

Short Mat Bowls in London

The London Short Mat Bowls Development Association (LSMBDA) was formed in 1975 which quickly progressed from a small group of volunteers to an Association representing over 100 Clubs from all the 32 Boroughs around the London Area. These clubs being formed into regions (N.W., N.E., S.W., S.E. and Central) within the London Area. By 1995-1996 the Clubs had risen to 102 with 2909 Club bowlers.

The controlling body, the English Short Mat Bowls Association (ESMBA), was formed in 1984 for the game of Short Mat Bowls throughout the U.K. Rules of the game were later introduced in the same year. The game's Association England membership is currently around 17500 bowlers. The ESMBA established inter County championships, national championships, junior championships, umpire's organisation and recently a coaching section.

The ESMBA was also instrumental in establishing international competitions played to the same set of rules. There is an annual British Isles and World Championships featuring England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Isle of Man and a World Championships which is held every two years with countries such as Belgium and India joining the home nations in the battle for supremacy.

In 1985 the London Association Management structure changed and the current London Short Mat Bowls Association (LSMBA) was formed and continues to organise the activities and functions of Short Mat Bowls in the London Area. The LSMBA continues to control all short mat bowling in London although of recent years Club membership and bowler numbers have somewhat declined but its Management is happy to help suitable organisations to develop this sport in any part of the London Area.

Short Mat Bowls - the game. One of the biggest benefits of short mat bowling is its flexibility. The equipment is portable and only needs an area large enough to take a mat 1.83 metre (6 foot) wide and 13.75 metre (45 foot) long. It is played in church halls, community centres, social clubs, school halls and leisure centres. The game is played by all ages, sexes and abilities who can all compete together - a real family sport.

Who plays? Well just about anybody who feels they will get enjoyment from this type of activity. The age range is from early teens to people in their eighties, able bodied to those with disabilities, men, women, boys and girls - it is a game that can be played and enjoyed by all. It can be seen as a family game as all are able to play the game together. All who play can just bowl for enjoyment with a minimum of competition (i.e. as a social

activity) or for those who require competition and development of their ability and skill they can progress up to the highest level of the game. The opportunity to play the game extends from Club activity to local, County and inter-County leagues, competitions at local, county and national levels. A player can bowl occasionally or every day throughout the winter months if they wish and now many Clubs also run throughout the summer months.

The major objective in playing the game must be to enjoy what you are doing, it need not be too expensive or physically active and certainly allows players to meet a lot of people. People just starting in the short mat game can develop as far and as fast as they may wish to do. The basic skills built up from the game of short mat bowls can allow players to move into the other forms of the bowls game if they so wish. Some basic training would be helpful to newcomers to the game and County Associations like London are keen to provide players who are able and willing to work with Clubs/Groups/players to help them establish themselves. If players are coming to this game from long mat or the outside game their previous experience can be readily adapted to this new activity.