



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL ON WEDNESDAY 13th DECEMBER 2007**

Present:	Alan Nelson	Chairman
	Brian Crack	Vice-Chairman
	Max Bavin	Chief Tournament Director
	Sally Bugden	EBU Vice-Chairman
	Margaret Curtis	
	Paul Hackett	
	Philip Mason	
	Addis Page	
	Andrew Petrie	
	Barry Capal	EBU General Manager
	Ian Mitchell	Secretary

1. Election of Committee Chairman for the Year 2007/08

Mr Nelson was proposed for Chairman by Mr Page and seconded by Mrs Curtis. There being no other nominations for Chairman, Mr Nelson was duly elected.

2. Election of Committee Vice-Chairmen for the Year 2007/08

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

3. Apologies for Absence

Peter Stocken	EBU Chairman
Mike Hill	EBU Treasurer

Mr Nelson welcomed Mr Petrie to his first Tournament Committee meeting, to Mr Mason on his return to the committee, and extended the welcome to all existing committee members.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (12th September 2007)

4.1 Accuracy

The minutes of the previous meeting were passed as accurate.

4.2 Matters arising

4.2.1 Mr Mason suggested that the tournament report for the Scarborough Congress, simply citing 'little to say' other than one minor problem, did not do justice to the success of the event.

4.2.2 Event Venues

Mr Bavin gave a verbal report on the continued search for alternative 'upmarket' hotel venues, having recently visited three potential venues.

He had visited two venues in the Home Counties. Although impressive in some respects, they failed to meet all the criteria required. However, Mr Bavin reported favourably on his visit to the Birmingham Metropole Hotel, located near the N.E.C. and Airport. There was ample function space, and the hotel accommodation was of good quality. There was also a selection of 'budget' hotels in the area.

There was a small choice of restaurants within the complex, but the location would mean that it would be unlikely that players would have the opportunity to venture further from the hotel in dinner breaks.

The hotel was apparently very keen to accommodate EBU events, and Mr Bavin was optimistic that they would be able to offer an attractive package to our members.

In Mr Hackett's report for a previous meeting, two venues in particular had come under criticism: Bournemouth and Eastbourne. In light of the relative failure of the Northern Seniors Congress, it was suggested that the two Summer Seniors Congresses be combined and held at the Birmingham venue, and also the Autumn Congress.

Given that it is undesirable to make changes to any details already published in the EBU diary, the committee decided that Mr Bavin should proceed with a view to making the changes in the 2009 calendar year.

Continuing the discussion on potential new venues, Mr Petrie suggested that the Oxford and Cambridge Colleges might offer a suitable location.

Concern was again raised about the Blackpool Easter Festival, with the cost and location of the venue considered to be major contributory factors in the decline in numbers. Opinion continued to be divided about the merits of holding two events at the same time in different parts of the country. Although many 'northerners' choose to travel to London rather than play in Blackpool, Mr Nelson felt that it was essential to offer reasonable alternatives as a service to our members. Buxton was suggested as an alternative venue for the Easter event. The Palace hotel had been used for many years by the BBL, prior to its dissolution, for two events. Mr Bavin believed that there had not been a falling out when the BBL chose to relocate the two events to Harrogate and Shrewsbury, so it was considered to be a feasible option.

5. Tournament Accounts

Accounts were presented for five events up until September. All events made a surplus of income over expenditure, and the figures for Scarborough, Brighton and Guernsey were considerably above the budget. Mr Capal pointed out that although the Brighton figures were good compared with previous years, the hotel costs were due to increase sharply next year.

6. Tournament Reports

Mr Bavin reported on events from September through November.

6.1 The Guernsey Congress

Attendance was about the same as in previous years, and the event continued to be profitable.

6.2 The Great Northern Swiss Pairs

Attendance was almost identical to last year's. Although this was very low when compared to previous years, Mr Bavin reminded the committee that the refurbishment of the venue had reduced the size of the potential playing area, which could not now accommodate many more tables than actually played. There had been favourable reports on the quality of the venue and the food.

Bridgemates had been used for the first time, and a projector screen used to display current (provisional) rankings. There were mixed comments about the availability of 'current' scores during the play. Although the screen was not visible from the actual playing area, apparently some players had left the table during play to look at the screen.

The committee agreed that this behaviour was inappropriate, but that otherwise maximum information should be available to the customers, in particular that they should be able to see their provisional results when they had finished each round.

The use of Bridgemates helped to speed up the running of the event, and many players felt that the finish on the Sunday was very early, and that there should be an additional match. The committee agreed that, with effect from 2008, there should be five matches on the Sunday, making a total of twelve matches overall.

6.3 The Autumn Congress

Consensus was that the hotel is much improved, in particular with regard to the quality of the dinners.

The early start on the middle day seems to have been met with general approval. Players' comments, however, suggested that the break between sessions should be shorter, so that more time is available at the end of play to have dinner.

An unfortunate incident occurred in the secondary final. A score had been incorrectly entered on a Bridgemate, and the error only came to light during the evening after results had been published and assumed to be correct. Mr Bavin confirmed that the request for the score to be changed had been made within the official protest time, and the changes were duly made. The effect of the score change was that the winners of the event also changed.

The committee felt that more care needs to be taken by the players to ensure that both partnerships have the opportunity to check results as they are entered. It suggested that guidelines be published in event programmes, and perhaps in an article in English Bridge.

6.4 The Seniors Congress

Attendance at the Seniors Congress was very poor. This was felt to be mostly as a result of the unavoidable clash with other congresses in Porthcawl, Torquay and the North East.

The entry fee for the Seniors is higher than for other events of similar format, in particular the fees for individual events as opposed to the Full Congress fee. In the past these fees had been raised because the congress had been oversubscribed, especially on the teams day. It was now felt, though, that this was no longer appropriate, and it was agreed to hold the prices for the 2008 event.

Amongst the feedback from the players were comments that the dinner breaks were too long. The lengths of the breaks were designed to ensure that the hotel could cope with two sittings in the restaurant. Although this year the low attendance meant that the hotel could have coped with just one sitting, Mr Bavin suggested that we should not change the timings, since numbers would be likely to increase in future years, and two sittings would once again be required.

6.5 The Rhodes Congress

There had been about 50 tables in play in the two main events, which was about the same as previously. The congress was reported to have been 'fairly successful'

6.6 The Tollemache Cup

This was the first large-scale event to be held at Hinckley, and appeared to have been very successful, both from the point of view of the bridge and the venue. There were many favourable comments about the hotel.

Some players did express their dissatisfaction over the queues for check-in before play on the Saturday, for the second dinner sitting, and at the bar at the end of play. The committee recognised that this was out of the EBU's control, and that the hotel had coped as well as they could in the circumstances.

7. The National Swiss / Bracketed Teams

7.1 The decision had been made at an extraordinary meeting that the format for the National Teams event in January 2008 should revert to the traditional Swiss format rather than the Bracketed format that had been advertised. The committee felt that there had been insufficient publicity regarding the proposed change, and that many players were still not aware of precisely what 'bracketing' entailed.

For this reason, the committee considered that the format reversal should only be treated as a postponement, and unless the numbers for the Swiss Teams recovered significantly, then the 2009 event should be run under the bracketed format. Leaflets would be prepared describing the bracketed format, for distribution at the 2008 event.

Messrs Petrie and Mason both expressed surprised that this particular event had been earmarked for the format change. Mr Mason felt it would be more appropriate to have selected a one-day event within a congress to trial the format, or to have an additional event alongside, for example, a Seniors Event, when there might be no major bridge event available for non-seniors.

Mr Hackett explained that the Swiss Teams was chosen for the change because it was severely in decline, and without a change in format could be liable to cancellation.

7.2 Criteria for Bracketing

Mr Bavin sought clarification from the committee about the method of dividing into groups. He observed that if we were to base brackets simply on master point totals, then most of the leading teams in the 2007 Swiss Teams would not be included in the top bracket. Using Gold Points instead would result in brackets that more closely represented previous performances. Mr Bavin was concerned, though, that advertising this method might make the event appear elitist, and deter entry from players with no, or very few, Gold Points. The committee felt that leaflets could be worded carefully to ensure that players with no Gold Points would be more than welcome.

Mr Crack reminded the committee that, for the Kent CBA Bracketed Teams, only the MP Rank had been taken into consideration, with Gold Points used to split ties for the last place in a bracket.

7.3 Ranked Masters Pairs

The committee also considered the Ranked Masters Pairs event, and concluded that the plans to introduce bracketing to all but the top two categories should also be postponed. Again, leaflets should be prepared for distribution at the 2008 events, advertising that we were considering an alternative format. The event details in the 2009 diary should reflect the possibility of a change in the format.

8. EBU Representation at Major Tournaments

The relevant page in the EBU Procedures Manual had not been updated since 1995. Mr Nelson presented an amended paper for approval by the committee. Subject to the deletion of a reference to an event that no longer existed, the paper was approved.

9. Promoting EBU Tournaments

9.1 The committee approved a paper presented by Mrs Bugden, outlining what should be happening with regard to the promotion of EBU Tournaments.

9.2 Following an incident in which it appeared that a county official had been unaware of a major EBU event being held in the area, it was suggested that county secretaries should be routinely contacted to advise them of EBU events being held within their counties.

The committee felt that this had been an isolated incident, but that it would nevertheless be constructive to send out leaflets for distribution within the county. It was also felt that all counties should be advised of any significant changes to the calendar.

10. Scheduling of EBU (& Other) Tournaments

Following the unfortunate clash this year between the Seniors Congress and other events (as described earlier) it has come to light that the 2008 event will also clash with the Porthcawl Congress in Wales, and it is impossible now for either event to be rescheduled. The clash may have arisen partly due to differing interpretations of 'the first weekend in November'.

Mr Bavin proposed that rather than following such rules for scheduling, we adopt the International Organization for Standardization's [ISO] concept of official week numbers, whereby (for example) the Seniors Congress will always take place in 'week 44'. If counties and other home unions also adopt the scheme, then future clashes should be avoided.

The committee agreed that we should go ahead with this idea, with effect from 2009, and hoped that other organisations would follow suit.

11. Correspondence

11.1 An e-mail from Bill Gardner was considered. Following a walkover, his Crockfords team had reached round 3 without having played a match. His concern was that he would be not be guaranteed two matches should he lose the round 3 match, as it would be too late to include him in the Plate. He alleged that this had happened to him some years previously, and he had been refused a refund.

Mr Bavin could not recall this previous incident (though that did not mean that it hadn't happened), and was very surprised that a refund of half the entry fee had not been offered. The committee agreed that a refund for the current event, and retrospectively for the previous incident, should be offered in the form of free entry to next year's event.

11.2 The committee considered an e-mail from Mark Denny (referring to the same defaulted Crockfords match), in which he expressed concern that his team has been awarded a disproportionately large number of away matches in EBU knockouts, and that the travelling distances involved were very large.

The committee considered that there was nothing wrong with our current draw procedures, and that no further action was required.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Earlier in the meeting Mrs Bugden had suggested that there should be an increase in the use of e-mails in between meetings for the purposes of making decisions that are either urgent or do not require face-to-face discussions.

12.2 Mr Crack raised the idea of awarding triangular ties in EBU Knockouts, as an alternative to awarding byes. The committee briefly discussed the matter, but felt that more time was needed to consider the implications, and deferred the issue to the next meeting.

12.3 A question was raised about the decision in a previous meeting to award prizes in the form of bottles of wine, rather than vouchers, at some events. The committee confirmed that this decision was specifically relating to the Ranked Masters Pairs.

Mr Hackett wondered whether it was still viable to do so if we had not advertised that we were doing so. He expressed the same concern about the reception for the players at the National Ladies' and Men's Pairs. The committee felt that as long as we had not advertised otherwise, then it was still reasonable to do so, and Mr Hackett suggested that such details should be mentioned in leaflets for the events. He advised that whenever there were any changes to the conditions at any of our events, such changes should be clearly advertised in advance material.

12.4 Dates for future meetings were arranged as follows:

Tuesday 4th March 2008

Thursday 29th May 2008