

# Winter and Summer, Bowling is a Great Social Activity

By Penny Coles  
The Local

There are carpet bowlers in town, and there are lawn bowlers — and then there are those who are happy to bowl in all seasons.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Carpet Bowling Club has about 55 members, 30 of whom can be counted on to show up most Monday and Thursday afternoons. The carpets get pulled out onto the smooth, perfectly even floor of the Community Centre auditorium, and the seniors get some exercise and enjoy a social time.

Paul McHoull is one of the winter bowlers who looks forward to spring and the beginning of the season for the NOTL Lawn Bowling Club.

Carpet bowling began in 1998 in the gymnasium of the former high school. A year later it moved to the old Platof Street Community Centre, where the floor was “interesting,” said McHoull. “Not only was the floor old and uneven but it had drains located at various spots. You couldn’t see them under the carpet but you could tell that they were there when your bowl would roll over one and make a funny little hop.”

It was a challenge to play, and members feel fortunate now to be in the Community Centre. They still have to unroll and roll up the carpets each session, but “I’m not complaining,” said McHoull. “This is a huge improvement,” he said of the new facility. He would like to be able to offer beginners more training and practise time, but that’s difficult when the carpets are only available for the duration of the afternoon games.

Members pay \$50 for the season and drop-ins can pay \$3 an afternoon. There are Teas held monthly, birthdays are celebrated, and there’s a pot-luck at the end of the season. “Some members prefer it to outside and don’t lawn bowl. Here they don’t have to worry about the weather, or getting too much sun.”

The two games have some differences — chiefly that the lawn bowling lane, at 90 feet, is twice the length of the carpet, which has a block in the middle so players can’t just hurl the bowl straight down. “You have to go around it — you can’t just heave it,” says McHoull.

While it’s more of a social game, with teams drawn randomly for each game, some members are more competitive than others and enjoy playing in a League offered by the club.

Some people come out and use the carpet bowling matches as a learning period before joining the outdoor club in the spring. Beginners can come out three times to give the sport a try before being asked to pay and rental bowls are free for the first year.

Carpet bowlers still have a few sessions left this season before heading outside. Registration for lawn bowling starts in mid-April, and the Official Opening Day is in May.



Elly Warren bowls on the carpet in the winter and moves outdoors to lawn bowling in April

*(Fred Mercnik)*

(Edited for the web site)