



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL ON THURSDAY 22nd MARCH 2007**

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

1. Apologies for Absence Paul Spencer

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (13th December 2006)

2.1 Accuracy

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

2.2. Matters arising

2.2.1 The question had arisen as to whether the decision to appoint two vice-chairmen was supported by the EBU constitution. The committee felt that the decision was not damaging to anybody, and the General Manager suggested that if this was contrary to the constitution, then perhaps the constitution needed to be changed.

3. Tournament Accounts

3.1 Mr Bavin tabled a report of the budget for EBU Tournaments that had been approved by the board.

3.2 Mr Crack had circulated a summary of net income, event by event, for the last six years. He suggested discussion of this at the next meeting. The Treasurer thanked Mr Crack for his work, and reminded the committee that income from Tournaments was essential to the financial well-being of the EBU.

4. Tournament Reports

Mr Bavin reported that there was little to say about most tournaments so far this year, except regarding the two Year End Congresses, and the Ranked Masters. Congress Reviews for these three events were circulated. The Ranked Masters was to be the subject of a later discussion.

There had been much correspondence regarding the new starting times at the Year End Congresses. The reviews showed that the majority were in favour, although those against were much more 'vociferous'. Messrs Nelson & Hackett said that verbal feedback that they had received was equally vociferously in favour.

The committee was reminded that statistics from Congress Review forms don't necessarily give an accurate picture. The majority of players don't fill in forms, and it can be assumed that they are generally at least content with the format. However, the figures do not take into account the players that have chosen not to attend, perhaps because of the format. Mrs Bugden suggested that we should canvas, perhaps by e-mail, players that don't return to tournaments, to find out their reasons; also that questionnaires should be put out on tables at the start of tournaments (to be collected after the first round), to encourage more players to offer their views. The committee observed that it would be more constructive to distribute the questionnaires at the start of the last day, so that players would be able to comment on their experience.

Some concern was raised that players were not made sufficiently aware of session timings in advance of tournaments, with respect not just to the starting times, but also to the length of breaks. The diary, for example, generally shows the starting time for each session, but does not give the finishing time, or the length of the breaks. The latter would be more useful to players that need to make plans for eating. It was decided that full timetables should be sent out with acknowledgements of entry.

Mrs Curtis repeated her concerns about the early starting times at Torquay.

5. Tournament Analysis

Mr Hackett presented a paper outlining his views on the relative success of EBU tournaments and other tournaments worldwide. His conclusions were...

1. Venues:

All tournaments that involve an overnight stay should be held in hotels or in city centres with accommodation immediately nearby. The Eastbourne Seniors & Veterans Congress, in particular, has come under some criticism on this issue.

Mrs Curtis observed that this congress, despite the drawback of the venue, has been particularly successful, and that therefore there was no pressing need for change.

Mr Hackett also suggested that there could be a demand for events to be held in more up-market hotels, and earmarked the Eastbourne and Bournemouth congresses as prime candidates to be relocated to such hotels. Suggestions were invited for potential hotels to be used for this purpose.

2. Hosts:

There should be a host at all EBU tournaments and congresses, including one-day events. In the case of some tournaments, such as the Tollemache, this could be a Tournament Director, but for congresses this should be a member of the bridge-playing public. In the latter case the host could be a playing member, but would be expected to forgo their 'social life' in order to be available at the appropriate times. Hosts would be offered reduced entry to the event, and a modest budget should be allowed to be used mainly to welcome first-time attenders.

In the absence of other suggestions, Mr Hackett offered to act as the host for the forthcoming Easter Festival in London, and to coordinate hosts for the Blackpool Festival and Spring Bank Holiday Congress. He would also draw up a checklist of duties, and a list of potential candidates.

3. Speakers:

All tournaments should have an opening and a close. It was acknowledged that this was already being put into effect.

4. EBU Contacts:

There should be a named contact at the Aylesbury office for each tournament. The public like to know that there is a specific person to whom to speak with regard to any particular event. This person should also be responsible for providing information to the organisers at the tournaments as well as to the players.

5. Hospitality:

At the Year End Congress in Blackpool, about 40% of the participants stayed on for the reception. It was felt that holding a reception on the last evening of a tournament only worked for events where players were likely to stay overnight afterwards, for example overseas events.

It was suggested that at other events there should be something for the players as they leave on the penultimate evening of an event. This could be in the form of a glass of wine, or a small snack (which might encourage them to stay for a drink as well).

Mr Stocken considered it worthwhile as an investment in the future to experiment with various options.

Mr Hackett identified the introduction of hosts as a high priority, as well as discussion about the following particular tournaments: The Ranked Masters Pairs, The National Swiss Teams, the Men's & Ladies' Pairs, the National Pairs & the Great Northern Swiss Pairs. Discussions about the latter two were deferred.

6. *The Ranked Masters Pairs*

There had been much correspondence regarding the format of the 2007 Ranked Masters. It had previously been decided that all categories would be scored by 'Butler IMPs', but this did not meet with universal approval at the event. Furthermore, due to falling numbers, the Chief Tournament Director had used his discretionary powers to merge two pairs of categories, for the purposes of the movements, although ranking lists were published for each category independently. Some players objected strongly to having to play against higher-ranked opposition. Others questioned why it was deemed inappropriate that the lower categories should play in small fields, when the top category (the Premier Grand Masters) was allowed to be run as a 5-table event.

The issue of prize money was also raised – why should winners in the lower categories receive less prize money, even though they had paid the same entry fee?

Following the success of the Kent one-day bracketed teams, Mr Crack suggested that the Ranked Masters should be replaced by a 'Bracketed Pairs' event. One benefit of bracketing, based on combined rankings, was that some regular partnerships would no longer be prohibited from playing together because of the regulation requiring them to be of the same (or similar) ranking.

An alternative was suggested, and accepted, that we should persist with the top two categories as they were, but that the rest of the field should be bracketed. Each category should be a complete all-play-all, and rather than the 'multiple-pairs-style' 2- or 3- board round, each 'match' should be of at least six boards.

Regarding the prize money, it was suggested that prize vouchers should be discontinued, non-cash prizes awarded, to at least the top three in each category ('Gold, Silver & Bronze'), and that more of the income should be spent in hospitality.

Regarding the scoring method, Mr Page observed that whenever there is a difference in conditions between national events and club events, this is an obstacle for potential newcomers. It was felt, though, that it was important to have some variety in the format of tournaments, and that the obstacle would not be a huge one, especially for players that had played in any sort of teams

event. It was proposed that prior to the start of the event a short lecture would be delivered, outlining how the Butler format works, and how pairs should change their tactics. This should be advertised in the programme to be sent out in advance.

7. The National Ladies' & National Men's Pairs

Although the numbers for this event had decreased again in 2007, there were many positive reports of the new Hinckley venue.

Mr Hackett suggested that this was an event that was a prime candidate for the introduction of hospitality, and suggested that the cost of hospitality on the Saturday evening should be covered by an adjustment to the prize fund, and, if necessary, a small increase in the entry fee.

8. The National Swiss Teams

Numbers for this have also been in decline, although the Kettering venue may have been a contributory factor over the last two years. Some members wondered whether there were simply too many Swiss events on the calendar, and alternative formats were proposed:

Bracketing was once again suggested. There was some concern that this would not work so well with the longer format (currently 13 7-board matches) – teams whose actual ranking placed them in a group either too high or too low for their true ability would be stuck with their 'mis-match' for a whole weekend.

Another suggestion was that the event should be divided into sections, or brackets; that each division would be run as a Swiss; and there would be promotion and relegation between divisions. However, it seemed that there was little difference between this and our usual method of running Swiss Teams with more than one subfield.

It was agreed that bracketing should be considered with immediate effect, i.e. for the 2008 event.

9. Correspondence

9.1 Overseas Congresses

There had been much correspondence, mostly from one individual source, regarding recent and forthcoming Overseas Congresses, but in particular with respect to our partnerships with the package holiday companies.

Some committee members questioned why we persisted with running these events – Although apparently successful, they cater for only a very small portion of our membership, and are a relatively large strain on our resources in Aylesbury.

9.2 In a communication directly to one of the committee members, a suggestion was made that existing members should be allowed free entry to EBU events when they were introducing new players as team-mates.

It was agreed to defer discussion on both matters until the next meeting.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Mr Page presented his suggested formula for opening and closing speeches at congresses. The committee approved and thanked Mr Page for his work.

10.2 Following a spate of knockout matches that have had to involve adjudication, it was agreed to discuss at the next meeting the procedures for adjudication.

Dates for future meetings have already been arranged as follows:

Wednesday 13th June 2007

Wednesday 12th September 2007