



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL ON WEDNESDAY 13th DECEMBER 2006**

Present:	Alan Nelson	Chairman
	Heather Dhondy	Vice-Chairman
	Brian Crack	Vice-Chairman
	Max Bavin	Chief Tournament Director
	Sally Bugden	EBU Vice-Chairman
	Margaret Curtis	
	Paul Hackett	
	John Neville	EBU Treasurer
	Addis Page	
	Peter Stocken	EBU Chairman
	Barry Capal	EBU General Manager
	Ian Mitchell	Secretary

1. Election of Committee Chairman for the Year 2006/07

Mr Nelson was proposed for Chairman by Mrs Curtis and seconded by Mr Page. Before accepting the nomination, Mr Nelson expressed his desire that there should be two Vice-Chairmen. Together with the Chairman they would act as an executive sub-group of the Committee to deal with routine issues of detail. The Committee agreed, and there being no other nominations for Chairman, Mr Nelson was duly elected. Mrs Dhondy will continue to be the nominated deputy for the Chairman in his absence.

2. Election of Committee Vice-Chairmen for the Year 2006/07

Mrs Dhondy was proposed by Mr Nelson, and Mr Crack proposed by Mr Hackett. There being no other nominations, Mrs Dhondy and Mr Crack were duly elected.

3. Apologies for Absence Paul Spencer

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (13th September 2006)

4.1 Accuracy

4.1.1 There were typographical errors in paragraphs 4.6, 9 and 10.

4.1.2 Mr Crack questioned the last sentence of paragraph 4.3, which appeared to be rather vague. The Committee agreed that the intention had not been to make any specific guidelines for Aylesbury staff, but that they should be firm when applying discretion.

4.1.3 Mr Crack was concerned that the contributions to the discussion made by himself and Mr Page had not been recorded. The secretary agreed to add those to the record.

4.2 Matters arising

4.2.1 Mr Bavin reported that there were aspects of the proposed high-profile 64-board-per-match midweek knockout at Brighton that he still needed to discuss with the Committee and Mr Hackett in particular. Mr Hackett recommended that the event should be delayed by a year. The proposed bracketed teams should nevertheless go ahead on a smaller scale.

4.2.2 The letter from the Membership Development Action Group was to form the basis for discussion of item 12 of the Agenda. It was agreed to bring this item forward in the meeting.

12. Role of the Tournament Committee

Mrs Bugden apologised that the letter from MDAG had taken so long to be presented before the Committee, and reported that in the meantime the group had made considerable progress, as a result of which the board had approved the 'Focus on Value' scheme presented by Mrs Maxwell.

There followed a full discussion on the objectives of the Committee, after which the Chairman, in summary, identified four areas that it needed to examine for further development:

- 1) The Chairman asked that the role of the Committee be clearly defined with regard to the revenue, costs of tournaments and "real" contribution requirements of EBU tournaments. Appropriate monitoring reports were needed on a regular and transparent basis. He asked Mr Crack to undertake this task.
- 2) The Committee recognised that the quality of service at existing tournaments could be improved. The Chairman asked Mr Hackett to look at ways to make tournaments more attractive to existing & 'easily recruitable' players – those members that fit the current profile of tournament players. In particular the issues of appropriate hospitality, format & prize structure needed to be considered for all major EBU events.
- 3) The Chairman asked Mr Page to explore what we could do for the vast majority of EBU members, and potential new members, who do not play in EBU tournaments, with a view to introducing appropriate new services and events.
- 4) Given the Committee's desire to make tournaments more customer-friendly events, it was agreed that tournaments should be opened and closed by guest personalities who would be attending the event. A panel of potential people, together with guidelines for announcements needed to be prepared and the Chairman asked Mrs Dhondy to undertake this. In addition he asked her to review the role and training for T.D.'s with a view to enhancing the customer service elements, rather than the traffic warden aspects of their position. Greater use of caddies when possible would also be considered.

The Chairman recognised that these investigations would take time, and that the earliest that they should be presented should be at the second meeting next year.

5. Tournament Accounts

5.1 Because of the recent passing of the Accounts Manager at Aylesbury, the full accounts for recent tournaments were unavailable.

5.2 The Treasurer proposed an increase of 4% on average in tournament fees for the 2007-2008 season. The Chairman reported that he had had some complaints from clubs about the cost of entering multiple teams in the NICKO. It was agreed that the cost for one team should be increased; the cost for a second team reduced; and a reduced price reintroduced for third and subsequent teams.

6. Tournament Reports

Mr Bavin reported that the numbers for the Autumn Simultaneous Pairs were up on 2005, as was the attendance at the Guernsey Congress.

The Great Northern Swiss Pairs was significantly down, at just over 50 tables, although the refurbishment of the venue would have made it difficult to accommodate many more tables.

Attendance at the Autumn Congress and the Seniors Congress were both worryingly low. Questionnaires from the Autumn Congress had reflected mixed opinions about the change of starting time on the middle day, but with a clear majority being in favour.

37 counties were represented at the Tollemache, including two Welsh districts. There was much concern about the length of the dinner break: for those eating at the venue there was too much time, whilst those eating out were very rushed. Mrs Curtis also reported that there was not enough food available at the venue; those finishing late had very little, if any, choice.

The new Autumn Overseas Congress had gone very well, and was enjoyed by all. Numbers were quite low, and this raised again the issue of whether increasing the number of tournaments actually increases either the revenue or the overall participation.

7. One-day Joint Ventures

7.1 Licence Fee

Mr Bavin observed that the 'licence fee' devised for ODJVs was greater than that for licensed county congress events. The Treasurer observed that the fee had been calculated to match the level of income that the EBU received under the old scheme. The Committee agreed that the discrepancy should be avoided, but that this should be via an increase in the normal licence fee.

7.2 Services offered to the counties

Mr Bavin requested that it be clarified what level of services should be offered to the counties, especially in light of the differential in licence fees.

It was agreed that counties should pay for anything that cost real money (e.g. stationery, and also the provision of duplimated boards), but that table hire, for example, should be offered free, subject to the county arranging delivery and collection.

The Committee noted that offering free table hire was prejudicial in favour of local counties, but that this was no different to the way things were previously.

7.3 Applications from Lancashire & Merseyside

The two counties had cancelled their combined March ODJVs due to problems with the venue.

Lancashire wished to use their Green-Point allocation for an existing one-day congress, whilst Merseyside wished to hold theirs on an entirely new date. Both contravene the regulation that the allocations can only be applied to an existing, or resurrected, county congress of at least two days' duration.

Committee members considered that to allow either event to be green-pointed would set a dangerous precedent, and were reminded once again of the reason for the regulation as it stood.

However, on the grounds that EBU members would suffer otherwise, it was agreed to allow both requests, but only for the forthcoming year. The counties would be expected to comply with the regulations in future years.

Mr Crack suggested that, given the increased congestion of Green-Pointed events, the Committee should consider discontinuing ODJVs, only allowing green points to be issued at county congresses. However, other Committee members suggested that this would only lead to further problems of a different nature.

8. EBU Calendars

The secretary distributed draft calendars for the next two competition seasons.

Mr Bavin reported with regret that the date for the Autumn Congress 2007 would have to be changed, as the hotel had ignored the EBU's provisional booking, and booked another event on the scheduled date.

The only solution available would be to move the congress to the date scheduled for the Daventry Seniors Congress, which would of course mean that the latter event would also have to change.

The revised dates will be:

2nd – 4th November 2007 Autumn Congress, Bournemouth

9th – 11th November 2007 Seniors Congress, Daventry

9. The Master Point Scheme

9.1 The Committee approved of the suggestion by Mrs Maxwell that two new ranks be introduced aimed at newcomers to Duplicate Bridge. Suggested names for the new ranks were 'Local Master' for the very lowest rank (100 local points) and 'Area Master' for the rank between Club Master & District Master (500 local points).

The Committee felt that publicity for the new ranks, and for the master point scheme in general, should be maximised. Whereas the scheme was viewed as not ideal for the top end of the market, it was very good for newcomers and average club players. The scheme is a service uniquely provided by the EBU, and should therefore be featured as a selling point for EBU membership.

9.2 Mr Crack complimented Aylesbury on the improvement in the timing of direct credits from EBU events.

The issue of direct-crediting of points from clubs was raised. All agreed that the greater the extent of direct-crediting, the better. Currently around 40% of clubs directly credit master points, as opposed to issuing paper certificates. Suggestions were made about how to encourage clubs to adopt direct-crediting, including a differential in the costs of paper & electronic certificates. Mr Capal was looking to recommend software to clubs, but acknowledged that there were other issues involved.

10. Correspondence

A letter from Cornwall CBA had been circulated, requesting that the Committee reconsider running the Tollemache Cup as a two-division event.

It was also rumoured that the northern counties were considering requesting that the qualifying round be regionalised.

The Treasurer recollected that when the matter had last been discussed at a shareholders' meeting, not very long ago, the vote had been solidly in favour of the status quo. However, the Committee agreed to review the situation when it received a firm proposal from the northern counties.

11. Any Other Business

The Chairman made a general observation about the Hotel industry. There appeared to be a trend that hotel occupancy and prices were beginning to rise considerably, and that this will naturally affect EBU tournaments.

Dates for future meetings were arranged as follows:

Thursday 22nd March 2007

Wednesday 13th June 2007

Wednesday 12th September 2007