



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL ON WEDNESDAY 12th SEPTEMBER 2007**

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

- 1. Apologies for Absence** Brian Crack
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2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (13th June 2007)

2.1 Accuracy

Minutes of the previous meeting were passed as accurate.

2.2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising other than those separately itemised in the Agenda.

3. Tournament Accounts

Copies of the accounts for nine events from April through July had been circulated in advance, and overall attendance figures for tournaments in general were circulated at the meeting.

Although accounts were generally very good, and ahead of budget, Mrs Curtis raised a concern over the figures for the Garden Cities Trophy. Although the use of Kettering for one regional final as well as the national final may have contributed to the net loss, nevertheless the loss was greater than the budgeted loss, which should have taken this into account.

The Chairman expressed pleasure that the Blackpool Easter Festival was still making a profit, despite the decline in attendance.

It was observed that in general the decline in numbers for Championship Pairs events was greater than for Swiss events. The lure of Green Points clearly was a contributory factor, and alternative means of attracting the lower ability players were considered. Where events have been flighted, the lower flights have generally not been very popular. 'Stratification' was suggested as an incentive in Championship Pairs for those of lower ability to earn Master Points. In a Stratified

event the field would not be divided for playing purposes, but separate ranking lists would be produced, according to the combined master points of the participants, and prizes and Master Points would be issued within the categories. Mr Bavin said that there would be no practical obstacle to introducing this as soon as possible, other than the ability of scoring software to cope. Further discussion on potential formats was deferred to the March meeting.

The attendance at Bournemouth continued to be a concern. Alternative 'up market' hotels had been suggested, but Mr Bavin reported that approaches to these hotels had so far been unsuccessful.

4. Tournament Reports

Mr Bavin gave a verbal report on recent tournaments, and analysis from the questionnaires was circulated.

4.0.1 The English Riviera Congress appeared to have been very successful. Feedback had been generally positive regarding the timings, and regarding other features such as having a small café outlet in the playing area.

4.0.2 There was little to say about the Scarborough Festival, other than that the lighting was poor in places.

4.0.3 Mr Hackett reported that as a host at the Eastbourne Seniors Congress he had received several verbal comments about the cancellation of the Veterans final. This was to be discussed shortly.

4.0.4 Numbers were again low at the National Women's Teams. Undoubtedly the change of date had been a contributory factor, but Mr Hackett questioned whether enough had been done by the Aylesbury staff to publicise the event. Although there had been a promotional push by e-mail to potential participants, it had probably been too late to have any effect. It was agreed that publicity for events in general should be circulated by e-mail six months in advance initially, to allow players to make long-term plans, and that there should be a follow-up after three months.

Reports of the hotel were generally positive, except that there had been a Wedding reception / disco in the adjacent room. Whilst the participants on this occasion were quite tolerant of the noise, the view was that there were other events due to be held at Hinckley at which the extraneous noise would be unacceptable.

4.0.5 At Brighton the level of dissatisfaction was much lower than in previous years, with most complaints being about the bar (poor level of service and repeatedly running out of stock).

Mr Hackett and Mrs Dhondy both reported that their jobs as hosts were more difficult at Brighton than they had been elsewhere, and suggested that at the weekends there should be a dedicated, non-playing, host.

The committee revisited the subject of hospitality at the Brighton congress, confirming their intentions to hold receptions on four occasions during midweek for 'loyal' customers. Some concern was raised about the choice of invitees, whether some players would be offended by their omission, and the Treasurer expressed reservations that the reduction in the prize fund to cover hospitality would be welcomed by the players, whether or not they were invited.

Mr Nelson felt that the Exhibition match between representative teams from England and Norway had done little to enhance the experience of the general public. There had been few spectators and little had been made of the conclusion; no EBU representative nor presentation. Mr Hackett, though, said that the spectatorship on BBO had been unusually high. Mr Bavin observed that the costs were not coming out of the Tournament Budget, but the Internationals Budget, as training for the international team. For that reason it was not the committee's concern as to the financial viability, though they had a rightful interest in any event that takes place at the congress. As an aside, Mr Hackett advised the committee that, although no final decision had been made, the Selection Committee was considering holding Open Trials at Brighton.

Concern was raised that very few questionnaires had been filled in at Brighton. The committee reiterated its request that forms should be put out on tables at the start of the final session, or final day, of every tournament.

4.0.6 The secretary reported that numbers had dropped for the Hubert Phillips Bowl and Gerard Faulkner Salver. Although there was a slight increase for the Crockfords Cup from last year, last year's figures had been very low.

4.1

The committee considered a letter from Mr Kambites, principally regarding the policy on the application of the dress code at the Brighton Congress, in particular with respect to the wearing of shorts. The committee acknowledged that, whilst some shorts were acceptable and others not, it was virtually impossible to legislate precisely. Mr Bavin agreed to write the regulations giving some examples of what was and was not acceptable, but with the stress that what was unacceptable was not limited to items on the list.

Mr Kambites' letter also questioned the late evening starts throughout the tournament, wondering whether this was due to dinner times in the hotel. Mr Bavin pointed out that very few participants actually eat in the hotel dining room, but that they have just as much difficulty in getting through meals at local restaurants in the time allotted.

4.2

The committee considered two letters regarding the cancellation of the Veterans final at the Eastbourne Seniors Congress and the reallocation of the Edith Kaplan award. Mr Hackett reported that, although the two letters were from members of the same partnership, their views had been echoed by other players at the event.

The committee was reminded that there had been very good reasons for both decisions (which had been made by the committee over a year ago). Due to the overall number of Veterans competing, it had been considered inappropriate to hold a separate final – some pairs qualified for the veterans final who had finished well below half-way in the qualifying event. At the inception of the event, there had been sponsorship from a Holiday company, providing a substantial prize to the winners of the Seniors Final, and so it had been appropriate to allocate the Edith Kaplan award to the winners of the Veterans Final. However, following the discontinuation of the sponsorship, it had become anomalous that the Veterans champions should get such a large prize whilst the Seniors champions received a relatively small amount. The reallocation of the prize to the Teams event meant that everybody (not just the veterans) had a chance of winning, and furthermore the amount of the prize was less disproportionately large. It was confirmed that the Edith Kaplan trustees had been consulted before the decision had been taken.

Two letters concerning the timings on Sunday were considered. The committee did not feel that one individual's travel problems justified a change in the timetable, but observed that the decision had nevertheless already been made, for the event in 2008, to bring forward the start time to 11:00.

5. Overseas Congresses

At the last meeting the committee decided to discontinue the Autumn Overseas Congress after the expiration of the sponsorship deal with Baker Tilly. Since then, the committee has received a number of objections, both written and verbal, from regular overseas participants. Furthermore, two holiday companies had independently put forward proposals for the Autumn 2008 Overseas Congress, in which they also cover the sponsorship for the events.

The committee felt that in the light of this, we should reconsider. The General Manager suggested that we should proceed with running two overseas events per year, but subject to the conditions:

- a) that the English Bridge Union would be responsible only for the running of the bridge; that the partner holiday company would bear all the responsibility for travel and accommodation.
- b) that the bridge events would be exclusively for those players that made use of the travel packages made available by the partner company; Bridge would not be open to players making their own travel arrangements.

- c) that the arrangements offered by the travel company, and the number of participants, continued to make the events viable.
- d) that the venues offered would be easily accessible.

The committee considered the proposals from the two companies for Autumn 2008. The two proposals were similar in terms of overall costing. However, a number of independent factors persuaded the committee that they should accept the proposal from Mercian Travel.

The committee noted that the EBU had already agreed to work with Mercian Travel for Spring 2009, and Mrs Bugden suggested that thereafter we should alternate between the two companies, subject to their continuing to offer reasonable deals. As this arrangement would mean that one company would always do the Spring event, and the other the Autumn, the alternative suggestion was accepted, that they should alternate two events at a time. Bridge Overseas would accordingly be offered the Autumn 2009 & Spring 2010 Overseas Congresses. The committee recognised that this was not in line with the 'open tender' policy that was desirable, but stressed that this arrangement would be subject to the company offering appropriate terms.

6. EBU Membership Strategy

The Chairman asked whether there were any implications for the Tournament Committee arising from the new Strategy Proposal. The Committee thought that tournaments would be unaffected by the changes, and that therefore there was nothing to discuss at this stage, but would await further developments.

7. Other Correspondence from members

Two e-mails had been received regarding the forthcoming Bracketed Teams.

7.1

In the first, Ms Rohan suggested that teams should have the option of 'playing above their rank', e.g. they could elect to play in the top bracket even if they were not sufficiently highly ranked. Mr Hackett pointed out the fundamental flaw in this suggestion: given that there was to be a prescribed number of teams in each bracket, in order to accommodate a lower-ranked team, another team would have to be relegated that had a genuine right to be in that bracket.

7.2

In the second e-mail, Ms Dunn questioned the validity of the format, and also wondered whether the change had been prompted by a drop in attendance that had more to do with the move to Kettering than with the unpopularity of the Swiss format. The secretary pointed out that attendance figures had actually held up through the move to Kettering, but had been generally falling for some time while the event was still in Leeds. It is the gradual decline over several years that had prompted the committee to consider a significant change in the format.

8. Any Other Business

8.1

Concern was raised over the future of One Day Joint Ventures. Following the introduction of the new financial structure, it was feared that the number of participating counties was falling. The secretary observed that a total of 37 such events were scheduled for 2008, and counties had so far applied for 31 events in 2009. He added that, even though the deadline for applications had long passed, there were counties that he was sure were intending to hold events, but had not yet applied. Furthermore the figures did not take into account the fact that over the years an increasing number of counties were taking up the option of including green-pointed events within their established county congresses. Mr Hill countered by saying that although counties had applied for events in 2009, it was quite probable that some would be cancelled in the mean time. The committee agreed to defer until meaningful statistics were available.

8.2

Mr Nelson reported that Mr Jepson had spoken to him following the National Counties League Final, wondering whether the EBU was content for him to continue running the event. The committee noted that the event seemed to have been a great success, and was very happy for Mr Jepson to continue.

8.3

Mr Jepson also had said that one of his bridge students had recently been a member of the British team for the Walker Cup [the Golf trophy contested by British Isles & U.S.A. amateurs]. He wondered whether there was any marketing potential for the Golfprint Trophy arising from this. The committee felt that any opportunity for publicity would be welcome, and were open to suggestions in this respect.

8.4

The Chairman announced that this was the last time that Mr Neville would be attending a Tournament Committee meeting, and expressed his gratitude for his many years of service.

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 13th December 2007, at a venue to be announced.