

N.E.S.D. Celtic Faire Inc.
Brings to you...

Irish Road Bowling

Irish road bowling has been played in the Irish countryside since the 1600s. Its origins are unclear-perhaps it was brought to the Emerald Isle from England by weavers in the new textile industry, or perhaps from Holland by the troops of William of Orange, or maybe it began when Irish patriots robbed small English cannonballs and rolled them home by the light of a full moon. Irish troops traditionally have played road bowling whenever they were stationed around the world.

Road bowling has a passionate following in County Armagh in the North, where it is called bullets or long bullets, and in the south, mostly in County Cork, where it is called road bowling. The two regions independently developed distinct and very different hurling styles (see The Throw, below).

These rules are similar to, but are not the official Bol~Chumann na hEireann (the Irish governing organization) rules, which govern all official Ireland, International and North America competitions.

The Gear

A 28-ounce iron-and steel cannonball the size of a tennis ball (a bowl or bullet) is hurled down a country road to the finish line. The player or team with the fewest shots to the finish line wins.

The Road

A road to road bowling is like a golf course to golf- each road is unique and requires a different combination of strategy and skill. Choosing a good road is important; it should be very scenic with a variety of terrain: straight-aways, curves to the left and to the right, and a hill or rise for uphill and downhill shots.

The road chosen can be one to two miles long, one to one and a half miles is a good distance for Irish road bowling. For first-time beginners, a one quarter to one half mile distance would be a good length. For larger tournaments with spectators, look for wider areas for parking near the start and finish lines.

The road should be closed to vehicular traffic, at least during the two hours required for the match. If not possible, a relatively quiet country road should be chosen and the local police/ sheriff's department or governmental authority must be contacted for permission. As a courtesy, property owners along the road should be notified that Irish road bowling will be passing by at a certain time.

For a tournament a circular road course works well, returning bowlers and spectators near the start line for the next match.

Problems to avoid when choosing a road

- 1. Houses or garages too close to road surface.**
- 2. A road with heavy vehicle or pedestrian traffic.**
- 3. Too many vehicles parked alongside road surface. If only a very few parked vehicles, they can be avoided, or a road bowling official or bales of straw can be positioned to protect the vehicles, (especially hubcaps).**
- 4. Particularly in curves, the bowls will roll straight ahead off the road surface. Make sure an off -the -road "run out" area is open and clear beyond all curves.**

Teams

Irish road bowling is played as singles competition, or with teams of two, three or four persons. Only one bowl is used per team, with players throwing in rotation. In Ireland, matches (called scores) are more commonly singles competition, or two person teams.

We will have singles, families, and teams. Teams and Families will consist of 2 or more bowlers.

The Start

A chalk line is drawn across the road. The thrower stands behind this line and his/her teammates (called road showers) go at least 20 to 30 yards down the road to mark the desired path of the bowl. They stand like human croquet wickets, feet apart, straddling the "perfect path" to be taken to achieve maximum distance. One of the road showers lays a scud of grass (the sop) in the road where the bowl should first strike the pavement. An experienced bowler can consistently "split the sop."

The Grip

The bowl should be held in a C formed by the thumb and the index and/or middle fingers. The bowl should be thrown from the fingers, not from the palm of the hand.

The Throw

The bowler should back up 10 to 15 yards and take a running start to gain momentum to the throwing line (the butt). For many people, however, taking two or three steps is sufficient.

As the thrower runs to the throwing mark, in the Northern or County Armagh style, he extends the arm and bowl behind him as he runs. At the throwing mark the arm is snapped forward by arching the back and shoulders, releasing the bowl underhand before stepping over the mark.

In the southern or County Cork style, as the thrower runs to the mark, the arm and bowl are lifted up and back, then whirled downward into an underhand throw, releasing the bowl before stepping over the mark.

The bowl should fly through the air a few yards before striking the sop rather than being thrown immediately into the road surface. The bowl, striking on or near the sop, will then grab the road, with heavy topspin, rolling on following its path to glory.

Topsin is imparted as the bowl comes off the tip of the index and/or middle fingers. Remember; throw from the fingers not from the palm of the hand.

The bowl should be released before the thrower steps over the line (i.e., before "breaking butt"), this is not strictly enforced in casual matches.

Safety

It is the responsibility of the thrower to ensure that everyone in the road ahead is facing him/her and paying attention. Do not be shy about shouting out "Rolling!" before throwing. It is the responsibility of the thrower's teammates, the road showers, to "Clear the way!" (Faugh a Ballach!), of all spectators for a safe distance (at least 50 yards) in front of the thrower before every shot.

The Shot

The shot is made from wherever the bowl stops, NOT from where it leaves the road surface, the bowl is taken directly to the nearest point on the road. A chalk mark is made at that point, and the next throw is taken from behind that mark by the next teammate in rotation, and so on to the finish line. It is customary to write the cumulative shot count on the road under each mark.

The Irish Loft

Over sharp curves or where two roads intersect (a corner), the bowl may be thrown through the air (lofted) over the corner rather than rolled around it. The loft must strike the road surface or pass over the road. If the loft fails to reach the road, it is a dead bowl and counts as one shot. The next throw, however, must be taken from the

same mark. The next thrower may chose either to again attempt the loft or to bowl around the corner.

It is the responsibility of the thrower and his/her team mates to be absolutely certain the landing area of the Irish loft is clear of all spectators before lofting.

The Finish

The final shot to the finish line should be thrown as far as possible past the line. If two or more players or teams have an equal number of shots crossing the finish line, the winner is decided by which shot goes the farthest distance past the finish line. A long "run-out" or straightaway beyond the finish line should available.

Irish Bowling Tips in General

Stroke--- A smooth Irish bowling "stroke" imparting accuracy and topspin often gains more distance than a more powerful but less accurate throw.

Bowling a curve---A shot can be played around the outer edge of a curve, but often it is more effective to shoot deep into the curve and let the bowl's momentum bring it back out. It is important to get through most curves in only two shots. The first shot, into the curve, must "get sight," i.e., allow the next thrower a clear shot out of the curve.

Lost bowls --- Beginner's throws often out pace the relatively inexperienced road showers, who must chase and spot the bowl for the thrower. Watch carefully where the last weed moved, or the exact spot where the bowl plunged into the stream. Then leap in gleefully and plunge those arms into the weeds or mud! If all else fails, bring along a metal detector. Real Irishmen never lose their bowls!

Stopping the bullet --- Never stop the bullet with your foot. Use a jacket, a piece of cloth or rug, or a garbage can lid. Sore toes and ankles, or worse, will surely result if you stick your toe out.

DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY

Safety must always be the highest priority in organizing and conducting an Irish road bowling match.

The North East South Dakota Celtic Faire Inc. Irish Road Bowling league and any and all other persons, volunteers and organizers disclaim any and all liability for any damages to persons or property as a result of participating in a game of Irish road bowling, or in using the bowls or any other materials in the Irish road bowling league, in any manner whatsoever.

Obviously, danger is inherent when playing a game that sometimes shares public roads with vehicles, bicyclist, spectators and other pedestrians. Always get permission from appropriate government authorities before using a road. We have cautioned against situations that our experience has warned us to avoid, but we cannot foresee unknown dangers in other locations. Keep in mind, road bowls, or bullets, originally were small cannonballs designed for mortal combat. Never take alcoholic beverages onto the road or to a road bowling match. It makes much better sport to meet in a pub afterwards. Be careful out there!

Irish Road Bowling 2010

General Rules

Minimum age is 13.

Single players ages 13-17 must have one adult aged 18 or older to supervise during the game.

Team players must have at least one person on their team that is 18 or older.

It is the responsibility of all players to read the rules before they start playing.

Family Bowling

All ages may bowl but remember, the ball is 28-ounces and the little ones may not be able to throw the ball very easily, let alone hold it. Use caution so the little ones do not drop the ball on their feet.

The rules are the same for young and old

Ages 12 and under will play on a half mile course with their parents. Ages 13 and up will play on the standard mile course.

Minimum of one ball needed for a family team.

Teams Bowling

Teams will consist of 2, 3, or 4 players. A team captain must be decided by the team prior to game play. The team captain will decide the order of play for the team.

Minimum of one ball needed for the team.

Singles Bowling

Singles bowlers are just that, singles. A ball is needed for the bowler, and may not be shared with other singles bowlers.

There are no handicaps

Substitutes are allowed.

Costs and Fees

13 and older \$10.00 per person for the summer

12 and under \$3.00 per person for the summer

Game (or match) fee:

13 and older \$3.00 per person

12 and under \$1.00 per person

Each person that has joined the league can play at the Championship game during the 2010 NESD Celtic Faire and Games on September 19, 2010.

A Cash prize and a trophy will be awarded to the winner.