

Unified Bowling

25-26 Rules and Regulations



Special Olympics
New Jersey



Unified Bowling Topics

**Special
Olympics**
New Jersey



- ✓ Participation
- ✓ Team composition & eligibility
- ✓ Competition format
- ✓ Competition options & season dates



Participation - NJSIAA



- All NJSIAA member schools are eligible to participate in Unified Bowling
 - Schools must declare/register their Unified Sports team*
- Unified Bowling team records will impact neither varsity nor sub-varsity team records/standings
- Students may participate in Unified bowling even if they are participating in another winter sport *other than Varsity bowling*
- Athletic Directors/Coaches should arrange matches against other teams participating in the same level of Unified Bowling
 - A three-match minimum is required to compete in the post-season
 - Strongly recommend six matches

NJSIAA Eligibility



ALL students participating must meet NJSIAA requirements and complete all NJSIAA required paperwork

Athletes (students with [intellectual/developmental disabilities](#))

- Students must be enrolled in high school, but may compete up to 21-years-old
- Varsity level bowlers are NOT permitted to compete with Unified

Unified partners (students without intellectual disabilities)

- Varsity level bowlers are NOT permitted to compete with Unified

Coaches

- Unified Sports coaches will follow the certification standards as outlined by the [NJSIAA](#) with the addition of the [NFHS Coaching Unified Sports course](#)

Team Composition



Special Olympics Unified Sports® were created to give individuals with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to train and compete in sports activities alongside their non-disabled peers.

- Teams may consist of up to eight bowlers: 4 competitors + 4 subs
- The four students actively competing will be comprised of:
 - 2 students with an intellectual disability (athletes)
 - 2 students without intellectual disabilities (partners)
- This ratio must be maintained at all times during competition
- Teams should be co-ed

Principle of Meaningful Involvement



- **Meaningful Involvement**

- Compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others
- Participate according to rules of competition
- Every player has the ability and opportunity to contribute to the success of the team

- **Things to Avoid**

- Display superior sports skills without communicating with teammates – what does this look like at bowling?
- Lower your level of ability and effort dramatically or comically
- Tokenism

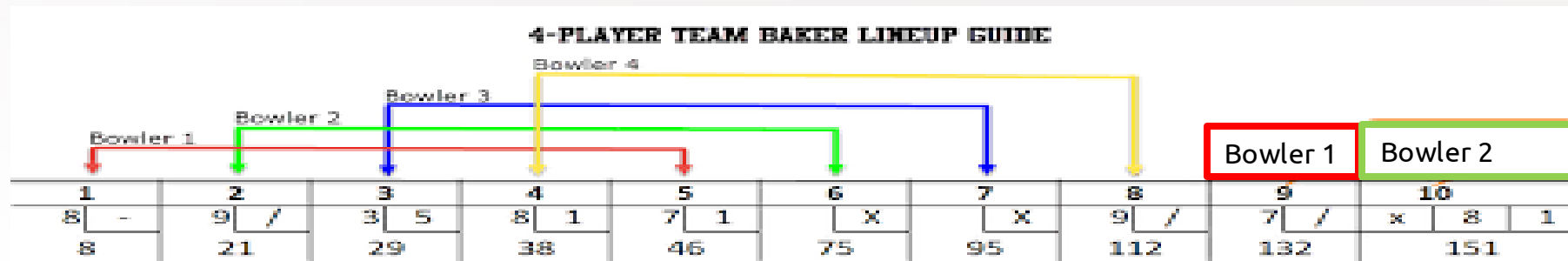
- **Player dominance applies to both partners AND athletes**

Format at State Competition



Baker Format

- Fast-paced and team-based method of bowling.
- Multiple bowlers bowl one game, alternating frames.



- Order: The bowling order (bowler 1, bowler 2, bowler 3, bowler 4) for Baker is set each game (1 game = 10 frames). Coaches may change their order from one game to another. However, an athlete must always be bowler 2 and bowl three frames in each game (frames 2, 6, 10).

Competition Format

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Substitutions:

- A coach may substitute players between any frames during the game. Once a player has been substituted for, that player may not re-enter the current game. Substitutions must keep the original team composition in place (Athlete/Athlete, Partner/Partner). **Only an athlete may substitute into the Bowler 2 spot.**
- All substitutions shall be noted with bowler names and frames bowled.

Games/Winner:

- Each four-person team will bowl 6 Baker games within each state meet. The winner of the meet will be decided by total pinfall. This means that the total score from all 6 games for each team is added together and the team with the most pins wins the event.

Lanes:

- All team members bowl on the same lane, bumpers are NOT used. After three games, teams shall switch lanes with one another for equal competition. In an effort to stay on the same schedule, teams shall not start a new game until their opponent has finished their current game.

Competition Format



Score Sheets/Information:

- Coaches/Administration shall pre-communicate their team information including: team composition, anticipated substitutions, and bowling order. All scoring discrepancies should be reported to the score monitor or the event administrator immediately.

Official:

- The administrator in charge during regular season events and district competition will serve as the head official regarding any disputes. During state competition, NJSIAA will have personnel in place. During Unified Cups, SONJ will have personnel in place.

Ramps:

- Ramps can be provided for sectional and state level competitions if requested in advance.

Coaching:

- All coaches should remain outside of the lane area unless assistance with accommodations is needed. There are no restrictions on when a coach may communicate and coach participants.

Competition Format



Playing Rules:

- All contests shall be conducted under the official bowling rules of the United States Bowling Congress (USBC) in conjunction with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Bowling. In such case, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Bowling shall apply or those approved by that organization with modifications approved by the NJSIAA

Tie-Breaking Procedure:

- In a bracket setting, the higher seed gets the choice of lane and whether to bowl first or second. In other meet formats, a coin flip will determine who decides on lane and order
- Each team gets one delivery. Higher pinfall wins the tie breaker. The bowler and order is determined by the last game, including substitutions. The same rotation must be used during a tie breaker. For example, the first athlete from the final game will bowl the first tie breaker delivery, followed by the bowler 2 (2nd tie breaker delivery, if needed), then the bowler 3 (3rd tie breaker delivery, if needed). The pins are cleared and re-set following each tie-breaker delivery

Competition Format



Dress Code:

- It is recommended that players wear school uniforms during play. The following shall apply during tournament play:
 - All bowlers must wear similar shirts of the same color. Bowlers should also wear full length slacks. These slacks may be of any color as long as they are similar to that of the rest of the team and do not have any tears or holes in them. Bowlers may NOT wear shorts, skirts, jeans or hats. Bowlers out of uniform will not be allowed to bowl until they are able to comply with the rules. Proper shoes are required.
 - Participants must keep their uniforms on while in the competition area. Coaches should wear either a team uniform or appropriate coaching apparel in school colors or the colors of black, white, gray or khaki.

Post Season - NJSIAA



NJSIAA Tournament Opt-out Deadline – February 13

3 matches played before opt-out date

SECTIONAL QUALIFIER (if needed) – Rosters due February 13 – *one team per school*

- Date is TBD as needed
- Unified Teams will go to the same site as their High School Team if lane space is available. Dates can be found on the NJSIAA website for each group
- Baker Scoring will be used for all games – roster of 4 to 8 bowlers, following all NJSIAA rules
- There can be no roster changes after February 10

TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS – *one team per school*

- February 25th, 2026, 11 am start, Lucky Strike (formerly Bowlero) – North Brunswick, NJ
- Teams will be divisioned into two Groups.
- The Group A team with the highest number of pins will be the Group A State Champion
- The Group B team with the highest number of pins will be the Group B State Champion

Post Season - SONJ

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Unified Cup – March 3rd @ Lucky Strike (formerly Bowlero) North Brunswick

- Registration will open January 3
- Schools may enter teams of 4 to 8 students (2-4 Athletes **and** 2-4 Partners per team)
 - Teams outside this ratio will be asked to re-roster in order to compete
 - Middle Schools – two teams
 - High Schools – one team, no members may have been listed on the NJSIAA Championship roster
- **All Athlete, Partner, and Coach paperwork due February 10 to JRW@sonj.org**
 - Athletes and Partners must complete [online registration](#) once per year
 - Coaches need NFHS Coaching Unified Sports Course, Protective Behaviors, Heads Up Concussion Training, Class A form
 - This paperwork should be completed PRIOR to your first practice
- **All roster updates and changes due February 16**
 - Any roster changes must be sent to JRW@sonj.org accompanied by paperwork

Important Online Links



- [25-26 Interscholastic Unified Sports Registration](#) – Make sure to register!
- [Interscholastic Unified Sports Teams](#) – High School
- [Interscholastic Unified Sports Teams](#) – Middle School
- [Bowling Match Report](#) – must be completed throughout the season to be eligible for post season play, high school and middle school form
- [NFHS Coaching Unified Sports Course](#)
- [NJSIAA Coach Accreditation](#) – NJSIAA Coach Requirements
- [Unified Bowling Info Page](#)

Contact Information



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NJSIAA Unified Bowling Competitions

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Questions?