



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL ON THURSDAY 29th MAY 2008

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

1. **Apologies for Absence:** none

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (4th March 2008)**

2.1 **Accuracy**

Subject to one typographical error, the minutes of the previous meeting were passed as accurate.

2.2 **Matters arising**

2.2.1 (Item 5.3.1) The committee had agreed that decimalised Green Points should be awarded for every match won in the Ranked Masters Pairs, and had asked Mr Bavin to suggest a formula.

Mr Bavin suggested that the award should be in direct proportion to the number of boards in the match, following a formula such as 0.03 greens per board, or 0.04 per board. The committee felt that the decimalisation should be limited to multiples of 0.05, and suggested that Mr Bavin should use his own discretion in choosing an appropriate formula and amending accordingly.

2.2.2 (Item 7.2) The committee had agreed that responsibility for adjudicating unplayed matches in knockout events should fall on the shoulders of the Chief Tournament Director, rather than the Company Secretary. The General Manager pointed out that to make this official would need an amendment to the Bye Laws.

3. Tournament Accounts

Summaries of the accounts for the financial year 2007-2008 were presented at the meeting. The committee offered congratulations to the Tournament Department for their continued success.

4. Tournament Reports

Mr Bavin gave a verbal report of tournaments from March through May.

4.1 Numbers were poor at the Blackpool Easter Festival. Mr Bavin gave a progress report on alternative venues. After some confusion, it had emerged that the Cairn Hotel in Harrogate would be unable to accommodate us on the Easter Weekend.

The Palace Hotel in Buxton, however, would be available. Whereas the function space was available at a reasonable rate, bedroom rates would be relatively expensive, especially for single accommodation. The committee agreed nevertheless to go ahead with next year's event at this venue, and suggested increased publicity, perhaps with more 'glossy' brochures, such as those produced for Brighton and the overseas congresses.

4.2 Mr Bavin reported that at the London Easter Festival there had been problems with Bridgemates, arising from a recent upgrade in the software.

4.3 Although overall numbers for the Portland Pairs were similar to those in previous years, there was still concern about low numbers at some specific heats, in particular the Manchester heat, where they had only six tables this year. It was observed that even Manchester players were choosing to travel to play in the North Wales heat in preference. The committee agreed that it was no longer viable to run both heats. It was felt that it would be politically unacceptable to consider cancelling the North Wales heat, and so consideration was given to finding an alternative venue to replace Manchester for the benefit of other members from the North West of England and West Yorkshire. Mr Petrie suggested Brierfield Bridge Club, and the committee agreed to explore this as a possibility.

Mr Page also suggested that there was a geographical 'gap' in the South of England (Hampshire & Reading), where the travelling distance to the nearest Portland Pairs venue was quite large in all directions. The committee was reminded that attempts to provide a perfect geographical spread have not necessarily been very successful in the past – there is now a 'gap' between Solihull and the Northern heats, which Derby might have filled, but there had been no uptake when it was offered as a venue in 2000. Furthermore, the committee felt that introducing a new venue might detract from the attendance at other venues. Nevertheless, Mr Page was invited to explore possible venues in the area that might not affect existing venues.

4.4 The Schapiro Spring Foursomes was hailed as a great success. 57 teams had entered, a vast increase on previous years, and the bridge had run smoothly.

There were, however, technical difficulties on the final day, resulting in there being no BBO (BridgeBaseOnline VuGraph) coverage of the semi-finals, and reduced coverage of the final. This was caused partly by local conditions – the poor quality of the hotel's wireless facility, and a severe power cut – but Michael Clark had pointed out that the BBO software itself was very unforgiving when internet connections were unstable.

4.5 Although attendance at the Spring Bank Holiday was up from last year, Mr Bavin observed that this was because last year was a particularly bad year, and figures were still worse than previous years.

Once again there had been problems with Bridgemates, to an extent that reflected badly on the EBU organisation. Mr Bavin reported that this was partly due to error by the operators, but that there were also some software problems that could not be diagnosed at the time.

4.6 Mr Crack reported that while he was attending the Lambourne Jersey Festival, it had emerged that the current venue would not be available next year. The Channel Isles CBA had worked hard during the week, and by the end of the congress had announced that they had come to an excellent arrangement with the 'Hotel de France' for the 2009 Festival.

This would be a good opportunity for publicity for the event, and Mr Crack suggested that an article should be written for *English Bridge*, either the October or December edition, and that it should also include some publicity for the Guernsey Congress.

4.7 Following a brief report on the National Pairs Final, the issue was raised about hotel bedroom rates on the Friday night preceding the event. The member concerned had not been able to book rooms at the 'special EBU rate'. Mr Bavin confirmed that it was not in the contract that the Hotel should provide the special rate other than the specified dates of the tournament, but other committee members reported that they had (on other occasions) been able to do so. The committee agreed that we should strive to have it included in contracts with hotels in general that they offer special rates on days adjacent to tournament dates (both before and after).

5. 'Balanced Scorecard' Rating System for Tournaments

Sample scorecards for a small selection of events had been circulated, giving each event a score based on a number of different criteria.

The scorecards give an overall score out of a maximum possible total of 28. Mr Petrie had provisionally set a traffic light system for overall rating: A score of 18 or more would rate the event as 'Green', a successful tournament; a score of 11 – 17 as 'Amber', an average tournament; and a score of 10 or less as 'Red', a failing tournament.

Mr Petrie, who had developed the scorecards with the help of Mr Bavin, stressed that these should still be regarded as snapshots, since the criteria selected, and particularly their relative importance, were to some extent subjective. He welcomed suggestions as to alternative criteria.

Mr Hackett suggested that criteria should include the contribution of the event to calendar congestion; i.e. events that take place in a congested time of year should be given a low score, whilst events 'filling a large gap' should receive a high score. As an example, he cited the relative closeness of the Swiss Teams Congress to the Ladies' and Men's Pairs as one contributory factor to their mutual decline in numbers.

Mr Crack suggested that in addition to raw attendance figures, and trends in attendance, we also need to examine the turnover; how many players return year after year, and how many new players the event attracts.

Mr Page wondered whether the committee should be setting specific targets, and whether they should revise their target of 70 tables for the Swiss Teams Congress in 2009. The committee felt that the target was a reasonable target to have made, and that they should stand by that unless the scorecard were to clearly suggest otherwise. It was repeated that these scores were a guide only, and a 'Red' rating should not mean that an event should automatically be considered for discontinuation or drastic change. However, an Amber or Red rating should mean that there may be some concern, and the actual score could be used as a benchmark for a particular tournament, to see whether or not it improves the following year.

Mr Bavin was asked to review all of the last year's events using the balanced scorecards.

6. Knockout Events

Michael Clark had written a short paper in which he suggested that there were flaws in the current regulations with regard to arranging dates for Knockout matches. He proposed an alternative system whereby team captains, both home and away, put forward their available dates electronically (via the internet). The proposal was still in an embryonic state, and Mr Clark acknowledged that there would need to be much fine-tuning.

Some committee members agreed that the system, in principle, would be much fairer, whilst other members considered it unworkable. The committee suggested that Mr Clark should develop the idea a little more, and the committee would consider the proposal again at a later date.

7. EBU Calendars

7.1 The 2009 Calendar

Mr Bavin reported that he had a date fixed with the Birmingham Hilton for the 2009 Autumn Congress. The date was a week earlier than the provisional date previously published (due to the timing of the half-term).

7.2 The 2010 Calendar

At the meeting in December, the committee had agreed with Mr Bavin's proposal to fix dates according to 'international standard week numbers', basing future calendars on the 2009 dates.

The secretary presented the committee with the provisional 2010 calendar based on this proposal. He observed that 2010 was a year when all dates would move back by six days, and many events would then be far removed from their 'traditional dates', as in 2009 they were already scheduled later rather than earlier.

The committee agreed that the secretary should fix the dates in 2010 so that events were closer to their traditional dates, and that thereafter they should be fixed by week number.

8. Tournament Committee 'Blog'

The committee welcomed the idea of a Web-Log on the EBU site in which T.C. matters could be better communicated to the public. None of the members wished to be wholly responsible for this, but they agreed that the duties could be shared amongst the whole committee. The chairman suggested that fresh submissions should be made regularly, and that committee members should be invited to contribute on a rotational basis, but that any member should feel free to make their own contribution 'out of rotation'. Mr Crack volunteered to submit the first contribution, with a report about the Lambourne Jersey Festival.

10. Any Other Business

The committee chairman reported on three decisions made at the board meeting on the previous day that would affect the tournament committee.

10.1 The board had decided that more power would be given to Aylesbury staff to make decisions without reference to the Tournament Committee. Mr Page suggested that it should be the role of the committee to audit the effectiveness of the Tournament Department, and Mr Petrie added that there should be an annual review of accounts and performance.

10.2 There was to be a change in the staffing structure at Aylesbury, but the Chairman was not in a position to provide further details at this stage.

10.3 There was to be a move towards 'direct crediting' of prizes to EBU accounts, rather than issuing the vouchers at venues. Concern was raised about how prizes should be presented to foreign visitors. Mr Bavin reported that provisions were already in place to remunerate such visitors at tournaments such as Brighton, where cash was available from the congress takings. At other tournaments it is commonly the case that foreigners played in teams with at least one English player, and that therefore if cash were not available, that player could be credited with the prize, and be responsible for distribution amongst his team members.

Stefanie Rohan had sent an e-mail to the committee regarding the value of issuing prizes. The committee thanked her for her comments.

10.4 The committee raised again the issue of stratification that had been postponed from a previous meeting. The secretary reported that the software was now available that would easily produce a ranking list for different categories within an event, and the committee therefore wished to put this in place as soon as possible.

The committee wondered whether it was feasible to make such a change when details had already been sent for publication in the diary. Mr Bavin suggested that such a change to an already

published programme would not meet any resistance from the players. The committee therefore agreed to introduce stratification for the three-session pairs event at the Easter festival at London.

The committee also wished to introduce Butler scoring to a one-day Swiss Pairs event within a congress. Amongst the forthcoming congresses, however, all such events were consolation events, and it was felt that it would not be appropriate for such an event to be Butler scored.

The committee therefore considered the Great Northern Swiss Pairs as a candidate. It was suggested that such a change to conditions already published was more likely to provoke a reaction from the players, but as this was an event that was suffering a decline in attendance, the committee felt that a change was needed. They also decided that the event should be stratified.

10.5 The General Manager reported that there had been a poor take-up for the Overseas Congress in Dubrovnik, with the high prices laid down by the sponsoring travel company being cited as the main reason. There were sufficient numbers for the event to proceed, but there was some worry that a similar pricing level at the proposed Tenerife Congress in February might lead to a similar situation. The company had now offered to relocate the February event to Tunisia, where they could offer a better deal.

The Tournament Committee confirmed its resolution following the Luxor Congress that it would never again venture outside of Europe.

10.6 Mrs Bugden was delighted to report that the EBU had secured two sponsorship deals.

Adams & Remers, a legal firm from Sussex, had agreed to sponsor the midweek Mixed Pivot Teams at Brighton.

Baker Tilly had agreed once again to sponsor the EBU playing cards, and also both Easter Festivals for a period of two years.

10.7 Bridge Great Britain had enquired about advertising in *English Bridge*.

The committee acknowledged that it would be beneficial to the EBU for BGB events to be advertised, but that it would be beneficial also to the other home unions, since all BGB income is divided proportionately between the unions, regardless of the source. The committee felt, therefore, that the cost of advertising should be passed on to BGB.

10.8 The date of the next meeting was set for 22nd October 2008.