



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL ON TUESDAY 4th MARCH 2008**

Present:	Alan Nelson	Chairman
	Brian Crack	Vice-Chairman
	Max Bavin	Chief Tournament Director
	Sally Bugden	EBU Vice-Chairman
	Margaret Curtis	
	Paul Hackett	
	Mike Hill	EBU Treasurer
	Philip Mason	
	Addis Page	
	Andrew Petrie	
	Peter Stocken	EBU Chairman
	Ian Mitchell	Secretary

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Barry Capal EBU General Manager

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (13th December 2007)

2.1 Accuracy

The minutes of the previous meeting were passed as accurate.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 Mr Hill questioned why the Eastbourne Summer Seniors and Veterans Congress had been targeted for relocation, as he considered it to be a successful tournament.

Mr Hackett referred the committee to his previous report, in which he stated that although the event was successful in terms of numbers attending, the venue had come under criticism, and the event could be improved by being held in an upmarket hotel.

On a number of occasions during the meeting, committee members enquired what our criteria were for determining whether or not an event was successful. It was felt that it was not sufficient that an event be making a profit to deem it to be successful. Nor were raw attendance figures a good measure. Mr Hackett suggested that even if an event (such as the National Swiss Teams) had high attendance, if the annual attendance were falling considerably, then the event should be worthy of consideration for modification or discontinuation. Mr Petrie agreed to prepare a set of criteria, with the help of Mr Bavin, to assess the success or failure of tournaments.

Mrs Bugden also suggested that more needed to be done to explore why numbers were decreasing. It was not sufficient to distribute questionnaires to players at the venues – information needed to be sought, for example by e-mail, from those players that had not returned to the event.

2.2.2 Mr Petrie reported that he had looked at hotels in Southport, with a view to finding an alternative venue for the Northern Easter Festival. There was a hotel that he deemed 'adequate' for a bridge congress, but that did not compare favourably with either the current venue in Blackpool or the Cairn Hotel in Harrogate.

The Chairman expressed his view that it was essential to retain a northern alternative to the London Easter Festival, but the committee decided that the event was no longer viable at the Blackpool venue. Consideration was given to discontinuing the event, and to relocating to a more suitable venue. The Palace Hotel in Buxton and the Cairn Hotel in Harrogate were cited as potential alternative venues. It was finally decided that the event should continue in 2009 only if either of those venues were available.

2.2.3 Further to item 9.2 of the previous meeting, an e-mail had been received from a different County Secretary, regarding the failure to notify him of an EBU congress in his county, and the failure to provide leaflets for distribution.

Mr Bavin recalled that Aylesbury had sent leaflets to the county concerned, and that although the county had complained that they had not been sent sufficient leaflets, this complaint had not been registered until after the event.

The committee repeated that specific notification should only be necessary in the case of significant changes to the calendar; counties should otherwise be aware of all EBU events through circulation of draft calendars. Nevertheless regular communication (e.g. via e-mail) would do no harm, and leaflets for congresses should be sent out to relevant counties and clubs.

2.2.4 The issue of holding triangular matches within EBU knockout events was revisited. It was apparent that the proposal raised at the last meeting had been misunderstood by some members: The idea was that three teams should meet over three separate head-to-head matches within the time period scheduled for two rounds (the alternative idea of arranging a three-way match on a single evening would prove too difficult to arrange).

A number of concerns were raised:

a) Mr Hackett observed that necessarily one team out of the three would have to play both their matches within a period assigned for a single round. This could prove difficult for those with an otherwise congested calendar.

b) There could be potential collaboration between the two teams contesting (in particular) the final match of the three.

c) It would frequently be the case in the last match that one or both teams would have no further interest in the event.

The latter two concerns might be diminished, but not eliminated, if regulations were that two teams out of the three would qualify for the next round, rather than one out of three. The secretary observed that this may not necessarily always be practicable; that it depended on whether the number of participating teams was more than, or less than, the nearest power of two.

The committee agreed that triangles should not be considered in cases where only one team would qualify out of three, and felt that there was no pressing need to introduce triangles yet. However, it decided that there should be a general discussion about knockout events at the next meeting.

2.2.5 A discussion about 'Stratified' pairs events had been deferred from the September meeting. It was confirmed that current scoring software was not yet capable of coping with this fully, but that it was likely to be available soon.

The committee discussed how fields should be split with regards to rankings, and decided that there should be three categories, corresponding to the 'flights' that are currently used (in principle) in the Swiss Pairs at the Easter Festival: The top category containing at least one life master or

above, the second category for pairs containing no Life Master or above, and the third category containing no Regional Master or above.

3. Tournament Accounts

Detailed accounts were unavailable, but Mr Hill reported that accounts were generally good. Although income from events was down, expenditure had reduced by a greater amount.

Mr Nelson reported that in terms of overall attendance, figures were satisfactory.

4. Tournament Reports

Mr Bavin gave a verbal report of tournaments from December to the beginning of March.

4.1 Mr Crack raised the issue of Master Points for the Ladies' Pairs, Men's Pairs and Mixed Pairs at the Year End Congress. Others had already observed that it appeared anomalous that the winners of each event should get the same Green Point award, even though the sizes of the events were very different.

Originally this event had started as an event just for Ladies' Pairs, and the Men's Pairs and Mixed Pairs had been added later (at different times) to run alongside the Ladies' Pairs. Now the Ladies' Pairs was by far the smallest event of the three.

Mr Bavin maintained that despite the size of the field, the standard of bridge required to win the Ladies' Pairs event was still much the same as it had always been. He also observed that although the top award may be the same in each of the events, the awards for subsequent places fell away much more sharply in the smaller fields.

After discussion, the issue was put to a vote. By a margin of 7 votes to 4, the committee decided to retain the status quo.

5. Format of Future Events

5.1 The Swiss Teams Congress

The committee had decided at the last meeting to reverse its decision to introduce bracketing at this event, and many of the committee felt in retrospect that this was not the right event for the introduction of bracketing.

Nevertheless, despite the move from Kettering to the Hinckley Island Hotel, attendance had dropped again. Mr Hackett recommended that the event should be discontinued, citing also that the event was not a 'unique' event; that there were several Swiss Teams events on the calendar.

The committee decided that the event should continue for one more year, but recommended that should the attendance fall below 70 tables next year, the event should be discontinued. It also recommended that following the success of the wine reception at the Men's & Ladies' Pairs, there should also be a reception at the Swiss Teams Congress.

5.2 The Golfprint Trophy

This event has been struggling for many years, with unacceptably low attendances at some regional finals. The committee therefore agreed that it should be discontinued with immediate effect following this year's final.

5.3 The Ranked Masters

5.3.1 Mr Crack suggested that there should be Green Points awarded based on number of 'matches' won. Rather than adopt the method used in some Multiple Teams events, whereby ¼ green is awarded for every two or three 'rounds' won, he suggested that Green Points be decimalised, so that fractions other than multiples of a quarter could be awarded.

The committee was concerned that a precedent might be set whereby we start to give awards for rounds won in other pairs events, and therefore agreed in principle that we proceed with the suggestion on an 'experimental' basis for next year's event. Mr Bavin was asked to suggest a formula.

5.3.2 It was noted that a number of pairs consisting of one Premier Grand and one Grand Master were allowed to play in the Premier Grand Masters. It had been agreed at the inception of this category that this would be allowed for the sole purpose of ensuring a viable number of pairs.

It had also been noted that one of the ongoing complaints about the format of the event was that regular partnerships were often prohibited by the regulations from playing as a partnership, due to differing ranks. In the lower categories regulations allow players of adjacent ranks to partner each other, but the Grand Masters Pairs and Premier Life Masters Pairs have always been restricted to players of those specific ranks.

In view of these two observations, the committee agreed to relax the regulations in the top categories as well, to allow a player that genuinely qualified for a particular rank to play with a partner of the rank immediately below. (i.e. a Premier Grand Master could play with a Grand Master in the Premier Grand Masters Pairs; a Grand Master with a Premier Life in the Grand Masters Pairs; and a Premier Life Master with a Life Master in the Premier Life Masters Pairs.)

5.4 The National Newcomers Pairs

Special mention was made, congratulating Mrs Pain on her efforts to encourage counties to organise heats, and to recruit players.

The committee considered an e-mail from Mrs Pain, in which she cited several reasons why the event was failing under its current format. The committee agreed, and decided that the event should be discontinued with immediate effect.

However, the committee suggested that the Education Department might consider running a new event in the future aimed at that level of player, perhaps in partnership with its teachers, especially those that run clubs catering specifically for emerging players, such as 'Bridge for All' or 'learn and play' clubs.

5.5

Mrs Bugden suggested that there needed to be more publicity regarding decisions made by the Tournament Committee, in particular with regard to changes, or potential changes, in the format of events. She suggested that short articles should be written for *English Bridge* by committee members. Mr Page volunteered to write such an article regarding the National Swiss Teams, and Mrs Curtis an article on the Newcomers Pairs.

6. *EBU Competitions in the era of 'Pay to Play'*

Mr Petrie presented a paper outlining his thoughts on the future of EBU tournaments. The committee complimented him on some good new ideas, but felt that he would have benefited from reading a previous paper that Mr Hackett had presented before Mr Petrie had joined the committee. The committee suggested that Mr Petrie read Mr Hackett's paper, and refine his own findings to be presented at a later date.

The committee felt that another 'brainstorming' meeting was due, and suggested that this should be deferred until after further research had been made, and details of the 'Pay to Play' scheme were finalised.

7. *Correspondence*

7.1 The Metropolitan Cup

The committee considered a letter from Mr Pool requesting that Green Points be awarded in the 'Metropolitan Cup', a high-profile event involving teams representing South Eastern counties.

Some years ago the committee had laid down regulations regarding the issue of Green Points for Inter-County leagues. The format of the Metropolitan Cup did not satisfy the requirements for Green Points to be issued, and the committee was not minded to change the regulations. However, it suggested that if the format of the event were to be modified so that the requirements were met, it might look favourably on a subsequent request.

7.2 Right of Appeal in Knockout Events

The committee considered a letter from Mr Jeff Smith, in his capacity as secretary of Manchester CBA, requesting that there be a 'right of appeal' included in the regulations with regard to the arrangement of NICKO matches (i.e. with regard to the awarding of unplayed matches).

The committee was satisfied that current procedures for deciding non-bridge-related matters were adequate, and that allowing such appeals would not benefit the smooth-running of knockout events in general.

Nevertheless, Mr Bavin pointed out to the committee an anachronism: According to EBU regulations, such disputes are adjudicated by the Company Secretary, although Mr Bavin has been doing so on the Secretary's behalf. The committee agreed that this should officially be the job of the Chief Tournament Director.

8. Items Deferred from Previous Meetings

These had been dealt with earlier in the meeting.

9. One-Day County Green-Point Events: 2009 Schedule

The Secretary presented a list of applications by counties to hold events in 2009.

A small number of potential clashes of interest were highlighted.

1. Two counties (Kent and Bedfordshire) had offered choices of dates, each applying to run two events on any two out of three dates offered. In Kent's case, one of the dates offered involved a clear clash of interest, and so they were awarded their other two alternatives.

Mr Crack raised the issue of whether such counties were being penalised for offering a choice, by not being given their first choice dates. The committee acknowledged that this might necessarily be the case, in order to disappoint as few counties as possible, but felt that these counties should take priority if a clash meant that it was unavoidable to refuse an application.

2. In the case of Bedfordshire, each of their three dates involved a potential clash of interest, albeit mild. Bedfordshire themselves had not objected to clashes with any neighbouring counties, and so the committee allocated two dates out of the three which the committee deemed, given the circumstances, to be the least contentious. The other counties involved would also be allowed to hold their events, if they still wished to do so in the knowledge of the potential clashes.

3. Northamptonshire had applied for an event on the same date that Norfolk and Suffolk had applied for a joint weekend. This had caused some inconvenience in 2007 when a similar clash of interest had occurred. In 2008, however, Northamptonshire had relocated their event to a venue in the westernmost corner of the county, and the Norfolk secretary intimated that this would no longer constitute a problem. The committee therefore agreed to allow both events to take place in 2009, subject to Northamptonshire continuing to hold their event in the new venue.

Subject to the conditions cited above, the committee granted all applications received.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 The committee was reminded that the 'Premier League' was being reintroduced.

It was suggested to the committee that (whenever relevant) England's representatives for the European 'Champions Trophy' should be the winners of the Premier League, rather than (as it has been to date) the Crockfords Cup winners. The committee agreed.

The committee also agreed that Gold Points, but not Green Points, should be awarded in the Premier League.

10.2 The date of the next meeting had already been set as 29th May 2008