



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE
HELD AT AYLESBURY OFFICES ON WEDNESDAY 9TH JUNE 2004**

Present:	Margaret Curtis	Chairman
	Max Bavin	Chief Tournament Director
	Tom Bradley	EBU Treasurer
	Heather Dhondy	
	Alaine Hamilton	
	Philip Mason	EBU Vice-Chairman
	Alan Nelson	
	Malcolm Oliver	
	Addis Page	
	Terry Collier	General Manager (until item 7)
	Nick Doe	Secretary

- 1. Apologies for Absence** Denis Robson EBU Chairman
Paul Spencer

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (24th February 2004)

2.1 Accuracy

The minutes were agreed to be a true record and signed by the Chairman.

2.2 Matters arising

2.2.1 Replacement for Members' Yearbook (item 2.2.3)

The Chairman urged all Committee members to look carefully at the new diary when it was issued and to note feedback for discussion at the next meeting. Mr Collier commented that it had been a difficult exercise and there would undoubtedly be plenty of feedback. He hoped that it would prove positive, in contrast to some of what had so far been received.

The Committee noted that winners' names had been omitted due to lack of space. By no means all winners' names had been included in the *Yearbook*, and it was perhaps better to publish such things in *English Bridge*.

2.2.2 Age qualification for Seniors (referred to in item 2.2.8)

Mr Doe reported that it was still not known whether the European Bridge League was to follow the lead of the World Bridge Federation in gradually raising the age limit to 60. An announcement could perhaps be anticipated at the forthcoming European Championships in Malmö.

2.2.3 *Possible Congress in the South-West (item 2.2.9)*

Mr Collier reported that he had had meetings with Cornwall and Somerset but not yet with Devon. Cornwall had been very enthusiastic, and Somerset had also expressed some interest. It was agreed that the matter would be kept under review.

2.2.4 *Internet results (referred to in item 4.4)*

Mr Collier reported that an analysis of hits to the site indicated that many members looked for the results of weekend competitions at the start of working hours on Monday mornings. It was clearly desirable for the results to be on the site by then, but computer incompatibility problems, the lack of expertise on site at tournaments and security issues meant that in most cases the results were still uploaded by EBU staff from Aylesbury.

The Committee considered that the minimum acceptable standard was for results to be posted by mid-day on the first working day after the event, but that it was obviously desirable for results to be posted from the site of an event wherever possible. The Committee also noted that the updating of the front page tends to lag behind the posting of the results, and hoped that this could be addressed. It also suggested that if results are not posted by first thing on Monday morning it is better for the site to say “these results should be posted by mid-day” rather than merely that they are “not yet available”.

The Committee also considered that it was desirable for more photographs of presentations to winners to be posted on the site, although it acknowledged that there were logistical problems.

2.2.5 *National Swiss Teams (item 4.6)*

Mr Bavin confirmed that the Hanover Hotel, Daventry was booked for 2006. Although he had a provisional booking with the Queens Hotel, Leeds, for 2005, he was having some difficulty confirming it.

Mr Collier reported that there had been some developments with regard to a possible National Bridge Centre. If such a centre came into being, it would naturally be necessary to contemplate moving a number of events to it from their existing venues. Mr Bavin indicated that this would be unlikely to be a problem in practice, as cancellation of the provisional bookings which were in place for future years would not normally attract penalties unless done at much shorter notice than we were likely to be able to give.

2.2.6 *Entry fees for the season 2004/05*

Mr Bavin confirmed that the entry fee for the National Women’s Teams had been reduced slightly to £192 to reflect the reduced length of the event.

3. Tournament Accounts

Mr Bavin informed the Committee that the Accounts Department were still engaged on finalising the 2003/04 accounts, and as a result no detailed figures were available, but he expected to be able to present them to the next meeting.

Mr Bradley reported that the overall results for 2003/04 showed an out-turn which was better than budget on both the income and the expenditure side, leading to a surplus of £213k in comparison with a budgeted surplus of £178k (both figures before management charges). This was a very welcome contribution to a mixed year for the Union overall, although it had to be acknowledged that the budget had not been that stringent.

The Committee noted that an increase in tournament income of some 7% in comparison with an increase in prices of 3-4% gave the lie to anecdotal evidence that entries were falling.

4. Tournament Reports

A paper from Mr Bavin was tabled.

4.1 Harrogate Spring Congress

This had been full as usual at 85 tables.

4.2 Golfprint Regional Finals

There had been 25 teams overall, split between four heats. The Committee approved Mr Bavin's suggestion of offering a team adversely affected by a disputed result free direct entry to next season's Regional Final.

The Committee agreed to increase the number of qualifiers from each Regional Final to two, to produce an 8-team National Final, with effect from the 2005 competition.

4.3 Ranked Masters Pairs

The overall entry had been slightly down, but the new venue (Hanover Hotel, Daventry) had been excellent.

4.4 One-day events (March)

The numbers of tables in play (Swiss Teams unless otherwise specified) had been as follows:-

Saturday

Bedfordshire	42	
Kent	37	(Swiss Pairs)
Leicestershire	51	(Swiss Pairs)
London	37	(Swiss Pairs)
Merseyside & Cheshire	47	(Swiss Pairs)

Sunday

Avon	48	
Channel Islands	21	(Swiss Pairs)
Kent	61	
London	43	
Manchester	27	
Nottinghamshire	44	

Mr Bavin reported verbally on a duplimating problem, and the Committee was satisfied that adequate procedures were in place to avoid any repetition. It was happy with the logistical reasons for playing the same hands over all events on the same day.

4.5 Portland Pairs

There had been 190½ tables, which was slightly down. There had been no problems except that the small size of some of the heats had necessitated unusual movements. It was agreed that it would have been better to avoid Mothering Sunday.

4.6 Golfprint National Final

The event had gone well.

4.7 National Pairs Regional Finals

There had been 164 tables in play in aggregate, which reflected a continuing downward trend. The new Northern venue at Bradford Bridge Club had been excellent, but the Eastern venue at Peterborough was unpopular due to poor chairs.

4.8 National Newcomers Pairs

The new format had generally been a great success, with 165 tables overall. Mr Bavin highlighted a few matters requiring attention:-

- Number of boards – it was agreed that 30 was ideal but it was not appropriate to be too prescriptive.
- Minimum heat size – it was agreed that 4 tables should be the minimum.
- Movements – it had been found that some heat organisers had not been as experienced as anticipated, so they had been permitted to run whatever movements they were comfortable with. It was agreed that it would be better to give more support and guidance on the movements which ought to be used.

The Committee discussed possible changes to the Master Point threshold, given that about 40% of EBU members qualify for the competition (quite apart from the non-members who participate). The suggestion was made of simultaneously running two or three similar events for different Master Point categories, perhaps combining the event with the lowest category of the Ranked Masters Pairs. It was agreed that this was worthy of further consideration, and that the names of the various categories would require careful thought.

The Committee noted a problem with the issue of Master Points, in that direct credits did not work well with so many non-members playing, and some Counties had been slow in issuing the certificates which were their responsibility. It was agreed that Aylesbury should endeavour to put a better system in place for next year in consultation with the Counties.

4.9 Easter Festival, London

The event had gone well, with numbers slightly down at an average of 85 tables. To play the junior finals at the main venue had worked very well.

4.10 Easter Festival, Blackpool

The entry had been very disappointing at an average of only 50 tables. No reason was apparent, although there had been some problems with the hotel.

4.11 National Pairs Final

There had been no problems. The event is to move to West Bromwich next year.

4.12 Lambourne Jersey Festival

The event had gone very well, with entries on both weekends up over 20%, and the new midweek Seniors events attracting 29 tables.

Mr Bavin drew the Committee's attention to the fact that the hotel wished to include the cost of mid-session teas in the overall charge for the event, rather than charging on an individual basis. This would require the entry fees to be raised for all competitors, something which the Committee had always resisted (not just for this event). Whilst it was too late to do anything for the 2005 event, the Committee noted that the Channel Islands Association was in favour, and the players were believed not to like the present arrangements, so it was agreed that the new method of charging could be introduced with effect from 2006 if a suitable figure could be negotiated with the hotel.

The Committee noted that the sponsors had indicated their concern that their name had too frequently been omitted from published information concerning the Festival. In an attempt to address this the Committee agreed that while the sponsorship lasted the event should be referred to as the Lambourne Festival (Jersey).

4.13 Portland Bowl Finals

There was nothing of significance to report.

4.14 Schapiro Spring Foursomes

Despite the new sponsorship, the number of teams was three down at 38. Mr Bavin highlighted the fact that there is no very satisfactory format for more than 32 but fewer than 48 teams. However, there had been few complaints, and the other changes had been welcomed by the players.

It was agreed that it was appropriate to make every effort to try to get the entries back to at least 48 teams, although it was not clear how this could be achieved. Most of the top teams (who are those most likely to be attracted by the increased prize money) play in the event anyway, but fewer “middle-ranking” teams seem to play than was once the case, the expense of playing in a four day event over a Bank Holiday weekend being cited as a possible factor.

The sponsor was disappointed by the degree of publicity, and had offered to increase her involvement, which was agreed to be a good idea. The Committee thought it would be helpful if Mr Collier were to have a meeting with her.

4.15 Spring Simultaneous Pairs

The number of tables was 1798 (705½ Wednesday, 1092½ Thursday), an increase of nearly 10%, helped by the lack of a clash with local elections.

4.16 One-day events (May)

The numbers of tables in play (Swiss Teams unless otherwise specified) had been as follows:-

Saturday

Bedfordshire	70	
Merseyside & Cheshire	44	(Swiss Pairs)
Sussex	74	

Sunday

Hampshire	73	(Flighted, 45 A, 28 B)
Lancashire	38	
Warwickshire	37	

4.17 Crockfords Final

All had gone well. Raymond Brock’s team had won on a split tie.

4.18 Garden Cities Regional Finals

All had gone well, despite a “no-show” at one heat, the reasons for which were being investigated.

4.19 Spring Bank Holiday Congress

The average number of tables was slightly down at 99, with the number of last-minute entries significantly down. The hotel had done well to make alternative arrangements in the light of the closure of the bar area due to an earlier fire. Although the dinner arrangements had been changed (for the worse) by the hotel, they had already made some suggestions for improvements for the future.

5. Entries for knock-out competitions

5.1 *Silver Plate*

The Committee noted entries down by about 12%, and hoped that the combination of the event with the Gold Cup under the auspices of BGB from next year would serve to rekindle interest in both competitions.

5.2 *Hubert Phillips Bowl*

Entries were down by two teams at 102. The Committee noted that the competition had effectively been given a stay of execution some time ago, but there was still support for the idea of making one further effort to revitalise it in its present format.

It was suggested that one problem was the time of year at which the event starts, with the result that early rounds are affected by the summer holiday period, but the general view was that it was better to maintain the staggered start of the various knock-out competitions, as different times of the year are busy for different people.

It was acknowledged that it is not sufficient to target people who may have entered the event before. Instead, new entrants should be sought. It was agreed to continue the discussion under item 7.

6. Development Plan – new events

The Committee noted the details of the events so far held, and the numbers attending, which had been mixed. Mr Collier reported that a new programme of events was in the process of being devised, with emphasis on partnerships with Counties, clubs, holiday operators and the like. Family events were also being considered.

The small number of participants at the Woodhall Spa golf event was noted. It seemed that there were different expectations among those who were primarily golfers from those who were primarily bridge players. The English Golf Union was set to become more closely involved in marketing the event to golfers, and it was hoped that numbers would be well up for the second such event in the Autumn.

The Committee noted that the take-up of membership offers made in conjunction with the events had been good.

7. Promotion of events

7.1 *Knock-out competitions*

A paper from Mr Oliver had been circulated in advance. His starting point had been that to double the entry to all our knock-out competitions would make as much money as the EBU's share of profit from all the One-day Green-pointed events. He had concluded that the lure of Green points per match had made the One-day events what they were, and suggested that Green points might be awarded per stanza in knock-out events, as an additional incentive to entries from teams who did not expect to win many matches.

Committee members generally were not convinced that the lack of such Green point incentives was what deterred people from entering knock-out competitions. Instead, the amount of travelling required, the difficulty in agreeing dates and the general availability of many other activities competing for players' time were thought to be factors. Some Committee members were also concerned at the potential for abuse if per stanza awards were to be introduced in matches played privately. Nevertheless the Committee considered that it was a suggestion which should be explored further by the Master Points Sub-Committee chaired by Mr Mason. Consideration should

be given to applying the proposed awards to the Spring Foursomes as well as to knock-out events played privately.

7.2 *General promotion of events*

A paper from Mrs Curtis was tabled. The Committee believed that more could be done to publicise EBU competitions. A flyer was normally produced for most competitions, but circulation was somewhat haphazard – in particular leaflets for all upcoming competitions should routinely be sent to all One-day Joint Venture events, which did not appear to happen at present. Suggestions were also made for improvements to the publicity for upcoming events on the EBU website, and in *English Bridge*. The proliferation of inserts with the magazine was felt by some to be counter-productive, but use could be made, for instance, of the currently blank reverse side of the bidding insert.

Mr Collier drew the Committee's attention to the appointment of a new Development Manager at Aylesbury (Virpi Ojala), part of whose brief would be to examine promotion in all its aspects.

Mr Page suggested that the leaflets produced for each competition should explain the nature of each competition in more detail in an attempt to demonstrate to potential entrants why they should be interested. Ms Hamilton thought that EBU leaflets generally could be made to look more enticing. Mr Oliver suggested the possibility of liaison with County websites, so that links to EBU events could be included on County sites.

The Committee noted that some Counties were sufficiently unconvinced of the value for money offered by advertisements in *English Bridge* for One-day Joint Ventures, that they had ceased to place such advertisements. This was to be considered by the Editorial Board. One possibility would be to have all the events for a particular weekend advertised together, as had happened for the BBL One-day events some years ago.

8. *Overseas Congress*

The Committee noted that arrangements had been finalised to hold the 2005 event in Tunisia, and that for the first time there would be a Students Congress played alongside the main event.

9. *Master Points*

9.1 *Master Points Sub-committee*

Mr Mason reported that the Sub-Committee (which in addition to himself and Mr Bavin, comprised Simon Cochemé, Kevin Comrie, Paul Hackett, Anwyn Lewis, Michael Prior and Margaret White) had now met. Mr Cochemé had done a considerable amount of work on comparisons with other NBOs' schemes. Further meetings were planned and it was hoped to put some firm proposals to Council in January. It had been suggested that a further member of the Committee should be invited to join the Sub-committee, and it was agreed that Mr Oliver should do so.

Ideas which were to be considered included handicapping, the depreciation of Master Points and the introduction of a new rank with a lower Green point qualification than the 25 Green points presently required for Regional Master. Mr Oliver's suggestions (see item 7.1) would also be considered. Any Committee members with ideas which they would like the Sub-committee to consider were welcome to pass them to Mr Mason.

9.2 *Possible Gold Point event*

A paper from Mrs Dhondy had been circulated in advance, in which she outlined some ideas which had come out of discussions with a number of the top players. She had endeavoured to approach the matter from the standpoint of what would persuade a significant number of the top players to participate. Her conclusion had been that an individual tournament was attractive, but there would

have to be significant prizes and therefore sponsorship. The Committee was very happy to progress the matter. Mr Mason agreed to draw the matter to the Board's attention, and Mrs Dhondy agreed to discuss her ideas on sponsorship with Mr Collier.

It was noted that such an event might (if the timing was right) prove a good inaugural event for a National Bridge Centre.

9.3 *Simultaneous pairs*

Mr Bavin said that he has been asked to request that a discussion be deferred, and the Committee was happy to agree.

9.4 *Trials*

Mr Doe reported that the Selection Committee wished to make use of the Gold Point rankings as a basis for deciding exemptions for trials, but had taken the view that the rankings would be more meaningful if they contained an element of recognition of performance in one of the strongest categories of event sponsored by the EBU, namely trials. It had therefore asked him to seek the Committee's approval in principle for the award of Green points for trials. The Selection Committee was aware that the traditional objection had been that such events were subject to selection, but the objection to awarding Master Points for such events appeared to have been abandoned with the award of Master Points for the Tollemache and for the Home Internationals. Besides, subject to considerations of space, which rarely came into play, most trials were now open entry events.

Mr Bavin cautioned that the decision to award Green points for the Tollemache had only been approved on the basis that the awards were very modest. Mrs Dhondy said that it seemed illogical to award points for Internationals but not for trials. Mr Bavin confirmed that it was possible to make Gold Point awards without actually issuing the underlying Green points which would normally be associated with them (a possibility which Mr Doe confirmed the Selection Committee had considered, without knowing whether it was feasible).

It was agreed to ask Mr Bavin to prepare a paper on the possible options for consideration at the next meeting, and in the meantime to flag up the possibility to Council. Ms Hamilton wished recorded her continued opposition in principle to awarding Green points for events for which players are selected to play.

10. *One-day Green-pointed Joint Ventures and County Congresses*

10.1 *Schedule for 2006*

Mr Doe reported that following the last meeting it had been drawn to his attention that the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire weekends shown in the schedule in July and September should have been reversed. He had also had discussions with Kent as requested, and the results were brought back to the Committee for a decision. The Committee decided that Kent should be offered Saturday 13th May or Saturday or Sunday 15th or 16th July in addition to the event already in the draft schedule on Saturday 17th June (which could be moved to the Sunday if they wished).

The Committee noted that Kent had felt disadvantaged because they had been very flexible in being prepared to hold events on a wide range of dates, whereas other Counties had applied for events on first choice dates only. It reiterated that Counties which for whatever reason do not find themselves able to offer second choice dates may find themselves at a disadvantage in terms of the allocation of events. Mr Doe agreed to draw this to all Counties' attention.

The Committee approved a late application from Suffolk for an event on Sunday 18th June 2006.

10.2 Inclusion of refreshments in entry fees

The Committee considered correspondence from Suffolk, who wished to be able to include the cost of refreshments in the entry fee. It was not entirely clear what was being proposed, but the Committee was prepared to consider the application favourably provided that the fee for refreshments was additional to the normal minimum entry fee so that the EBU's share of profit would not be adversely affected.

10.3 Congress option application

The Committee provisionally approved an application from Warwickshire to exercise the Congress option in respect of the teams event at the Midland Counties Congress in early January (the congress is a joint venture with Staffs & Shrops and Worcestershire, but the Green-pointed event will come from Warwickshire's "quota"). Approval is subject to Aylesbury receiving the appropriate assurance that all relevant neighbours have been consulted and have raised no objection.

11. Any other business

11.1 Tollemache Cup

Mr Bavin said that he had received an informal approach to see whether the Committee might be prepared to allow an entry from Wales. The Committee decided to await any formal approach, and in particular would wish to see whether it was Wales, or individual Welsh districts (of which there are four) who wished to be considered.

11.2 Isle of Man Congress

Mr Bavin reported that he had been contacted by the local organisers with details of the possible new venue which had been awaited. The Committee was enthusiastic about the information which had been provided, and requested Mr Bavin to make a provisional booking for 2006. It was still not clear whether the new venue was available for the right dates in 2005, the alternative dates offered being unacceptable due to a clash with the Guernsey Congress. Mr Bavin was authorised to move the 2005 event if the right dates became available.

The Committee approved the suggestion of the local organisers to abandon the Thursday evening pre-Congress Pairs.

11.3 Seedings

The Committee considered and approved a suggestion to seed Crockfords and the Hubert Phillips Bowl by reference to the Gold Point ranking list (subject to the existing guarantees for the previous year's finalists in the case of Crockfords) instead of asking the Selection Committee to reach a subjective decision. It decided to make no change to the current method of seeding the Schapiro Spring Foursomes (whereby the Selection Committee is invited to seed the top eight teams, and all teams mentioned by the Selection Committee form the primary seeds, with the remainder being ranked according to Gold Points, with discretion for Mr Bavin to make adjustments for foreign teams).

The Committee considered it worth suggesting to BGB that they might wish to seed the Gold Cup by Gold Points, with a suitable alternative method to accommodate Scottish teams (as the SBU has no Gold Point scheme).

11.4 Gold Point race

Mrs Dhondy asked when the cut-off point might be for qualifications for the proposed Gold Point event, and whether any adjustments should be made for anomalies arising from incomplete knock-out competitions. The Committee considered that the Gold Point list as at 1st July should be used without any adjustments, but Mr Doe was asked to check whether the issue of Master Points by BGB for the Gold Cup did give rise to any anomalies.

11.5 ***Format of minutes***

The Chairman asked whether the Committee was minded to follow the Board's lead in much reducing the degree to which the opinions expressed by individual Committee members were attributed in the minutes. The Committee was content to maintain the existing style in that respect.