

# BOCCE

## GENERAL RULES

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall govern all Special Olympics bocce competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has developed these rules based upon Special Olympics, Inc. for bocce. Special Olympics, Inc. rules for bocce shall be employed. For more information, visit [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org)

### **OFFICIAL EVENTS OFFERED**

1. Team Competition (four-person)
2. Unified Sports® Bocce Team (four-person) Invitational only

**NOTE:** Teams must play a minimum of two (documented) games against other Special Olympics teams prior to registration for district competition (unified teams must play unified teams). The team roster must remain the same for the two qualifying games, district competition and State competition. Teams that modify their rosters will forfeit all games. Qualifying games must be played against other teams with an Intent to Play form on file. **One game must be played against a team from another Agency.** Forfeited games do not count toward the scrimmage requirement.

### **SECTION A – RULES OF COMPETITION**

Coaching: Once competition begins, coaches and spectators are not allowed to coach.

1. The Game
  - a. Equipment – Bocce is played with eight large balls and one smaller target or object ball called the pallina (jack, cue, beebie). There are four balls to a side or team, and they are generally made in two colors to distinguish the balls of one team from those of the opposing team. The large balls are also inscribed with distinctive lines to identify the balls of the players on the same team.
  - b. Pallina and Color – A coin toss by the referee will determine which team has the pallina and choice of ball color. In the absence of a referee, the two team captains will execute the coin toss. The coin toss should take place on the court.
  - c. Sequence of Play – The pallina is rolled or tossed by a member of the team having won the coin toss to start the game. The player tossing the pallina must deliver the first ball. The opposing team will then deliver their bocce balls until the point is taken or they have exhausted their four balls. This “nearest ball” rule governs the sequence of played balls. The side whose ball is the closest to the pallina is called the “in” ball and the opposing side the “out” ball. Whenever a team gets “in”, it steps aside and allows the “out” team to deliver.
  - d. Three-Attempt Rule – The team possessing the pallina will have three attempts at placing the pallina beyond the 30-foot (9.125m) mark and before the 10-foot (3.05m) mark on the opposite end. If these three attempts are unsuccessful, the opposing team will have one opportunity to successfully throw the pallina. If this attempt is unsuccessful, the referee will place the pallina in the center of the court width at the 15.24m (50’) mark (opposite end of foul line). However, at no time does a team lose its earned pallina advantage of being able to deliver the first ball.
  - e. Initial Point – It is always incumbent upon the team with the pallina advantage to establish the initial point. Example: Team A tosses the pallina and delivers the first ball. Team B elects to hit Team A’s ball out of position. In doing so, both balls, Team A’s and Team B’s, fly out of court, leaving only the pallina in the court. It is incumbent upon Team A to re-establish the initial point.

- f. Ball Delivery – A team has the option of rolling, tossing, bouncing, etc. its ball down the court provided it does not go out of bounds and the player does not violate the foul markers. A player also has the option of “spocking” or hitting out any ball in play in trying to obtain a point, or decreasing the opposing team’s points. All ball delivery attempts must be in an underhand style and may be made with one or two hands. A player can grip the ball by placing his or her hand over or under the ball, as long as the ball delivery is in an underhand style. An underhand delivery is defined as releasing the ball below the waist. Balls traveling beyond the end court line or out of the boundaries of the court shall be considered out of play and may not count as points scored. If the pallina passes beyond the court line the frame shall be considered dead.
- g. Number of Balls Played by a Player  
1) Four-Player Team – each player is allowed to play one ball
- h. Coaching  
1) No coaching from the sidelines from team members, coaches and/or spectators  
2) In team play (regular and/or unified), discussion with any athlete is prohibited once the athlete steps onto the court
- i. Scoring – At the end of each frame (when both teams have exhausted all balls), points will be determined as follows: points are awarded to the team whose balls are closer to the pallina than the closest ball of the opposing team which can be determined by viewing or by mechanical measurements. The captain or the coach may request a mechanical measurement. At the end of the frame when the referee has determined the “in” balls and has called out the number of points, and the player or team agrees with the number of points awarded, the player or team then proceeds to remove the balls to start the next frame. The scoring team for each frame will also win the pallina advantage for the subsequent frame. Official Special Olympics Summer Sports Rules 409 states the referee will be responsible for the validity of the scoreboard and scorecard. It is incumbent upon the team captain to verify the accuracy of the posted score at all times.
- j. Ties During Frame – In the event that two opposing balls are equidistant from the pallina (tied), the team that rolled last will continue to roll until the tie is broken. Example: Team A rolls a ball for the pallina, and Team B rolls its ball for the pallina. The referee determines that they are both exactly 33cm (13”) away from the pallina. Team B must roll until it has a point closer than 33cm (13”) from the pallina. If Team B does roll up to the point and Team A hits that ball out re-establishing a tie, Team A must continue to roll until the tie is broken.
- k. Ties at the End of Frame – In the event that the two balls closest to the pallina belong to opposing teams and are tied, no points will be awarded. The pallina returns to the team which delivered it. Play resumes from the end of the court from which the frame was last played.
- l. Winning Score  
1) Four-player team – one ball/player = 16 points  
2) Games are played to 16 points. A time limit of 35 minutes per game is in effect at all competitions. All points are scored in the final frame. No new frame may be started after 30 minutes unless a tie exists. Tie games will be played out until one team is leading at the end of a frame. A forfeited game shall be scored as a 16 – 0 victory for the winning team.
- m. Scorecard – It is the responsibility of each team’s captain or coach to sign the scorecard after a match. The signatures will indicate the indisputability of the final score. Games in which

protests will be filed should not be signed by any coach disagreeing with the score or its validity.

- n. Ties at the end of Tournament Play
  - 1) If two or more teams are tied in the final place standings at the end of competition, ties will be broken by the following tie break procedure:
    - a) Head to Head
    - b) Point Differential
    - c) Total Points Scored
    - d) Eight Point or 30-Minute Maximum Tie-Break Game
- 2. Player Designation
  - a. Captain – On any team, the captain must be designated and made known to the officials before play begins. The captain may not be changed during the course of the game, but may be changed during the course of a tournament or league. The tournament or league officials must be notified of this change prior to any subsequent games.
  - b. Rotation of Players during a game – The players of any given team may elect to play their ball in any rotation provided the player who tosses the pallina delivers the first bocce ball. The rotation may vary from frame to frame; however, no player may deliver more than his/her allotted number of balls per frame.
- 3. Unified Sports Team
  - a. Each Unified Sports team event shall consist of two athletes and two partners.
  - b. Each game shall commence with a coin toss. Either member of the team that wins the toss starts the game by throwing the pallina and the first ball. The second ball is thrown by either member of the opposing team. Play continues with an alternation of throws by partners and athletes until the game is won.
- 4. Substitutions
  - a. Official Notification - Officials must be notified of line up changes prior to scheduled game time or it will result in forfeiture of the match.
  - b. Rotation of the Players between games
    - 1) Rotation of Players – Team rosters may have up to six athletes per team with four athletes playing per game. Player rotation (changing the team lineup) may take place between games and any four of the six athletes on the roster may be used for the line up for any games played.
    - 2) Limitations – Once a player has registered for one team during the tournament, the player may not play for any other team during that tournament.
  - c. Substitution During Game
    - 1) Substitution of players during a game may only take place in the event of an emergency. In the event of a medical emergency, one player may be substituted during the process of a game. Emergency substitutions will only be made at the end of a frame; if this is not possible, the frame will be considered dead. However, once the substitution has been made, the substitute must complete the game. All requests for a medical substitution must be made to the games management personnel for the competition prior to making the substitution.
    - 2) Forfeiture – Teams with less than the prescribed number of players will forfeit the match.

5. Timeouts, Delays of Game, and Checking Position of Points
  - a. Circumstances
    - 1) Timeout – The official may grant a timeout whenever the circumstances explained appear to be of sufficient validity to do so. The timeout will be limited to 10 minutes.
    - 2) Intentional Delay of Game – If, in the opinion of the official, the game is intentionally delayed without sufficient or valid reason, the official must give a warning. If play is not resumed immediately, the delaying team will forfeit the match.
    - 3) Delays Caused by Weather, Acts of God, Civil Disorder or Other Unforeseen Reasons – In such delays, the ruling of the league or tournament director will be decisive and final.
    - 4) Checking Position of Points – Players may only proceed to the half court mark before delivering their ball(s). When only one team has exhausted all of its balls, the referee shall be permitted at any time to declare, by measurement or viewing, which team is “in” (has the point).
6. Penalties
  - a. Enforcement of Penalties
    - 1) Determination – Immediately upon determination by the official that a foul has been committed, the official will notify the captains of both teams and inform them of the penalty imposed. The ruling of the official is final, except as otherwise provided for hereafter.
    - 2) Conditions Not Covered – For conditions not specifically covered in these rules, the league or tournament director’s ruling shall be decisive and final.
    - 3) Protest to Forfeiture – If a team must forfeit a match as a result of not being present for a scheduled match, or as a result of violations hereunder prescribed, no official protest will be acknowledged. Protests will be acknowledged and judged on the basis of merit in circumstances not specifically proved for hereunder. [Official Special Olympics Summer Sports Rules 411]
  - b. Specific Fouls
    - 1) Foul line Fouls – In pointing and hitting, the foremost part of the specific foul line will not be surpassed by any part of the player’s foot or any apparatus used by an athlete such as a wheelchair, crutches, cane, etc., after the ball is released and before the ball touches any part of the playing field in front of the specific foul line. A referee, as a result of witnessing the foul, must call all fouls. The penalty for a player (team) committing the foul will be to declare the specific ball being thrown dead. The referee will wait until the just-released ball comes to a complete stop and then remove the just-released ball from the court. If the ball comes in contact with the other balls on the court or the pallina and these balls are moved from their original position, then the referee will place the balls back as close to their original position as possible and play will continue.
    - 2) Player Plays More than Allotted Number of Balls – When a player rolls an extra ball during a frame, the ball in question is declared dead. The referee will wait until the just released ball comes to a complete stop and then remove the just-released ball from the court. If the ball comes in contact with the other balls on the court or the pallina and these balls are moved from their original position then the referee will place the balls back as close to their original position as possible and play will continue. This condition will exist when a player plays two balls instead of one.

- a) The remaining players who haven't played any balls must decide who is to play the remaining unplayed balls.
- 3) Illegal Movement of a Ball Belonging to Your Own Team – If a player moves one or more of his/her team's balls, the ball(s) are removed from the court and considered dead and play continues. Balls not immediately "in contention" may be replaced as close as possible to their original position. "In contention" is herein defined as a ball(s) close enough to the pallina to require measurement to determine whether a point may be awarded.
  - 4) Illegal Movement of an Opponent's Ball – If, after all eight balls have been thrown, a player moves one or more of his/her opponent's balls, the opponent's balls that were moved will be awarded one point each and play continues. If a player moves one or more of his or her opponent's balls and there are remaining unplayed balls, the referee will place the balls as close to their original position and play will continue.
  - 5) Illegal Movement of the Pallina by a Player – If the pallina is moved by a player, the team fouled against may be awarded as many points as the number of live balls that were "in contention" plus the number of balls not yet played by that team during the frame in which the foul occurred. If the team fouled against has no balls "in contention" and no balls remaining, then the frame will be declared over by the referee and started over at the same end.
- c. Accidental or Premature Movement of Balls or Pallina by Referee
- 1) Accidental Movement of a Ball or Pallina During Play (when more balls are yet to be played) – If a referee, either in the course of measuring or otherwise, moves a ball "in contention" or moves the pallina, the frame is considered dead and started over at the same end.
  - 2) Accidental or Premature Movement of a Ball or Pallina by a Referee After All Balls Are Played – If the point or points were obvious to the referee, they will be awarded. All uncertain points will not be awarded and the frame is considered dead and started over at the same end.
- d. Interference with a Ball in Motion
- 1) By One's Own Team – When a player interferes with his or her team's ball in motion, the referee as a result of witnessing the foul, must declare the ball being thrown dead. The dead ball is then removed from the court. The referee, after declaring a foul, should attempt to stop the advancement of the ball as it proceeds down the court so that it doesn't strike any balls in play. If the referee cannot stop the ball as it advances down the court, the referee will wait until the ball comes to a complete stop and then remove the ball from the court. If the ball comes in contact with the other balls on the court or the pallina, and these balls are moved from their original position, then the referee will place the balls back as close to their original position as possible and play will continue.
  - 2) By Opponent's Team – If a player interferes with an opponent's ball in motion, the team fouled against has one of the following options:
    - a) Playing the ball over
    - b) Declaring the frame dead
    - c) Declining the penalty, accept the lie of the touched ball and continue playing

- 3) With No Disruption of Position – If a spectator, animal or object interferes with a ball in motion and that ball does not touch another ball already in play, it must be played over by the same player.
  - 4) With Disruption of Position – If a spectator, animal or object interferes with a ball in motion and that ball touches another ball already in play and “in contention,” the frame is dead.
  - 5) Other Disruption of Play – Any action which interferes with the position of the pallina or the ball of each team closest to the pallina renders the frame dead. In the event that balls other than the pallina or the two opposing balls closest to it are moved, they may be replaced as close as possible to their original position by the two captains or referee. Such disruptive action may be the result of a dead ball from another court, foreign objects, spectators or animals entering the court and changing the position of the ball(s) in play.
- e. Wrong Color Delivery
- 1) Replaceable – If a player delivers a wrong color ball, the ball may not be stopped by another player or the referee. The ball must be allowed to come to rest and replaced with the proper ball by the referee.
  - 2) Not Replaceable – If a player delivers a wrong color ball which cannot be replaced without disturbing another ball already in play, the points of the play will be recorded at that time, with the wrong color ball counting for the team which rolled or delivered it, and play will continue. It will be the responsibility of the two team captains and the referee to maintain identity of the wrong color ball(s).
  - 3) Unidentifiable – If a player delivers a wrong color ball which cannot be identified by the referee as a result of hitting or scattering of balls, the frame will be considered dead and no points awarded.
- f. Wrong Rotation of Play
- 1) Initial Roll – If a team wrongly delivers the pallina and its first ball, the referee will return both the pallina and ball and begin the frame over from the same end.
  - 2) Subsequent Rolls of Proper Color in Improper Sequence – If a player delivers his/her ball when his/her team is “in” and the other team still has balls left, the ball in question remains where it comes to rest, is considered “live” and play continues. This ruling holds true regardless of who indicated which ball was “in” since it is the responsibility of each team to request a measurement when an “in” point is questionable.
- g. Out of Bounds – If a ball is over the line, it is out of bounds. A ball is considered in-bounds if any part of the ball is on the line. If the pallina is on the line it is considered in-bounds.
7. Officials
- a. Objections
- 1) Officials shall have full authority to interpret rules. For further questions, the tournament rules committee shall be consulted.
  - 2) Officials shall have the power to make all decisions on any points not specifically covered in the rules.
  - 3) Objections to Officials – Each team has the right to object to a designated official for any reason prior to the start of a game. This objection will be considered and decided upon by the tournament director.

- 4) Participant Officials – No member of a team or registered substitute of a team will be allowed to assist in officiating a game in which that team is also playing.
- b. Substitute Officials
  - 1) During a Game – Substitutions of officials may occur during a game only with the permission of the tournament director and both team captains.
  - 2) Additional Officials – Additional officials may be assigned to any games during the course of play provided permission is granted by the tournament director.
  - 3) Team Requests – Officials may be changed during the course of a game if either team presents sufficient cause to the tournament director.
  - 4) Official's Uniform – Referees should be clearly distinguishable from players.
8. Other Circumstances
  - a. Broken Ball
    - 1) During Play – If during the course of a frame a ball or pallina should break, the frame will be considered dead and will be replayed. Replacement of the ball or pallina will be the responsibility of tournament directors.
  - b. Court Grooming
    - 1) Prior to Play – All courts must be groomed to the satisfaction of the tournament director before the start of each game.
    - 2) Court Grooming during Play – Courts may not be re-groomed during the course of the game. Obstacles or objects such as stones, cups, etc. may be removed during the course of a game.
    - 3) Unusual Court Conditions – If in the opinion of the Tournament Director, the court conditions are such that play is impractical, the game can be stopped and resumed on another court or at another designated time.
  - c. Moving Objects
    - 1) Moving Ball or Pallina – No player may play his ball until a pallina or another ball has come to a complete rest.
9. Player Behavior
  - a. Whenever possible, a player should move off the court when an opponent is playing.
  - b. Unsportsmanlike Conduct
    - 1) Disqualification – Players shall act in a sportsmanlike manner at all times. Any act which is deemed as poor sportsmanship such as insulting language, gestures, actions, or words which produce ill-will, if flagrant, may result in disqualification.

## **SECTION B – DIVISIONING**

1. All teams will play as coed open teams.
2. Teams will be divisioned according to a "Team Score" compiled in the Bocce Skills Assessment Test (BOSAT) prior to both district and state competitions, coaches' input and scores of at least two games played versus other Special Olympics bocce teams.
3. The Bocce Skills Assessment Test (BOSAT) "Team Average" is determined by adding the team's top four players' scores and dividing that total by four.
4. Delays in Starting – Teams must be ready to field a team within 10 minutes of the official declaring the game started or the game will be forfeited.

5. Teams must play a minimum of two (documented) games against other Special Olympics teams prior to registration for district competition (unified teams must play unified teams). The team roster must remain the same for the two qualifying games, district competition and State competition. Teams that modify their rosters will forfeit all games. Qualifying games must be played against other teams with an Intent to Play form on file. One game must be played against a team from another Agency. Teams may be required to complete scrimmage forms if requested by the Regional office.

## **SECTION C – THE COURT AND EQUIPMENT**

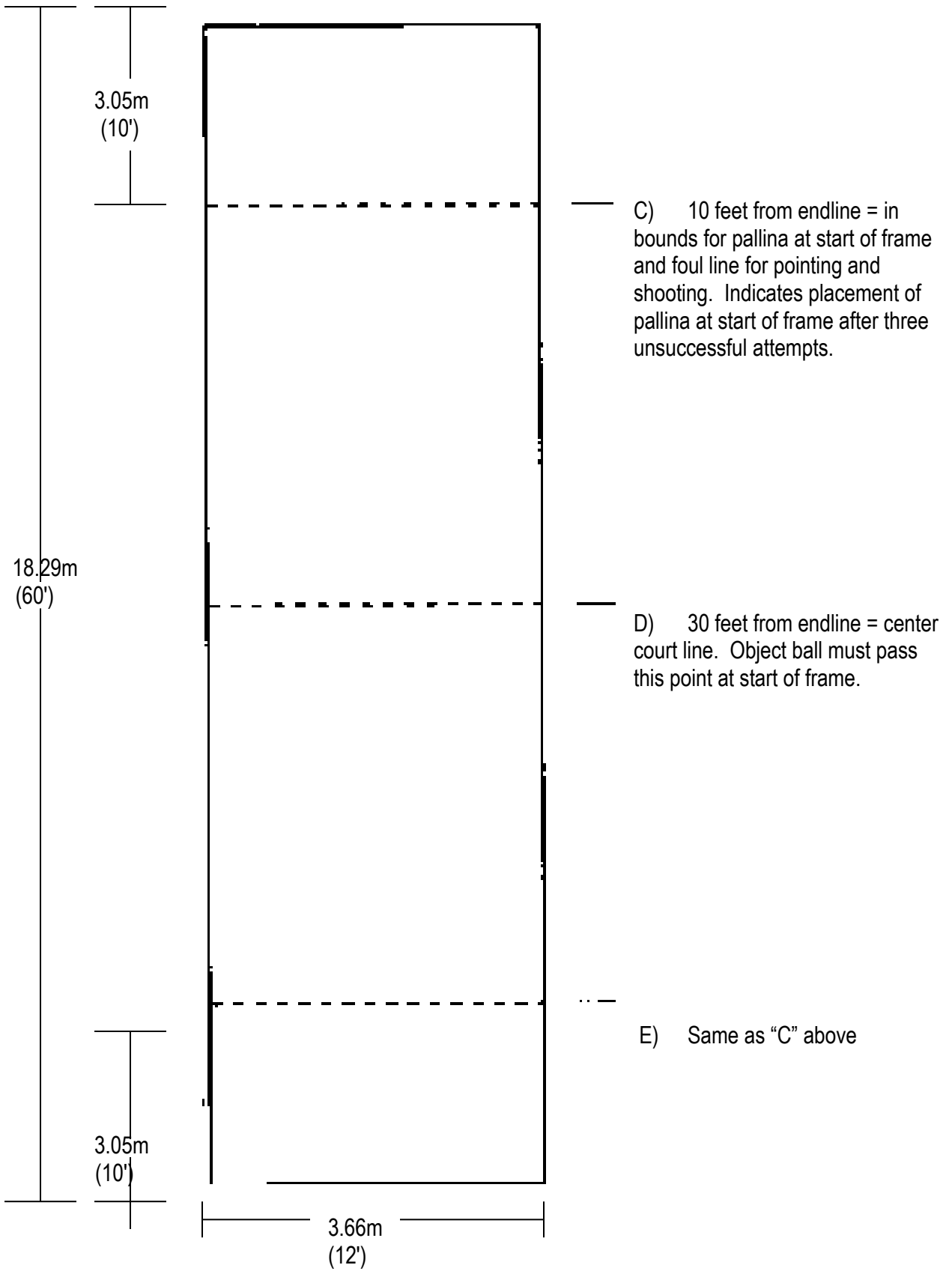
1. Court
  - a. The court is an area 3.66m. (12') wide by 18.29m (60') long (See Court Diagram).
  - b. Court surface may be composed of stone, dust, dirt, clay, grass or artificial surface provided there are no permanent or temporary obstructions in the court that would interfere with the straight-line delivery of a ball from any direction. These obstructions do not include variations in grade or consistency of terrain.
  - c. Court markings may be painted, or may be composed of rope or other materials
  - d. Markings: (See Court Diagram) All courts should be clearly marked for the following:
    - 1) 3.05m. (10') from end line; foul line for pointing and shooting
    - 2) 9.145m (30') center court line – minimum distance pallina is played at the start of the frame. During the course of play, the position of the pallina may change as a result of normal play; however, the pallina may never come to rest closer than the half-point marker or the frame is considered dead
    - 3) The 10-foot and 30-foot lines should be permanently drawn from sideline to sideline
2. Equipment
  - a. Uniforms
    - 1) Players with illegal uniforms will not be allowed to play. Players with non-matching uniforms will be penalized accordingly. Legality of a uniform may be determined by the referee or by the event coordinator.
    - 2) Proper Attire – Players will dress in a manner which will serve to bring credit to them and the sport of bocce. Players not wearing proper attire will not be allowed to participate. All players on a team shall wear uniform tops that are identical in color, trim and style. Players may wear shorts, warm-up pants, or pants that need not be identical in color. (Player bottoms may vary between shorts and long pants on the same team.) No denim jeans or cut offs!
    - 3) Footwear – Players will not be permitted to wear shoes which may damage or disrupt the court surface. Shoes must cover participant's toes. Players will not be permitted to compete wearing sandals, flip flops or no shoes.
  - b. Bocce balls may be composed of wood or a composition material and of equal size. Official league and tournament ball sizes may be from 107mm (4.20") to 110mm (4.33"). The color of the balls is immaterial provided that the four balls of one team are clearly and visibly distinct from the four balls of the opposing team.
  - c. The pallina must not be larger than 63mm (2.5") or smaller than 48mm (1.875") and should be of a color visibly distinct from both bocce ball colors.
  - d. The measuring device may be any device that has the capacity of accurately measuring the distance between two objects and acceptable to tournament officials.



## BOCCE SKILLS ASSESSMENT TEST (BOSAT)

1. The BOSAT is designed specifically to measure the basic skills necessary to participate in the sport of bocce, i.e., the delivery of the ball, while focusing on a target, so the thrown ball comes to rest as close as possible to the target (pallina in the BOSAT).
2. All athletes to be entered in bocce competition must have completed the entire BOSAT (along with his or her team members) in order to be eligible for all bocce competition.
3. Caution: You should administer the BOSAT only after athletes have become familiar with the scoring area and procedures. In addition, administer the BOSAT shortly before your district entries are due. Hopefully, skills will have improved your training from pre-district competition opportunities.
4. Equipment:
  - a. Four official size (4.20" – 4.33") bocce balls – metal or wood
  - b. One pallina of similar material and size (1.875" – 2.5")
5. Set Up
  - a. An official 60 foot grass bocce court
  - b. For each trial, the pallina will be centered in the middle of the court at each of the distances listed (30, 40, then 50 feet measured from the end).
6. Test:
  - a. Each player being tested will stand behind the throwing line at the end opposite the placed pallina and will deliver four consecutive balls as close to the pallina as they can for each trial.
  - b. If a player's foot fouls while tossing a ball, the ball will be picked up and re-tossed by the player.
  - c. If the pallina is moved during the trial, it shall remain where it lands and shall not be replaced in its original position until after completion of the trial. Play shall continue unless the pallina is knocked passed the end court line in which case it shall be considered out of bounds and the trial shall be replayed.
  - d. The official shall measure and record in inches the total number of inches all four balls are from the pallina for each trial and shall record the closest three. The measurement will be from the center of the pallina to closest side of the ball.
7. Scoring
  - a. When all three trials are completed, take the best score from each of trials (30,40 and 50 feet) and add them together to get the cumulative score.
  - b. A team score (average) shall equal the total number of inches for the four best players (with the lowest scores) on the team, divided by four.
  - c. If a ball rolls past the end line during a trial, the score shall be the measurement in inches from where the pallina was placed, measured to the end line. For example, if measuring from the pallina placed at the 40 foot mark, it would be 20 feet or 240 inches to get to the end line. The following scores will be used:  
pallina placement = inches to the end line  
30 feet = 360 inches  
40 feet = 240 inches  
50 feet = 120 inches

# BOCCE COURT SET UP



# BOCCE SKILLS ASSESSMENT TEST (BOSAT) SCORE SHEET

Agency Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

TEAM MEMBERS	TRIALS (in inches)									*TOTAL OF 3 best scores from each trial (in inches)
	1 (30 feet)			2 (40 feet)			3 (50 feet)			
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										

**IMPORTANT:**

**BOSAT TEAM AVERAGE** When all three trials are completed, each of the best three scores from each trial shall be added together into one cumulative score.

The sum of the four lowest (best) athlete totals for all of the three trials = \_\_\_\_\_ divided by 4 = \_\_\_\_\_  
**[Please record all trials in inches.]**

- The BOSAT team average will be used along with competition scores to division bocce teams for competitions.
- **A copy of your BOSAT must be forwarded with your district bocce registration materials.**
- **Transfer this total to district registrations.** If you have more than one team, rank your teams, with the best team having 1 the next 2 and so forth.