



**MINUTES OF THE SHAREHOLDERS MEETING
HELD AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, LONDON,
ON WEDNESDAY 3rd JUNE 2009**

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| Present: | Sally Bugden Andrew Petrie Michael Hill Barry Capal John Carter Graham Jepson Jeff Morris Alan Nelson Malcolm Oliver Martin Pool Jeremy Dhondy Elena Jeronimidis Sandra Claridge Karen Durrell | Chairman Vice Chairman & Tournament Committee Chairman Treasurer General Manager, Company Secretary & Merseyside/Cheshire Proxy Board Member & Hants & IOW Proxy Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member Board Member Laws & Ethics Committee Chairman <i>English Bridge</i> Editor Minute Taker Reception |
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| Apologies: | Heather Dhondy David Harris Peter Stocken | Selection Committee Chairman EBU Advisor & Vice President Board Member |
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| County | Shareholders: Present | Apologies | Proxy | County | Shareholders: Present | Apologies | Proxy |
|-----------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Avon | | Mrs M Harris | P Green | Lincolnshire | S Cochemé | Mrs D Brown | |
| Bedfordshire | Mrs V Lawson | | | London | Mrs C Duckworth J Smith | | S Cochemé |
| Berks & Bucks | T Garrett N Thompson | | | Manchester | M Newman S Travers | Mrs K Nelson | M Newman |
| Cambs & Hunts | | | | Merseyside/Cheshire | G Endicott | A Clark | B Capal |
| Channel Islands | Mrs P Panter | | | Middlesex | Mrs J Feldman PN Rosen | KAR Drane | |
| Cornwall | | JM Booth | | Norfolk | JG Faulkner | R Amey | Mrs S Gill |
| Cumbria | | PR Ford | Mrs S Landy | North East | | MJ Baker | I Rankin |
| Derbyshire | | | | Northants | G Hedley | | |
| Devon | T Treeby | | | Notts | Mrs J Burgess | | |
| Dorset | R Heath | | | Oxford | Mrs B Harris | P Baxter | Mrs B Harris |
| Essex | Mrs M Curtis D Green I Moss | | | Somerset | Mrs R Brown | | |
| Gloucestershire | Mrs P Pearce | | | Staffs & Shrops | PD Hackett | J Withers | |
| Hants & IoW | | Mrs M Gale | | Suffolk | M Carey | | |
| Herefordshire | | G Harrington R Underhill | | Surrey | MR Curtis | PB Bentley Mrs P Griffin H Marsen | MR Curtis MR Curtis MR Curtis |
| Hertfordshire | BN Eddleston M Hancock M W Minting | | | Sussex | PJ Bates Miss JB Simpson | | |
| Isle of Man | Dr E Slatcher | | | Warwicks | C Lang L Reece J Pyner | | |
| Kent | BR Crack JM Lewis | | | Westmorland | | | |
| Lancashire | B Brelsford | | | Wiltshire | P Green | | |
| Leicestershire | RH Northage J Wilcox | Mrs J Wright | | Worcester | | Mrs JA Skelton P Hammond | |
| | | | | Yorkshire | P Mason Mrs L Millet I Rodger | | |

Opening the meeting the Chairman congratulated Bernard Teltscher, as Patron of the Seniors Camrose Trophy, on his team's win in the 2009 event, and thanked him for his continuing sponsorship of the event.

The Chairman paid tribute to Alec Salisbury, who had been a significant force in the teaching of bridge, who died very recently.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

See page 1 for County information.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 11th MARCH 2009

2.1 Accuracy

The Chairman said that the paragraph heading *Corporate Governance* on page 3, should be replaced with *All Party Parliamentary Group*. Subject to this amendment, the minutes were signed as an accurate record.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 EBL Subscription

Asked by Gerard Faulkner whether any progress had been made on persuading the EBL to reduce their membership subscription, the Treasurer said that the matter had been raised during the Rome conference which he attended with Barry Capal. No conclusion had been reached, but the matter would be pursued when the membership picture became clearer on the introduction of PTP. However, it was already the case that the EBL charged a lower per capita rate above the threshold of 30,000 members. In the event of EBU membership doubling, the additional cost of EBL and WBF subscriptions would be a small five-figure sum. He also reported that the EBL was aiming to increase its reserves back to E 750k but would be doing this via surpluses on its competitions.

3 UNIVERSAL MEMBERSHIP PROJECT BOARD - UPDATE

The Chairman reported that at the last meeting of the Universal Membership Project Board the PTP package had been finalised and despatched to clubs, counties and shareholders. Details on IT systems and the timescale of the file format for scoring program authors has been publicised on the website, and testing of systems by clubs would take place very shortly. In addition, the facility for clubs to practice uploading results and membership data would be available from the end of this year, i.e. with a 3-month lead-in prior to implementation of PTP.

The Chairman thanked all the volunteer members of the Universal Membership Project, Angus Clark, Margaret Eddleston, Jeff Smith and Megan Taft for all their hard work in setting up the scheme over the last eight months, and Andrew Petrie, Michael Hill, John Carter and the staff at Aylesbury for the construction of IT projects and systems. The Chairman said that it was not possible to report on the response to the Club Affiliation

Packs but that in early September the detail would be provided to the counties for discussion. The General Manager confirmed that membership information held by Aylesbury would not be available via the Scorebridge program, but would be made available by other means, to be advised later (now done).

4 BUSINESS STRATEGY UPDATE

The Chairman updated Shareholders on the business strategy 'Bidding for the Future', launched at the AGM in October, as follows:

Clubs

The Club Committee has undertaken important consultation work on regulation and *English Bridge*. The Committee continues to support the needs of clubs prior to the implementation of PTP, and will be addressing a formal regional representation method for implementation after April 2010. Consultation with clubs will continue on new tournaments and education. A number of deals and services for clubs and individual members have been negotiated, and details included in the PTP packs.

Education

Rob Lawry, Senior Lecturer in the Education and Life Long Learning Department of Exeter University has provided a review of the Union's education activities and suggested a strategy for the future. His excellent contribution has formed the basis for the 5-year plan for education which will be presented to the Board in July. The Chairman thanked Rob and hoped that he would have time to continue with the development of education in bridge. The online teaching program will be launched on the website in October, with additional publicity in *English Bridge*. The Chairman also thanked Suzanne Gill, Eastern representative of the Club Committee, bridge teacher and retired educationist, who had volunteered to help the Board implement its education activities.

Tournaments

An online survey has been undertaken to determine the needs of our existing tournament players, a report of which is contained in the June edition of *English Bridge*. A programme of new tournaments and competitions has been compiled which has been reviewed by the Club Committee. This will be circulated to clubs on when the Club Committee has completed its work on the PTP project. Consultation is continuing on a new master point system which it is hoped will be more relevant for all levels of players. The amount of tournaments that can be purchased online will be increased, and efforts will be made to ensure that tournament venues have the appropriate IT facilities to allow uploading of results.

Simplification of Regulation

The Tangerine Book is being finalised by the Laws & Ethics Committee, and a draft will be provided to the Club Committee for its meeting in October. Jeremy Dhondy is also producing a simple presentation of the ten most frequent Law infractions.

Selection

The Selection Committee has adopted a policy on declaration of interest, and it is working within the constraints of its budget whilst seeking to ensure that their selection process gives greater continuity and development of our most successful partnerships.

Managing the Organisation

The compilation of 5-year plans is close to completion and will be presented to the Board at its meeting in July. These have been overseen by the Business Planning Team. The allocation of overheads has been reviewed and now presents a more accurate picture of the costing of our activities. In an effort to reduce unnecessary IT problems the Union's server provider has been changed. The IT programs for universal membership are providing a much more streamlined approach to the management of master points' allocation and processing of membership income.

We have created a sponsors pack and have started negotiations with several organisations about commercial partnerships in the fields of teaching and holidays, for the benefit of the membership.

Corporate Governance & Democratic Representation

A great deal of research has been undertaken into achieving charity status by April 2011, and on corporate governance in the 21st century. The results of the research will be presented to the Board at its meeting in July, and a working group will be set up in August. A County Chairman's meeting is planned for Spring 2010, and this can be extended to other county officers as appropriate.

Communication & social benefits

An all party parliamentary group has been set up for the development of bridge. A new electronic newsletter has been created for tournament players. Consultation has been undertaken with club players on *English Bridge* to ensure that it will be more representative following the implementation of PTP.

A number of delegates pointed out that bridge sections were being very successfully run as part of the U3A organisation. Whilst it was clear that in some areas the groups were autonomous and made their own local decisions and there was currently no national bridge co-ordinator, it was agreed that efforts should be made to communicate with the Third Age Trust national headquarters to set up a link to their website, and to county associations.

5 CLUB COMMITTEE UPDATE

Graham Jepson reported that the Club Affiliation Agreement had now been provided to all clubs. Assistance in terms of IT support would be offered to every club and county, and volunteers with suitable IT expertise would be welcomed in all areas.

Graham Jepson urged all clubs to try the system for at least two years, and to channel negative criticism into positive comment.

6 NATIONAL GRADING SCHEME

John Carter presented an overview of the proposals for the National Grading Scheme, which are annexed to these minutes. The fully automatic computer system, facilitated by PTP, was intended as a service and applicable to the vast majority of the membership. Expansion of the proposals would be provided by October, following which there would be a consultation phase, and an opportunity for amendment(s). John was joined by the Chairman in thanking the group for the immense amount of work they had undertaken in putting together the detail of the scheme.

It was noted that the question of prizes, publicity and handicaps would be discussed further. Some concern was expressed that "opting out" was restricted to one host or mentor, which in the case of the latter was an invaluable service to students. John confirmed that all pair's events, including novice tournaments would be included, provided that the playing sessions were sufficient for the mathematical element of the scheme.

7 TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer reported that the audit for the year to 31st March 2009 had yet to be completed, but the provisional figures indicated a deficit of just under £10k. A deficit of just under £50k is forecast for the current year, but normal operations are showing a surplus of about £27k (i.e. excluding the implementation costs of PTP).

Malcolm Curtis (Surrey) requested that the amount shown as overheads be broken down for the benefit of shareholders, with major items being identified. In response the Treasurer said that several components were now shown separately and further detail might not prove helpful, but that he would look at possibilities.

In answer to a suggestion by Grattan Endicott that given the Union's expenditure on sending our teams to WBF and EBL events, provision be made for fluctuations in the Euro/Dollar, the Treasurer said that to do so would be expensive, and not without risk.

8 LICENCE FEES FOR ONE-DAY EVENTS

Malcolm Curtis (Surrey) outlined his county's concerns about the effects of the two-year experiment of licence fees for joint venture one-day events, and questioned the Board's stance on its fiduciary responsibility. In Mr Curtis' view, the administrative procedures for profit-sharing outlined by the Board were insignificant by comparison with the financial burden on counties, who rely heavily on income from one-day events.

A lengthy debate ensued in which it was recognised that the success of one-day events depended largely on the cost of venues, which were significantly higher in the south, and that some solution must be found which would ensure the continuing success of the events, without providing too large an administrative burden on the Union. Andrew Petrie said that the Board fully understood the background to Surrey's proposal for a retrospective choice for profit-sharing or licence fee based on the financial outcome of

the event, but the Board's responsibility was to do what was best for the EBU as a whole, and it was in its best interests to have a single, consistent approach.

In light of all the views expressed, Malcolm Curtis withdrew Surrey's original proposal and replaced it with the following, which was seconded by Dick Green (Essex):

"A licence fee should be charged for all one-day joint venture events, but the total payable to the EBU headquarters should not exceed 50% of the surplus at the event, as calculated before the licence fee charges were applied." The proposal was carried by a substantial majority.

9 PROPOSED CHANGES TO BYE-LAWS

A number of Bye-law changes to enable subscriptions to be collected through PTP, remove restrictions on EBU members engaging in non-licensed events and to tidy up errors and anomalies, were tabled.

The current category of Direct Membership was available to anyone to join as a Player Member by payment of a membership fee determined annually. Such member would be entitled to all the benefits of membership, would, as appropriate, be required to pay a county subscription, and would not be exempt from PTP charges.

Sid Travers (Manchester) raised a question concerning the continued requirement for county constitutions to be **approved** by the Union. In response Gerard Faulkner said that some unacceptable clauses had been included in the past, particularly in regard to exclusion of members of the Union in good standing. The Union had no wish to restrict counties, but it had a responsibility to ensure that they were conforming to European legislation, and that their regulations would be in line with those required to obtain charity status.

Martin Pool requested that comments on the changes be sent to him by email to ebu@timberlands.co.uk or by phone 01444 892414.

Sally Bugden thanked Martin for his work on the Bye-law changes which would be voted on at the AGM in October.

10 MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON 5TH MARCH 2009

Presenting the minutes, the Chairman reported that Clive Owen had recently resigned as Chairman of the Youth Committee. She thanked him for his enormous contribution to youth matters, and congratulated Malcolm Oliver on assuming responsibility for the Youth Committee. Sally also thanked Sandra Landy for her contribution to the Youth Committee, and announced that Susan Stockdale would be her replacement.

Gerard Faulkner sought clarification on the qualification for members receiving *English Bridge* following the introduction of PTP. The Chairman said that the Board would develop systems to measure patterns of play, and would ensure that everyone would be

made aware that EBU tournament sessions would also qualify in terms of the total number of sessions played. It was recognised by the Board that there would be seasonal fluctuations, and in reality anyone playing 12 sessions in a 12-month period would receive *English Bridge*.

The Chairman said that no decision had been taken on the future of the Corn Cairdis, and Peter Stocken would discuss its continuation with the Irish prior to the next match, to be hosted by England.

Minutes of the meeting on 11th May would be included on the agenda for the Annual General Meeting.

11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LAWS & ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 19TH MAY 2009

11.1 L&E Publications

Presenting the minutes Jeremy Dhondy highlighted the Committee's ongoing review of its publications, and said that its aim would be to bring them up-to-date, and to make as many as possible available electronically. David Stevenson had agreed to revise the White Book, which was a document primarily for the benefit of TDs and Appeals Committees, and this would be completed by April 2010. The Orange Book needed virtually no revision, and the significantly shorter "Tangerine Book" would be available early in 2010.

11.2 Alerting of Doubles

The Club Committee had been consulted at length on the alerting of doubles, and had advocated no change. Articles would be included in the August and October editions of *English Bridge* which it was hoped would elucidate the simple concept.

11.3 Suspension from membership

In answer to a question on whether a club can admit a player suspended from membership of the EBU, it was confirmed that it was the responsibility of the club to determine whether it wished to admit the player, but that all benefits of EBU membership would be withdrawn for the period of suspension, and the player would not be permitted to take part in any simultaneous pairs events organised by the EBU or Bridge Great Britain, or heats of EBU competitions e.g. National Pairs. If it was subsequently found that a player had broken the rules of the suspension all their results would be removed and any master point awards cancelled.

11.4 Minute 7.1.3

It was agreed that this item be referred back to the Committee for re-examination.

12 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE ON 30TH APRIL 2009

Presenting the minutes Heather Dhondy congratulated Bernard Teltscher's team on winning the 2009 Seniors Camrose Trophy.

Heather reported that the Committee had examined various options for selecting teams for the 2010 European Championships, and had determined that the best use of the Committee's budget would be to select a number of pairs for a coaching programme, and to give them as much experience as possible against other foreign players before the Championships. The list of pairs could be added to or subtracted from to the end of the current year, and final selections would be made in January 2010.

**13 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE
ON 2ND JUNE 2009**

Andrew Petrie reported that the Tournament Committee's "scorecard" review of all of its tournaments and competitions was ongoing. Unfortunately the Buxton Easter Festival had been poorly attended and the Committee had decided to hold the event for one more year, and discontinue it thereafter if the level of entries showed no improvement. Despite the best efforts of himself and Max Bavin no suitable venue had been found for the Great Northern Swiss Pairs, and Andrew asked for suggestions for housing the event.

Better news was reported on the Portland Pairs where entries were significantly up, and the Spring Fours which continued to increase in numbers and prestige. However, the National Womens' Teams had attracted only 13 entries. A decision had been taken by the Committee to revamp the event in 2009, with a Saturday morning start, and a number of ladies were seeking sponsorship for the competition. Andrew thanked the ladies for their efforts, and Paul Hackett for his invaluable help.

Results of the tournament survey undertaken in January & February would be available in July, and an article is in the current issue of *English Bridge*. It was pleasing to note that with a few notable exceptions the competitions programme was surviving the current economic downturn, and the EBU should be proud of its tournaments.

Responding to Neil Rosen (Middlesex) who felt that the EBU's website results service was still disappointing, Barry Capal said that the service had improved, and that it had achieved its target of a Monday morning deadline, but that it was dependent on the facilities available on site, and EBU staff to overcome technical difficulties. However, every effort would be made to achieve instant uploads.

John Carter (Hants & IOW) requested that the Committee consider for the future the final stages of the Crockfords Plate mirroring the multi-team final of the Crockfords Cup. Andrew Petrie confirmed this would be the case for the 2009/10 season.

Gerard Faulkner noted the new system for prizes, i.e. discontinuing the voucher system and crediting the member's EBU account for future competition entries or refund, and expressed the view that such had not been widely publicised. Pam Pearce (Gloucestershire) supported the scheme, but suggested that access to member's accounts should be available on-line.

Some concern was expressed that no progress appeared to have been made on revamping the National Newcomers Pairs. In response Andrew Petrie said that some

No Fear events had been introduced, and from September 2010, i.e. after the implementation of PTP, the calendar would include new events in clubs for members below the rank of Star Master. Brian Crack said that there was a major problem in defining a “newcomer” and discussions would be held with the Education Department on how best to cater for those entering the game e.g. in partner/teacher clubs.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Malcolm Curtis (Surrey) asked when up-to-date accounts on PTP would be available, so that financial projections could be examined before adoption of the bye-law changes. In response the Chairman said that at the beginning of September, counties would receive information on clubs who had confirmed their affiliation. She stressed that universal membership had already been voted on and adopted, the Board was doing everything possible to carry out the Shareholders' wishes, and that adoption of the changes to the bye-laws would be to facilitate the PTP scheme. The Board had the interests of the Union at heart, and would do nothing that would threaten its future.

Michael Hill pledged to provide as much information as possible to Shareholders in October.

NEXT MEETING
Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 7th October 2009
Imperial Hotel, London

National Grading Scheme (NGS)

Introduction

This document contains the high-level overview of the proposal for the policies governing and the modus operandi of the **National Grading Scheme**.

Objectives for the NGS

The NGS is to be an EBU service which is intended to be relevant to the vast majority of the membership, and not just for the existing tournament players, i.e. it is not to be a service which would be perceived by many to be “by the elite for the elite”.

Hence, the objectives for the National Grading Scheme are:

- To provide a fair and trustworthy measure of an individual's current performance when playing duplicate Bridge, which:
 - Is easy to understand.
 - Calculates changes (both up and down) in an individual's current standard of play.
- To enable new competitions to be constructed for use in Club, County and National competitions based on the current performance of individuals, through treating the measure of current performance as a “handicap”.

It should be noted that the NGS is **complementary** to the Master Point Scheme, whose existing arrangement is unaltered by the NGS proposal. The two schemes are independent. The Master Point Scheme provides an indicator of an individual's aggregated **lifetime** achievement in Bridge, whereas the NGS indicates an individual's **current** playing ability based on the last 40 (or so) playing sessions.

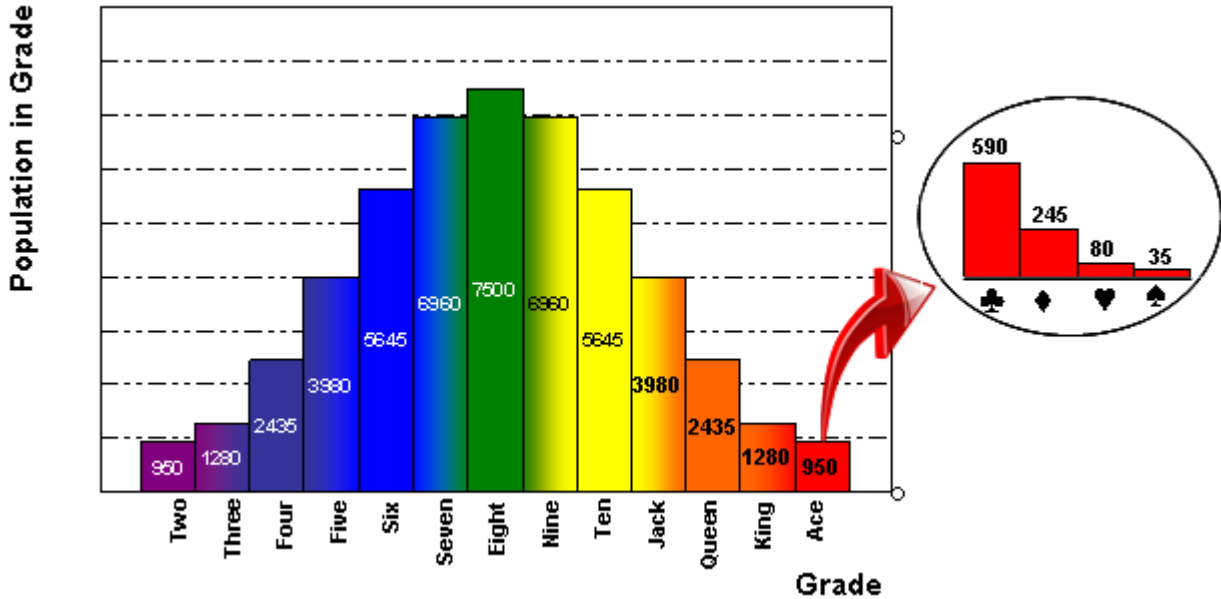
The Basic Proposal of the NGS

The NGS proposes that:

- Every EBU member has a “**grade**”
 - Which is an indication of that person's **current** playing ability
 - Based on his/her results over the last 1,000 boards played (in all partnerships and all competitions)
 - The most recent playing session contributing the most to the grade, previous results having a progressively reducing significance
 - See also “Anonymous Members and NGS Opted-Out Members”.
- There is a progressive sequence of 13 “**grades**”
 - Named “2” (novice) to “Ace” (top expert)
 - “Ace” being sub-divided (by suit), so as to distinguish the top experts further
 - Indicating that an individual's current performance lies in a band
 - Covering an equal percentage segment (2%) of the normal distribution of Bridge skill
 - Implying that there will be different populations of member in each grade.
- An individual's grade is based on a personal “**grade value**” which is:
 - A percentage (maintained to several decimal places for reasons of accuracy)
 - Calculated based on the last 1,000 boards that the individual has played
 - As reported to Aylesbury, i.e. it includes results from Club, County and National events
 - Analysed in chronological sequence by date and time of play

- Such that older results have a progressively reducing significance (using straight line decay to zero).

The mathematics anticipates the following populations in each grade, based on an example participation of 50,000.



Applicability of the NGS

As well as producing a grade for an individual, grades will also be calculated on a partnership basis, thereby allowing a member to observe the grade of the various partnerships in which they play, the latter enabling them to identify the partnership in which they perform the best (or, for that matter, the worst).

Also averaging the grades of the participants gives an indication of the standard of the field in that playing session.

Thus, grading applies to:

- An individual
- Partnerships in as many combinations as occur
- Playing session and sections in Clubs, Counties and Nationally

The Operation of the NGS

The NGS is being designed to “look after itself” in a fully automatic manner. A scoring result as returned to Aylesbury contains all the information necessary and is processed on receipt by the NGS to reflect any changes to grades as soon as possible. Therefore, there is no additional work for a club to engage with the NGS.

The NGS re-calculates an individual’s grade value using the results achieved by that individual in that playing session. The nature of this calculation depends on the movement which has been used. However, the grade value of the individual’s partner as well of the grade values of opponents is taken into consideration. As a consequence, it is unnecessary to classify particular

events by their (perceived) standard, i.e. the context (e.g. National Congress, County Event, or Club Session) in which the result was achieved is irrelevant.

Note that the grade value of every participant remains the same throughout the playing session (i.e. it is not varied on a board by board basis), so the order in which the boards of the playing session are played is immaterial.

The result of the analysis of the whole the playing session is reflected in an alteration to an individual's grade value. If the grade value crosses a band boundary, then the player's grade will change.

An individual can observe the information pertaining to his/her grade by way of the membership record. Grades will be public and accessible by the use of an individual's EBU number (much like today's Master Point information) or by name. However, other information will be private and will include: Grades in various partnerships, Grade value, Position in NGS (or Grade), Catalogue of contributing playing sessions and Grade history.

Additional Information

Initialisation and Evolution of an Individual's Grade: In order to preserve its mathematical and statistical integrity, any new joiner to the NGS commences with a grade of "8". An individual's grade then "evolves" in accordance with their performance in practice at table.

Experience with existing rating systems has shown that an individual's grade broadly stabilises after the play of about 600 boards (i.e. approximately 24 playing sessions). The more partners a player has, and the more clubs they play in, the more representative the grading. For many cases, a good first approximation occurs after only 300 boards. Accordingly, the NGS does not propose to indicate an individual's grade until 12 playing sessions (i.e. about 300 boards) have been played.

This mechanism will be applied to existing members when the NGS is introduced, i.e. there will not be any subjective assessment of an individual's grade, for example, based on his/her Master Point Rank.

Types of Duplicate Bridge game contributing to a Grade: The initial phase will use results from all, except very rare types of, Pairs events and a further phase will also use results from Teams and Individual events.

Currency of an Individual's Grade: To have a current grade an individual must have had at least 12 playing sessions within the Playing Year. This implies that an individual cannot retain their grade by discontinuing playing. Individuals whose grade loses currency will be so marked.

Board Inclusion: All boards of a playing session will be included, even when the score of that board has been adjusted, e.g. for a revoke or a mis-boarding, such incidents being considered to be part of the game.

Events Scored Twice: Only the first (club) instance of the scoring result will be included from those events, such as Simultaneous Pairs, which are multiply scored.

Anonymous Members and NGS Opted-Out Members: An "anonymous" EBU member will not be able to see his/her grade. Other EBU members can choose to "opt-out" of the NGS altogether and this will be marked in their membership record, which will not include their grade.

However, note that both these categories of individual will actually be graded, because their standard of play has an influence on the grades of their partners and/or their opponents.

In addition, there will be an option for up to one (but only one) person to opt-out on a playing session basis. This accommodates situations in which there are “hosting” or “mentoring” players involved in the playing session. The option does not have to be used and it is at the discretion of the organiser of the playing session to determine which player may use this capability.

Derivation of a Handicap from a Grade: The NGS lends itself well for use as a handicap. For example in Pairs events each player’s handicap could be approximated by a simple conversion scale of -6 for a grade of "Ace" to +6 for a grade of "2". A partnership’s handicap is the sum of the two player’s handicaps and this is the amount by which the event’s percentage score is adjusted in determining the handicapped result. This approximation might be acceptable for “fun” events (such as a club party), but does entail a potential grade value error for a pair of up to 2%. Therefore, for more “serious” events in which handicaps are employed, it would be necessary to use a more accurate conversion of the grade values.

Prizes, Publicity and New Club-based Competitions: These considerations are all outside the remit of the NGS. However, it is possible to devise annual awards based on the NGS (the corollary to those currently provided in the Master Point Scheme); although with a large number of grades these may not be for each grade. English Bridge will contain grade information, in particular a list of the top players which is likely to be of interest to many, but probably not changes in the grades of individuals. New club-based competitions, e.g. using (rough or precise) handicaps, are enabled through the NGS.

Health warning:

Note that “**Grades can go down as well as up**”. It is suggested that this appears on every pack ☹

Hope warning:

Grades won’t always go down. If you have a really good playing session your grade just might go up ☺

Next Steps

More detailed documentation will be made available later this year. It is intended to provide three levels of documentation, each with an associated set of Questions and Answers, as follows:

1. A high level overview describing the policies governing and the modus operandi of the NGS, targeted to be made available at the end of this month (based on the presentation made at the Shareholders’ meeting on 3rd June).
2. A more detailed description intended to provide a very good understanding of the principles of the NGS, which is targeted to be made available in the late October timeframe.
3. A very detailed description of the mathematical foundation (which is definitely not intended for the feint hearted), which is also targeted to be made available in the late October timeframe.

It is intended to hold an electronic consultation phase, probably from late-October 2009 until early January 2010. However, for the moment, the NGS team welcomes questions and constructive comments on the high-level principles (as opposed to the excruciating detail) by way of “grading@ebu.co.uk”.