with the most points and if equal by the team with the greatest shot difference and if still equal the team with the highest number of shots scored. These local leagues or pools may be organised on a geographical basis to minimise travel time.

3g) The organiser will despatch details of results and regular league updates to all clubs at least twice per month. In 2026 the organiser will be Basil Larkins whose full contact details are on the invitation letter. In all other regards the normal Bowls England rules will apply. In the event of queries about these rules or any other matter the Organiser's decision will be final.

Rule 4 Semi-Finals and Final

4a) The semi finals will be played at the same time on a green nominated before the timetable is agreed. The venue will normally be Haywards Heath and Beech Hurst.

4b) The final will be played at a home of the previous year's winners on a date in September to be agreed with the host club.

Notes Spirit of the Competition

This Competition is aimed at those less experienced or less skilled bowlers so that they can be introduced to competitive bowls in a gradual manner.

Clubs are free to pick their teams as they see fit (subject to rule 2e) but each club should make every effort to include bowlers of mixed abilities and not rely entirely on the best bowlers in the club.

Refreshments

The home club will provide tea/coffee and biscuits after the match and will where possible open their bar.