

NON PLAYING CAPTAIN – AUSTRALIAN BRIDGE FEDERATION POWER AND DUTIES OF NON PLAYING CAPTAINS FOR AUSTRALIAN TEAMS

Introduction

A captain's main objective is to obtain maximum performance from the team at the designated event.

To achieve this objective, the captain is responsible for arranging and/or managing the training, discipline & welfare of the team prior to and during the championships and for planning and executing optimum competitive stratagems.

To this end it is recommended that you perform as many functions as are reasonable to allow the players to focus **solely** on optimising their bridge performance.

The term of the NPC is from the appointment to the position until returning to Australia after the completion of the event.

Liaison with the ABF

The NPC will act as the contact point between the team, the ABF, and the tournament organisers. The NPC represents the ABF at all official functions.

Travel

The NPC is not the travel agent to the team. He may choose to investigate fares and options and make recommendations for the team but the team members are totally responsible for making their own bookings.

The NPC should be aware however of the final travel arrangements including arrival times, whether the organisers intend to transport players from the airport, and if so, make the necessary arrangements for that to happen.

The NPC should ensure the team gets to the tournament early enough to rest and become acclimatized to the venue before play starts. In general terms, the ABF expects the team to arrive at least 48 hours prior to the commencement of the first match.

Accommodation

Have accommodation close to the venue (if at all possible) so players can have post session discussions in comfort and privacy and minimise focus on travel arrangements to and from the venue. In general terms, it is expected that players will not stay more than 10 minutes by car from the venue. However it is important that all players are happy and comfortable with their choice of accommodation. Ideally, a suitable room or apartment should be sought at or near the venue that can be used by the team for resting, eating, etc.

Officials

The NPC should become acquainted with other captains and tournament officials. Every effort should be made exercise diplomacy to ensure that the best interests of the team are

met. Directing staff should be given full respect and cooperation. Players and captains are considered ambassadors of Australian Bridge and should act as such at all times.

Before the tournament

Arrange team practice if possible. Where this is not possible for geographic reasons consider online practices as well as a training camp weekend. Consider also arranging for a mentor for pairs who may benefit from this. In the past several leading players have offered to assist in this area.

Ensure all players have fully documented their systems before submitting them. Be aware that many players treat this as a frivolous exercise and consequently submit deficient or incomplete cards or supplementary notes. Contact Chris Diment if any further information is required on the adequacy of systems.

Cards of all opponents should be procured from the internet and given to each player so they can become familiar well before they leave Australia.

In consultation with each pair arrange for suitable defences to be prepared. If necessary, consult leading players for their ideas on specialised defences.

It is recommended that the captain take ample supplies of spare cards for each pair.

Ensure that WBF and other relevant Regulations are promulgated and understood.

Personal Issues

It is critical that the NPC obtain and maintain the respect of the team. Management of the team in the following areas is also vital:

- maintain control over individuals and partnerships
- prevent players from dominating discussions
- be aware of seating preferences (NSEW)
- be aware of any particular times that players believe that they perform optimally or otherwise
- not allow players to allocate blame for errors
- generally try to avoid getting into discussions about hands as the players often do not respect the bridge abilities of captains as much as they perhaps should.
- ban discussions during play including post mortems at the table
- ensure that players respect cultural and language differences which may exist either pre, during or post tournament

The NPC should find something positive to say after a bad session – all teams will have bad sessions and players will feel better after a positive comment.

At the event

Ensure the team is kept motivated, even when well ahead or well behind. Do not sit on a good lead or panic because the team is well behind.

The NPC should decide the manner in which line-up decisions are made. This will very much depend on the relationship that the captain establishes with the team and the relationship between the players themselves.

However in the final analysis the responsibility for line-ups rests with the captain.

Keep an eye on how each pair performs against particular opponents and if there is any psychological issue with any opposing pairs. Ensure players do not run over time during playing sessions.

Where possible keep datums of individual pair's performance and consider these when deciding line-ups.

It is recommended that the captain establishes a principle with the team of not second guessing line-ups and other decisions, In other words, once decisions are made, that should be the end of the discussion and the captain and/or players should not subsequently discuss what they would have or should have done.

Some rules that will assist with team harmony include:

- do not offer or solicit comments from players as to how they went prior to the score up even from pairs who may have sat out
- no comments between players prior to scoring up
- no comments during the score up
- ensure that players avoid comments like "I thought we had done much better' or similar. Players at this level know when they have done badly and don't need to be 'reminded'

Long term Objectives

This should always be kept in mind. During qualifying periods, the goal is to qualify.

Administrative duties

Ensure that an environment is created where players feel that they will give their best.

That is helped by ensuring

- all travel plans are in order
- players are aware of their first point of contact when they arrive
- players know how the team will be run before leaving Australia
- all players have satisfactory accommodation
- the team has somewhere where they can eat and rest comfortably
- the players can be reached at all times particularly in the case of an emergency. In this regard encourage players to bring their mobile phones as SMS messages are a good means of keeping in touch
- Having a common meeting point as players leave the playing area

Lineups

Prior to departure determine if any of your player have issues with any of the opponents such as previous good or bad results or personal experiences that may influence the line

up. Players may be reluctant to express these views at the venue so soliciting them in advance is more appropriate.

The NPC must provide line-ups to the tournament staff on time. Assuming seating rights are available opponents line-up will be provided before your line-up is necessary (usually 15 minutes before), if you are the home team. This allows placement of your pairs as strategically as possible. When the away team, you will need to anticipate as best as possible how to manage the opposing NPC tactics.

Score up

Try and allocate a meeting point for score up so that players do not have to search for team members or whether team mates have finished etc. This should be done quietly with no comments about particular hands, particularly where a pair has got a bad score. Allow some discussions after the score has been tallied, but no finger pointing.

Appeals

Appeals should be a team decision. If players intend to appeal they should merely advise the director of the possibility of an appeal and then discuss this with the team and NPC. The NPC must represent his/her team in all matter pertaining to appeals. However, it is important to not appeal unless the grounds merit an appeal. Remember that even if the team is not in contention it may be appropriate to appeal to protect the field.

Recorders

The ABF has a policy of paying for recorders, and this is to be approved before the event. Arrange for the provision of a recorder at the table if necessary. The host will often have recorders available but often there will not be enough to go around so make sure you make the necessary arrangement as early as possible.

Captains Meetings

The NPC must attend all meetings and report relevant information to team members. The conditions of contest are very important and all players must be made aware of them, and any changes that occur throughout the tournament.

Report

On return to Australia, a full report of the tournament and the team's performance is to be provided to the Management Committee within one month. The Report will be confidential to the ABF and its officers. The Report should contain heading such as:

- preparation for the event
- training and practice
- performance of team at the event on a match by match basis including, where possible, the datums for each pair
- overall results
- morale, behaviour and presentation
- significant issues
- recommendations