



World bowls president pledges Africa injection

By ALAN SIMMONDS, Media Officer, Bowls South Africa

Johannesburg, South Africa. - In spite of financial constraints Africa's lawn bowls nations could expect help from World Bowls in the fields of development, infrastructure, coaching and technical advice.

In an interview during his attendance at the prestigious 2015 Warwick Wealth/Bowls South Africa Masters Singles Champion ships at the Wanderers Club, here, the newly appointed president of World Bowls (WB), John Bell, waxed optimistic for the continent.

The meeting was also attended by a former World and Bowls SA president John McArdle, WB's Director for Africa and Americas and Bowls SA's president Allan Freeman.

Says Bell: "I have inherited several problems which have my attention.

"Once is ensuring the 'minnows' of our global bowls family receive assistance. I will be exhorting the main nations to look to their smaller neighbours - something I am pleased to see happening in Africa, thanks to South African commitment and advice.

"I can say world harmony has been restored after a difficult time. A pro-active agenda will ensure success in all directions. I realise transparency must remain uppermost in our delivery and a stringent and expansive marketing policy, coupled to re-creation of a readable, up-to-date website, are essential.

"A world survey has been undertaken to assess priorities; our global regional directors will be appraised of what is required."

A major ongoing problem remains WB's puny about £220 000 (about R5-million) budget. With traditional resistance to any increase in WB affiliation fees from club players everywhere, the body remains caught between intent and practise – “people do not seem to care about World Bowls,” an obviously disappointed Bell said.

Africa is regarded as a growth area, with South Africa leading the way.

Said McArdle: “We have sent New Age (small) Bowls to Malawi and Botswana, but there is need for coaching staff (Malawi has no coaches). There is no money available; I have asked South Africa if they can help and this avenue is being explored.”

This was echoed by Freeman, who pointed out, “Tournament such as the African States, Botswana Pairs and the Quadrangular with Namibia and Zimbabwe allows for co-operation and exchange of ideas; we are keen to assist our neighbours wherever and whenever possible.”

The same expansion and assistance drive is in place for Europe.

Said Bell: “Fledgling bowls nations such as Germany, Hungary, France and others have intimated they require assistance; my excellent board has the matter in hand. “

Unfortunately for bowls this is a process beset with many obstacles en route; “We need to be aware, but as for any code require assistance from the media; but we also need time. In return I promise everything possible will be done to ensure bowlers everywhere can look forward to an excellently administered sport and a plethora of options, assist programmes and a bright future,” concluded the world president.

Bell, 66, a former multiple champion at every level, author, correspondent and amazing after-dinner speaker, regular visitor as player and tourist to South Africa, with wife Jeanette shared their holiday programme as guests of Bowls SA to the Masters. They have left for Cape Town on the iconic Blue Train.

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