

Senior Subcommittee Report for AGM 27th May 2025

Committee Members

- Chair Áine Lebioda
- Treasurer Ray Bergan
- Secretary Kevin Horton
- Score Keeper Mark Higson
- Score Keeper Stephen Ekermans
- Member Paul McCauley
- ESBC Rep Pat Holmes

1 Introduction

The incoming Senior Subcommittee was formed in October and held its first subcommittee meeting on October the 6th. We extend sincere thanks to the outgoing members – Maeve, Joe, Peter, and Ken – for their guidance during this transition. We would also like to thank our tour members for their continued support.

Note: Kevin Horton will be stepping down from his role as Secretary and We extend our thanks to him for his work throughout the year.

2. Decision making,

The integration of NITBF bowlers last season presented some challenges, particularly with incorporating Northern Ireland bowlers who did not have prior averages recorded in our system. As a temporary measure, averages were calculated based on current-year tour participation.

For the 2025/26 season, we are proposing the introduction of a rolling average system calculated over the most recent eight Tours. This will provide a more consistent and transparent basis for tracking performance and determining eligibility.

We recognise that some decisions made over the past season have raised questions. It is important to note that both the Senior Subcommittee and the Executive are composed entirely of volunteers, all committed to the advancement of the sport. We welcome constructive input at the End of Season meeting and encourage all members to share their thoughts on how the Senior Tour should be run.

However, while we value open discussion, not every decision can be made by consensus. Our actions must align with the broader National Strategy for the development of Tenpin Bowling in Ireland. Inevitably, there will be occasions where some expectations cannot be met.

A key component of the Senior Tour is our Senior Selection Criteria, which plays a central role in how we build teams to represent Ireland abroad. We are committed to ensuring that these teams are the best prepared possible — both in terms of performance and professionalism.

Participation in the Tour directly contributes to selection, preparation, and readiness for international competition.

As the National Governing Body (NGB) for Tenpin Bowling, all decisions are informed by official frameworks and guiding documents, including:

- Sport Ireland directives and policy guides
- Selection Criteria
- Senior Handbook (with thanks to Kay Lyons)
- Constitution, policies, and Strategic Development Plan

We want to reassure all members of the Senior Tour that every decision is carefully considered with the long-term interests of the sport in mind. Our goal remains clear: to foster a strong, fair, and sustainable competitive environment that supports the ongoing growth of Tenpin Bowling across the island.

Chair extended a warm welcome to our Northern Ireland bowlers joining the Tour. While the merger presented initial challenges, we are optimistic these are now behind us. The merger is still in its early stages of settling in, and we appreciate everyone's patience as the new committee finds its rhythm.

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success”

Henry Ford

3. Senior Tour Participation

The Senior Tour has enjoyed very strong support from our Senior Bowlers with 40 men and 18 Ladies participating. While not all bowlers aim for international representation, I recognize the honor to all of our bowlers for playing in such a prestigious sporting event, every participant contributes meaningfully to the development of the national team.

Our bowlers vary in motivation—from aiming for selection, to enjoying the competition, to chasing personal milestones such as a finals spot or Grand Prix qualification.

4. Tour Expansion and Access.

We are planning to return to 10 Tour events plus the Grand Prix in the next calendar year. The inclusion of the Belfast benchmark venue in the Tour this year opens an opportunity to athletes from Ulster, I would also really like to open a tour event to encourage more southern bowlers to join the tour. We also need to increase the number of seniors. Advertisement and social media to be used to invite bowlers to join the Senior Tour, especially the age demographic of 49 – 65+

With the Tour selection criteria set so that athletes from extreme distances can opt to play or not in venues further away without losing out. We will need to ensure that no bowler is disadvantaged by not wanting to travel excessive distances.

Paddy Kilduff advised that ALSAA are going to increase their lineage charge, and the other centres would most likely do the same which might leave us with no option but to increase tour entry. No proposal or decision is necessary until the full detail is known by SSC. Members at the end of season meeting expressed the view that increase from €45 per event might result in loss of members and other options, such as reduction / cancelling monthly raffle might be preferred.

Fundraising: SSC has offered advertising for the Senior Tour Handbook and the Senior Handbook as a means of increasing income. Call to action for our members businesses/employers to support Team Ireland bowlers travelling to events with ads or sponsorship in this year's Senior National Championship Handbook, and the 2025-2026 Senior Handbook.

5. Rankings Snapshot (Pre-Nationals)

- Scratch: Theresa Watts, Fergal McLoughlin
- Handicap: Kathleen Lyons, Patrick Kemmy

Best of luck to all bowlers competing in the upcoming National Championships.

6. National Championships

- Venue: ALSAA
- Thanks to: Mark and team (ALSAA), Barbara Sloan (Tournament Manager), Adrienne Dunne (Assistant), John Dunne & Tim Dawson (Score Keepers)

Their work enables committee members to bowl without administrative responsibilities. I regret being away for the event and send my best wishes to all participants.

7. Grand Prix

- Venue: Leisureplex
- Sponsor: Leisureplex (continuing support confirmed)

We would like to thank Sean Kennedy and Leisureplex for their continued sponsorship of the Grand Prix and are looking forward to working with Leisureplex next season. We have also advised Sean we are preparing a bid to host the 2028 ESBC, following the success of the 2017 event.

8. Senior Triple Crown – Stroud, England

Our special thanks to Team Manager Paddy Gibbons who did a fantastic job of looking after and supporting the team. Paddy reported the team gelled well and the event was enjoyed by all. We think it was positive that two of our long-standing members joined the team for the first time utilizing the change of passport rule implemented last year.

This year's event was a 5 Nation Tournament with separate points going for Triple Crown and All Nations Trophies. We have a lot to be proud of well-done Team Ireland.

Women's Team:

- Theresa Watts, Lorraine Keane, Dymphna Kestell, Elaine Lalor, Ursula Ekermans, Anita Watts



Men's Team:

- Philip Watts, Paul Stott, Kieran Shortt, Paul Molphy, Paddy Dunne, Stephen Ekermans

Manager: Paddy Gibbons

- 15 medals won under tough lane conditions
- 5-Nation Format
- Ireland: **2nd overall** with **625.5 points**
- Ladies: **2nd in All Events** (359.5 points)

Medal Winners:

- **Theresa** – Singles (Gold)
- **Lorraine** – All Events (Gold)
- **Theresa/Lorraine** – Doubles (Silver)
- **Lorraine/Elaine/Theresa** – Trios (Silver)
- **Paul M/Paul S/Philip** – Trios (Bronze)

- **Ladies Team** – (Silver)

Issues raised at the End of Season Meeting; Lack of coaches was raised as a significant issue. Also, the Ladies Singles event had more Men on the lanes than Ladies. This should be raised with the Presidium to determine and decide exactly who is authorised on the lanes. It was suggested that if a team was paying their own way they should be able to bring a non-EBF Coach with them. The Chair explained that this is not possible when playing on Team Ireland. It was also proposed that if no EBF Coach was available for STC, then a Sport Ireland Coaching certified coach could be ratified for STC. The chair explained that this would not be possible.

It was suggested that a change of days for STC (Mondays / Tuesdays instead of Thursday/Friday) should be considered by TC Presidium, as it might suit host centres better and reduce lineage, travel and hotel costs.

9. Future Selection & Coaching

We propose:

- Forming a **selection panel early in the season**
- Starting training earlier for international preparation

Coaching: A long-standing issue—efforts will be made to secure a dedicated coach in collaboration with the Coach's Subcommittee.

Coaching has been an issue for seniors for a long time now, in that we have not been able to enlist a coach who will travel with the team. This needs to be resolved through collaboration

10. ESBC – Hamburg 2025

Chair congratulated this year's medal winners. The ESBC Committee will present a bid for Ireland to host the ESBC 2028 at this year's event in Tali

- 10 Irish Seniors attended
- **Medals:**
 - Pat Holmes – Singles (Bronze)
 - Pat Holmes & Treasa Whelan – Doubles (Bronze)



11. 2025/2026 Senior Tour Calendar (Provisional)

The Proposed Tour Calendar (subject to change) to be submitted to the Executive for approval It will need to be cross checked by the Junior and Team Ireland subgroups as some of our members have missed out because of taking juniors to their events. It will also need to be checked to avoid Bank Holidays and International events. Objective is to get as much coverage as possible for the Tour. SSC proposal to return to 10 Tour events and the Grand Prix with the National Championships returning to January of February 2026. The reasons for such a move are:

- 1) Move back to traditional hosting times.
- 2) Easier to secure a Bowling Centre for a 4-day event.
- 3) Good preparation for the annual Senior Triple Crown and European Grand Senior Championships in February.

Draft Senior Touring League and International (Int.) Tournaments 2025-2026

Note: The Touring League dates and venues are a work in progress and subject to confirmation and input from team and centre managers.

Event No.	Int.	Date	Event	Venue
1		Sep-25	Touring League	LeisurePlex, Blanchardstown
2		Oct-25	Touring League	LeisurePlex, Tallaght

	✓	13-23-Oct 25	IBF World Seniors Championships	National Bowling Stadium, Reno, Nevada, USA (selection)
3		Nov- 25	Touring League	Dundonald International Ice Bowl
4		Dec-25	Touring League	ALSAA Bowl (2 squads)
5		Jan-26	30 th Senior National Championships	LeisurePlex, Charlestown
	✓	30-Jan 26 08-Feb 26	EBF 1 st European Grand Seniors Championships	Vienna, Austria (selection)
6		Feb 26	Touring League	Dundonald International Ice Bowl
7		Mar 26	Touring League	LeisurePlex, Coolock
8		Apr-26	Touring League	ALSAA (2 squads) – date may move subject to Triple Crown dates
	✓	?? April 2026	Senior Triple Crown	Dates and venue to be confirmed (selection)
9		Apr 26	Touring League	LeisurePlex, Tallaght
10		May 26	Touring League	LeisureMax Wexford
11		May-26	Touring League Grand Prix	LeisurePlex Charlestown (Qualification)
	✓	20-28-June 26	ESBC	Rome, Italy

Public Holiday dates in Ireland

Oct 27 Bank Holiday, Dec Christmas, Jan 1, 2026, Bank Holiday, Feb 1, 2026, St Brigid's Day Mar 17, 2026, St Patricks, Apr 3 – 6 Easter, May 4 May Day, June 1 Bank Holiday

End of Season Meeting raised the question that Dundonald lane oil starts 2 feet in and this is not usual in other centres. Meeting was advised that this is a health & safety decision by the local Council who will not budge on it.

Also asked: are bowling centre foul lines activated for our events. Meeting informed that the Foul-lines are checked at sanction and should be switched on for our events.

A **Senior Bowler Development squad** to be set up at the end of the season (June 2025) for next season's international events, ready for September 2026, so that training can start as soon as possible. Squad set up in June 2025 will indicate Senior bowlers interested in proposed international events, thus avoiding chaos created in the past two years of only having Squad for STC known a few weeks before the event and costs then greater.

12. Website and Online Systems

The ITBA website is difficult to navigate. A review is underway to explore:

- Online entries
- Online memberships

13. Fundraising

To date we have had limited fundraising outside of annual raffle

- **New initiative:** Paid ads in National Championship Handbook
- Call for businesses to support bowlers with ads or sponsorship
- Goal: Anchor sponsor & fundraiser events to support Team Ireland

14 World Senior Championships in Reno WSrC

The closing date for WSrC Form A has been extended and after an exhaustive search we have been unable to find any additional bowlers to make three teams. We have asked the selectors to review the panel and select a Men's team to go to Reno. Paul McCauley has been ratified as the manager.

15 Team Selection & Ranking System

The Senior Tour is the event from which we select our Senior Team Ireland Bowlers, and as such is a very prestigious event. It is more than a social league although I appreciate that this is a significant part of the Tour.

Ranking Points: I acknowledge that there is much discussion on the ranking system. As part of the ITBA strategy for Bowler Development the Gold Silver and Bronze pattern system did bring a new challenge, but also opportunities. It is part of an overall programme to give our travelling teams a chance to experience the types of patterns they will encounter away. This is a very important part of bowler development, and I feel we should be very cautious about changing the Tour or diminishing it in any way, especially reducing it to a league. We are the only group who have such a Tour and there is huge distinction to all who play in this event “participating is more important than winning” and not many bowlers get to participate in this type of event. I would also be very cautious about taking this away from our Tour members who do not wish to be selected for Senior Team Ireland as they are a real part of the development of the Senior Team Ireland.

I have looked for advice on this from within ITBA and from other sports. It is normal practice to have G/S/B events as part of a selection process, and to have increased points for more challenging patterns. I am not in favour of removing the system, however. I am happy to discuss what changes could be considered without losing the credibility of the selection process and also support and encourage our bowlers who don't want to be selected for a team. I believe there are more opportunities here than threats.

The Coach's subcommittee will be providing statistics for these patterns, and I believe they are very reassuring. With each pattern I have arranged for an 'oil pattern strategy sheet', giving advice on how best to play each pattern and what equipment best suits. I do hope that the tour members have found the information useful. I see no reason why this could not be developed further perhaps into specific bowler development sessions for our senior bowlers.

The End of Season Meeting proposed that G/S/B Patterns are retained but oil ratios should be adjusted to reflect the Senior bowler population. Junior, Senior and Team Ireland G/S/B Patterns should not and do not have to be the same.

G/S/B Patterns should yield equal points with the Senior National Championships returning to double points. 2025-2026 Senior Handbook to be updated for ratification by Executive.

The anomaly in the points system between 12th and 13th place. This was not an error, but part of the new Ranking System introduced this year. It was also published in the 2024-2025 Senior Handbook. Therefore, there will be no re-calculation required for 2025 Grand Prix qualification places. More Senior Bowlers were not aware of the issue until raised as a need to seek a change for 2025-2026 season.

The End of Season meeting proposed that the anomaly be reduced to the normal descending scale and 2025-2026 Handbook is updated to reflect this and sent for ratification by Executive.