

## **A History of the Rossmoor Lawn Bowling Club**

The Rossmoor Lawn Bowling Club is both a competitive sporting club and a social environment for the enjoyment of Rossmoor residents. In 2017 it celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! It is world renowned for its excellent greens.

In the mid-1960s a group of new residents in the Leisure World senior community (the forerunner of the Golden Rain Foundation – Rossmoor) in Walnut Creek, CA made known their interest in having the sport of lawn bowling be part of the community's activities. These 30 individuals from lawn bowling clubs in Oakland and Berkeley became the organizers of the Rossmoor Lawn Bowling Club. Their commitment was great enough that it was one of only three clubs originally enshrined in the community's charter.

The formation and ongoing advancement of RLBC has been an evolutionary process that began during the 1970s and 1980s. Over the years the membership has discussed and developed the rules and standards for the club and how lawn bowling is played at Rossmoor.

The club membership in 1967 was 30, but by the end of 1968 had grown to 200. It hit a peak of 315 in 1994. In 2007 there were 151 active bowlers at RLBC, and in 2021 there were 115 bowlers with another 24 non-bowling members. The decline has been attributed to Rossmoor residents finding many alternative activities to lawn bowling that were not available when Rossmoor first opened.

Even the demographics of the club have changed over time. In 1970 the club had more men (149) than women (69), but by the late 1980s women began outnumbering men. In 1990 there were 103 male members and 122 female members. By the mid-90s, active women bowlers numbered 146 to only 111 men bowlers. At the end of 2021, active women bowlers still outnumbered men 61 to 54 in the club.

The installation of the original greens began in 1966. They were completed and dedicated in 1967. With the increase in membership, by the early 1980s the club asked Rossmoor's Board of Directors to add a third green. Learning from the lawn maintenance experiences of the previous 15 years and the advice of outside consultants, the bowling environment was reengineered and a third green added between 1983 and 1986. The Rossmoor greens became the gem of the bowling world, not only in the Bay Area, but throughout the United States.

In 1969 Golden Rain Foundation (GRF) constructed a building (the Mat House) to store equipment dedicated to the club's use. (It was expanded in 1974 to include the room used for lockers today.) Originally paid for by GRF, the club raised significant funds over the years to add metal lockers for the members' equipment and a kitchenette (2007). The building has since provided a space for meetings and social events. A water fountain was placed outside the front of the Mat House in 1985 dedicated to the founder and first club president, Douglas Smith.

Aside from bowls, club members have always been responsible for buying or making any equipment needed to play the game – jacks, mats, ground sheets, carts, rakes, rink/boundary markers, etc.

From the dedication of the first greens RLBC members have held draw games and tournaments. Many bowlers preferred the social games and organized games were a daily occurrence. Efforts were made to attract members to intra-club competition believing the experience stimulated better bowling. The result is you can see many framed wall areas in the Mat House showing all the winners of club competitions over the years.

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The first competition between men and women was held in 1984. This triples tournament, first called Ma and Pa, became the current day Guys and Dolls event held each 4<sup>th</sup> of July. In 1993 the “Four Score and More” singles tournament for men and women over 80 years old was started.

Inter-club tournaments and participation in national events were also a part of RLBC life. Early in the club’s history RLBC became a founding member of the Pacific Inter-Mountain Division (PIMD), a regional organization and part of the national Bowls USA. PIMD holds many regional competitions each year in which club members participate. RLBC also hosts the seasonal PIMD Opening Ceremonies each year.

In 1968 PIMD hosted the Men’s National Open using RLBC’s facilities and its newly dedicated greens. Since then, RLBC has hosted and participated in national events on a regular basis. In 2002 RLBC hosted the US Lawn Bowling Championship.

The social aspect of the club has always been an important part of RLBC. Early in the 1970s bi-weekly brown bag lunches were begun to introduce new members and conduct club business. They allowed members to enjoy each other’s company and to inform the membership of club affairs. The club history shows that they were still being held in 2006, although they have since been replaced by the monthly Fun Social tournament and meal. To commemorate past bowlers, the Memorial Day tournament was started in 2008. Club tournaments have also been held on other national holidays. These events allow members to commemorate the holidays and enjoy a meal together.

RLBC has hosted many organized tours over the years from other countries, as well as individuals and groups from other clubs in the USA. The groups from overseas clubs include people from England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong. RLBC has also toured extensively to bowl in many places, including Hong Kong, England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Canada, Hawaii, and Northwest and Southwest USA.

Other tidbits of interest in the RLBC:

- Handicaps were proposed in the early 1980s and a list prepared by the mid-1980s.
- The first Fun Social was held in March 1992.
- The first club Directory was published in 1994.
- The first Bowler of the Year was awarded in 2006; Dan Belton was the first recipient
- A penalty of \$.25 for wrong bias bowls began being charged in 2008
- The game of Rummikub was introduced to the Mat House in 2009
- Winter League is started and becomes an official tournament in 2012
- The dress code was changed to allow colored clothing for practice and draw games in 2013; it was further loosened in 2021

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## Notes from RLBC History Binders (unless otherwise noted)

- Organized in 1967 by 30 residents who had been members in other clubs around the Bay Area. Assisted notably by the Oakland and Berkeley clubs, which provided not only advice, but also equipment. Incorporated as a non-profit on October 3, 1968. (Handbook)
- Construction on two initial greens begun in 1966 and completed in 1967. Official opening on May 4, 1968. Addition of a third green was begun in 1983 by moving the existing greens apart and was dedicated in November 1986. (Handbook)
- The Mat House was built in 1969 to store equipment and was expanded in 1974 to include the current locker room. A kitchenette was installed in 2007. (Handbook)
- GRF Board of Directors in 1967 under Rule 104.0 had delegated the day-to-day responsibility for the lawn bowling greens and Mat House to the RLBC. RLBC is responsible for: certifying residents for play, determining greens conditions and restrictions for play, scheduling games, maintaining the equipment, monitoring compliance with the Lawn Bowling Rules, and serve in an advisory capacity to GRF staff in matters related to the facilities maintenance. (Handbook)
- Membership began with 30 individuals in 1967 and totaled close to 200 by 1968. It hit a peak of 315 in 1994. Currently 120 active bowlers are members. RLBC has had to compete for membership from the many clubs that have started since Rossmoor first began offering residency.
- In 2017 the club celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a variety of events.
- Club was a founding member of the Pacific Inter-Mountain Division of Bowls USA. It has hosted many Opening Day ceremonies.
- Each year in December the club hosts its Annual Awards Dinner to celebrate the winners of the many tournaments it has held that year including naming it male and female Bowlers of the Year.
- Numerous events have been held with each national holiday that includes bowling and eating.
- In the 2000s the traditional “white” clothing club members used to wear has given way to less formal attire in order to attract new members. Some long-time members still wear whites in tournaments.
- 1967 – Founder and first president of club: Douglas Smith. The drinking fountain at the corner of the Mat House was dedicated to him in 1985.
- Originally men were affiliated with PIMD and ALBA in 1968. AWLBA was begun in 1970 for women with PIMD one of the founding members.
- In 1970 the club had more men (149) than women (69), but by the late 1980s women began outnumbering men in the club. In 1990 there were 103 male members and 122 female members. By the mid-90s, active women bowlers numbered 146 to on 111 men bowlers.
- Many experienced bowlers have taken on coaching new bowlers. Hall Smith is one of the more successful mentioned from the 1970s.
- Early in the 1970s brown bag lunches were begun to introduce new members and conduct club business.
- In 1968 PIMD hosted the Men’s National Open and the Rossmoor greens were used. In 1969 the club held its first Invitational. Eight clubs participated. The Rossmoor greens became a showplace that continues today. Pflugfelder became the first self-appointed caretaker of the greens and instituted such habits as rotating rinks and taking them out of play when maintenance was being done.

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- Through great perseverance from 1970 to 1987, the two initial greens were replaced by three new greens as their inadequacy became apparent. Experts were brought in to convince the GRF Board of the need. Eventually, GRF decided to fund the entire amount. Bids were let, but many members were used as consultants to ensure successful construction. The new greens were dedicated and Rossmoor was used for the men's and women's National Opens in 1987.
- In 1995, RLBC was the only sport in Rossmoor which belonged to regional, national and world bodies which conducted tournaments in which members have an opportunity to compete.
- Club members have always bought or made all the equipment needed to play the game – jacks, mats, ground sheets, carts, rakes, score boards and rink/boundary markers.
- Martin Duffy designed and built the plastic rakes in use today. Hank Klaver devised a colored tab system to mark rink rotation and Jim Towar updated the system later.
- As the club started many bowlers preferred the draw games. Efforts were made to attract members to intra-club competition to stimulate better bowling. Organized games were a daily occurrence. In 1984 Mary Mag-Hasse organized the first competition between men and women. This triples tournament, first called Ma and Pa, became our current day Guys and Dolls event held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. The first Fun Social was held in March 1992. The stimulus for the game was a cash prize. In 1993 the Four Score and More singles tournament for men and women was started.
- Handicaps were proposed in the early 1980s and a list prepared by the mid-1980s.
- PIMD hosted the National Opens in 1968, 1974, 1981 and 1987 with opening ceremonies at the SF, Oakland, Berkeley and Rossmoor greens. In 1993 RLBC's Orville and Erma Artist organized one of the most exciting national tournaments ever seen complete with the pomp of the traditional British games. While Rossmoor bowlers have not often appeared as winners or runners-up in large tournaments, they have placed in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.
- During the 1980s and 1990s the use of semi-weekly Brown Bag lunches was noted as the foundation for the club's cohesiveness. They allowed members to enjoy each other's company and to inform members of the club affairs. They were also used to impart the sport's history and brief talks on rules and etiquette, tactics and strategy, etc.
- The club has gone on many bowling tours over the years. The first in 1974 was a PIMD trip to Hong Kong. In 1975 members joined bowlers from Southern California to tour and bowl in many parts of the British Isles. RLBC began its own tours in 1979 to the Northwest and British Columbia. In 1981 the club travelled down the California coast with stops to bowl in many locations and completed their trip by bowling in the Arizona State Open in Sun City, AZ. In 1983 the club went down under bowling in New Zealand, Fiji and Australia. More tours to the Northwest and Canada occurred during the 1980s. Other trips were arranged for just attending international tournaments.
- RLBC has also hosted groups over the years from other countries, as well as individuals and groups from other clubs in the USA. In the 1978, 42 bowlers visited from New South Wales, Australia; in 1981 visitors from the Hong Kong Football Club; in 1990 a group from the UK was met by our bowlers lining the greens in whites; and in 1991 a group of male UK bowlers toured the USA playing in mixed games.
- In 1994 the first club Directory was published.
- 1995 – state triples, novice singles and fours tournaments played at RLBC
- 1996 – answering and message system is installed in the Mat House
- 1996 – RLBC hosts 32 Australian bowlers

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- 1996 - RLBC greens used for National Open Tournament in September
- 1996 – RLBC hosts group of British bowlers in October
- 1997 – club initiates Twilight Fun Socials in August
- 1997 – George Matulich presents the club with a painting of the three greens.
- 1997 – Rossmoor hosts both the opening and closing days for PIMD
- 1997 - RLBC members tour New Zealand
- 1998 – club celebrates its 30th anniversary
- 1998 – Rossmoor hosts men’s US Singles playdowns
- 2000 – Rossmoor hosts representatives from 17 English Bowling Association clubs
- 2000 – 4 Rossmoor of 5 members for the USA compete in the Can/AM West Classic
- 2001 – Rossmoor hosts dinner at the close of the US championships held in PIMD
- 2001 – 25 club members journey around Great Britain for two weeks playing “upper class” clubs in a number of venues
- 2002 – RLBC hosts the US Lawn Bowling Championship
- 2003 – RLBC tours New Zealand after a day of bowling in Honolulu
- 2004 – RLBC hosts British visitors
- 2004 – RLBC tours 9 clubs in Southern California and Arizona
- 2005 – Club directors approve a new handicap system. They will apply to all tournaments except championship tournaments
- 2005 – RLBC visited clubs in Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia
- 2006 – weekly brown bag lunches still being held
- 2006 – 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month is set aside for Fun Socials
- 2006 – First year Bowler of the Year is awarded; Dan Belton is the first recipient
- 2007 – Kitchenette is completed in the Mat House
- 2007 – 151 active bowlers at RLBC
- 2007 – 26 RLBC members travel to Arizona for play at various clubs
- 2008 – wrong bias bowls now cost players \$.25
- 2008 - Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declares May 10 to be Lawn Bowling Day
- 2008 – A mentor program is introduced for newly certified bowlers
- 2008 – Rossmoor hosts largest contingents for USLBA Open
- 2009 – The game of Rummikub is introduced to the Mat House
- 2008 – The Memorial Day tournament is introduced commemorating past bowlers
- 2009 – New rake design is introduced which is cheaper and easier to maintain
- 2010 – RLBC hosts two touring groups from England
- 2010 – RLBC travels to Hong Kong
- 2011 – Winter League is started and becomes an official tournament in 2012
- 2012 – RLBC.net launched
- 2013 – A tree fell on the roof of the Mat House creating a hole. It was repaired and new A/C and heating systems were added to the building.
- 2013 – The dress code was changed to allow colored clothing for practice and draw games.
- 2013 – 20 RLBC members travelled to the Pacific Northwest.
- 2014 – RLBC travelled to England

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- 2014 – Summer League is started
- 2014 – Membership in Bowls USA became optional
- 2019 – 28 members of the club travelled to Devon, England, touring various cities and playing at fours games at three different clubs