



Special Olympics Minnesota 2024 Bocce Handbook

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| Traditional Bocce Rules | 3 |
| Qualifying Scores, Registration & Divisioning ... | 5 |
| Modified Bocce Rules | 6 |
| Sportsmanship | 6 |

COACH CERTIFICATION RATIO TABLE

The updated coach certification ratio tables can be found in the Special Olympics Minnesota Coaches Portal under policies and fact sheets, or here: [Coach Ratio Table](#)

MORE INFORMATION

Practice ideas, skill assessment/development, and rules can be found in the SOI Quick Start Guides and SOI Rules for each respective sport can be found at www.specialolympics.org/sports.aspx

Rules of competition for the International Federation for Bocce and Special Olympics Inc. will be used for all events conducted by Special Olympics Minnesota. The rules listed below are highlights of the rules of competition along with any rule exceptions.

TRADITIONAL BOCCE RULES

Court

The traditional bocce court is 12 feet wide by 60 feet long. The court surface can be composed of stone dust, dirt, clay, grass, or artificial surface, provided there is no permanent or temporary obstruction 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, consistency, or terrain.

The foul line should be marked 10 feet from the back-end line. The half-court line should be marked at 30 feet. During play, the position of the pallina may change because of normal play. However, the pallina may never come to rest before the half-court line or the frame is considered dead. In this case, the pallina would be moved to the closest spot in the eligible section of the court.

Equipment

Bocce balls may be manufactured of wood or a composition material and must be of equal size. Official tournament balls will have a circumference of 107 millimeters. 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. The pallina will have a circumference of 60 millimeters.

Rules of Competition

The team possessing the pallina will have three attempts at placing the pallina beyond the 30-foot line and before the 10-foot line on the opposite end. If these three attempts are unsuccessful, the opposing team will have one chance to place the pallina. If this attempt is unsuccessful, the official will place the pallina in the center of the court at the 50-foot mark. However, at no time does a team lose its earned pallina advantage of being able to deliver the first ball. This is known as the **Three Attempt Rule**.

The pallina is rolled or tossed by a member of the team having won the coin toss to start the match. 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," they step aside and allow the "out" team to deliver.

It is always incumbent upon the team with the pallina advantage to establish the **initial point**. For 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 fly out of the court, leaving only the pallina in the court. It is then Team A's throw to re-establish the initial point.

Players have the option of rolling, tossing, bouncing, or banking their ball down the court, provided it does not go out of bounds of the court. A player also has the option of hitting out any ball in play in trying to obtain a point or decrease the opposing team's points. A player can grip the ball by placing their hand over or under the ball as long as the ball is released in an underhand delivery. An underhand delivery is defined as releasing the ball below the waist.

Event management will have the discretion to allow for certain modifications or interpretations of ball delivery based upon a physical characteristic. If the pallina gets hit and leaves the court, the pallina will be placed back in the pitch as close to where it went out as possible and play will proceed. If the pallina is hit past the foul line, but still within the court, that is okay. Only the initial placement of the pallina needs to be within the 50-foot and 30-foot marks.

If a player throws a ball out of turn, that ball is removed from the playing area and does not count for scoring. If the ball that was thrown out of turn moves any other balls, replace the balls back to their original positions. The player that threw out of turn does not re-throw that ball.

Each match will finish when either a team/side reaches 12 points, or 20 minutes have passed, whichever one comes first. No match should end in a tie. If after 20 minutes a match is tied, one more frame is played. There are four balls to a side/team. A coin toss by the official will determine which team has the pallina and choice of ball color.

In singles, each player will play four balls. In Unified doubles or traditional doubles, each player will play two balls. The sequence of players does not matter.

If a tie exists after round robin competition, the tie will be broken by the following order: (1) Higher total points scored by each person or team, (2) lower total points scored against by each person or team, (3) if still tied, whoever won the head-to-head match between the tied players/teams.

Coaching/Substitutions

Athletes and Unified Partners can strategize together but coaches that are not playing are prohibited to discuss strategy once the match begins.

If an official determines that a coach or spectator is violating this rule, the official may sanction the offending individual with a verbal warning, or forfeiture of the match.

With divisions being set in advance by an assessment score, substitutions for registered teams are not allowed. Another registered athlete or Unified Partner will be allowed to play for an absent player, but the team will receive a participation award.

Scoring

At the end of each frame (when both teams have thrown all balls), scoring 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. The players (not coaches or spectators) have a right to request a measurement if the players disagree with the official. The scoring team for each frame will also win the pallina advantage for the subsequent frame.

QUALIFYING SCORES, REGISTRATION AND DIVISIONING

During the assessment process, if the pallina is moved from its starting spot, it is to be replaced on the spot before the next ball is rolled and before any measurements are taken. A coach will place the pallina at the 30-foot line, and the player plays eight balls. The coach will measure the three closest balls and record their distance in centimeters. This will then be repeated at 40 feet and 50 feet, with eight throws at each distance.

All athletes and Unified Partners must submit assessment scores to be used for divisioning. Measurements will be taken from the center side of the bocce ball to the center side of the pallina, for a total of nine measurements, with the sum of those nine throws becoming the player's assessment score.

For Unified doubles or traditional doubles, the team assessment score will be the sum of each player's individual assessment score. These will be calculated automatically, as only individual scores should be entered into registration. Do not enter the sum of the two scores at any part of registration. When creating a team name during registration, please use the format of Last Name/Last Name (for example, Jones/Anderson).

For athletes that are non-verbal, visually impaired, or need additional assistance on the court, please register with **on-court assistance**. The court assistant can help pick up the balls for the athlete, but the athlete must throw the ball on their own. Court assistants must be provided by the delegation and registered online as coaches, thus part of the competition registration process.

Divisioning in bocce is typically done in divisions of three or four players or teams to accommodate scheduling. Athletes will be guaranteed two matches at the regional competition, and three matches at the state competition.

Once divisioning and scheduling is completed, any scratch will lead to rescheduling the entire division. This must be done because in most cases, a scratch results in one player or team only having the opportunity to play one match, which is not desirable in any competition. For this reason, it is especially important to let staff know of any scratches you can in advance as well as check the division schedules often during the competition.

MODIFIED BOCCE RULES

This event is designed for lower ability or mobility athletes who do not yet have the skills to put a regulation pallina into play or place a regulation ball past half-court. If an athlete can do either of these skills consistently, they should be in Traditional bocce.

The pitch length will be 40 feet in modified bocce, and athletes will not switch ends between frames. The end of the pitch from which play originates will remain open. Ball size will be 90 millimeters and pallina size will be 40 millimeters.

The athlete assessment scores for modified bocce participants will be based on pallina placements at 10, 20, and 30 feet (versus 30, 40 and 50 feet for traditional scores).

Modified Unified doubles and modified traditional doubles will also be offered at competitions. An athlete may be paired with a Unified Partner and will be divisioned in the event based on the modified assessment scores for each doubles player.

Ramps will be allowed in modified bocce only, although we are hopeful those athletes can participate successfully in the modified events without a ramp. Participants using a ramp will be divisioned based on their assessment score and placed in a ramp division when participation allows. Teams must provide ramps for their own athletes.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship is both the coach's and athlete's commitment to fair play, ethical behavior, and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes by leading by example.

Competitive Effort

- Put forth maximum effort during each event
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform in competition
- Always finish a match; Never quit

Fair Play Always

- Comply with the rules
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play
- Respect the decision of the officials
- Strategy discussions with any athlete or partner are prohibited once game begins
 - If an official determines that a coach, partner, or spectator is violating this rule, the official may sanction the offending individual. Sanctions may include verbal warning, citing the coach/partner with unsportsmanlike conduct, or expulsion from the games.