Opposition Skips Inspecting the Head.

When a Skip or player inspects the head, can the opposition Skip or player go with them? This has happened a lot in singles play and has resulted in considerable discussion at umpire meetings with consultation resulting in a diverse range of views.

Firstly, lets dispose of some urban myths that have come from players in Bowls Counties Manukau. *"The opponent can inspect the head out of turn if invited by the other Skip".* Not correct, the other Skip cannot alter the Laws in that way. *"The opponent can inspect the head out of turn if the Marker says it is OK".* No, Markers cannot alter the laws either.

So, what do the Laws of Bowls say? Law 12.1.1 requires a player not in possession of the rink to remain 1 meter behind the mat. That is why an opposing player cannot accompany a player to the head. However, things are not that simple because we all know that sometimes a Skip will remain at the head after the other skip has moved to the mat end to play their first bowl. If you have watched bowls on television, you will have noted that players do seem to move around the rink quite a bit. So how does that work? Advice from the Bowls New Zealand Umpires Committee was that a Skip not in possession of the rink can go to the head end and talk with other team members but must, like other team members, stay behind the jack and away from the head and must not actually stand over the head and inspect it to gain assistance in delivering their next bowl. However, that situation could not occur in singles.

The only person who can stand over the head and inspect it (at a time in the game that is in accordance with the Laws and Conditions of Play) is the person delivering the next bowl. They should be able to do that and properly contemplate the delivery of their next bowl without interference or comment from the opposition.

Umpires will be providing advice at tournaments to ensure things are done correctly and that there is fairness for players inspecting the head and contemplating their next delivery.