



Tournament Committee

MINUTES

Meeting held in Sydney (NSWBA)
Saturday 6th August, 2016, 10:00-16:00

1. PRESENT

David Morgan (Chair), Sartaj Hans, Laurie Kelso, Marcia Scudder, Therese Tully. Matthew McManus was directing at the same venue, and provided input when requested. John Scudder was also present at the venue and provided input for the PQP discussion

The committee congratulates SH and Sophie Ashton on the arrival of their daughter, Sasha.

2. **APOLOGIES:** Peter Reynolds, Sean Mullanphy.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

a.) *Publication of TC minutes*

In order to fast track the publication of minutes of the TC meetings, they will be first sent to the MC, where they will be discussed, then back to DM who will see to their publication on the web, and the promulgation of any information or changes to the relevant parties.

To ensure a speedy turnaround, the TC meetings will be held two-three weeks prior to each MC meeting, to the extent TC members' commitments permit.

b.) *Communication with Players*

The TC noted that the ABF website now includes a FEEDBACK tab on the top line. It agreed that:

- the TC should use this to inform players of decisions made following their feedback; and
- any new requests for feedback should include a link to the Feedback page as well a link to the specific request.

However, a surprising number of players are unaware of the existence of this line of tabs, so some education should be provided in an article included in the ABF Newsletter. This will give a general outline of "how to navigate the ABF website" with emphasis on how players can take part in feedback processes. (DM to prepare)

c.) *VP scale for Swiss Pairs: MC request for further explanation*

MM will explain the rationale to the MC at their next meeting.

d.) *Playoffs Charter*

The TC thanked SH for his further work on the charter that covers all aspects of the Playoffs. (See Appendix 2.)

After the charter has been approved by MC it will be published on the ABF website, and any email regarding the playoffs will include a link to it. It will be emailed to all teams accepted into the playoffs.

MC request that TC review the PQP allocations for all youth categories including youngsters' and girls' events with David Thompson and Phil Gue before finalising the Charter.

e.) Publicising options for flighted and/or mixed events

TC agreed that it should publicise the options available to TOs to include such events. (DM to draft; LK to circulate to all stakeholders)

4. ANC BUTLER – responses to questionnaires

SH offered to prepare a Butler Pairs Charter to include reasons for decisions made regarding format etc.

Player feedback showed a clear dislike of the current Swiss format for Stage 1 of the Open Butler. Preference was for two fields. There were some proponents of cross-imping as against use of datums.

TC recommends the following formats for the ANC Butler Pairs:

Open Stage I: Two seeded fields playing a Mitchell movement, with each pair playing as many pairs from the other field as practicable. Butler Scoring against datum. Carryforward for each field based on the difference in IMPs between the qualifying pairs in that field.

Open Stage II: 19 rounds over 4 days. Scoring against datum from all tables.

Women's and Seniors' Butler Stage I: Swiss (or, depending on entry numbers, other) format reducing to 10 pairs in each event. Butler scoring against datum calculated from all scores in women's, seniors' and open fields.

Women's and Seniors' Butler Stage II: 5 tables in each. Butler scoring against datum calculated from all scores in women's, seniors' and open fields.

MC notes that this will have ramifications for the 2017 ANC in Canberra including board dealing and handling, timings, and compatibility with concurrent events such as the Restricted Pairs in terms of movements and playing the same boards. TC is requested to consult and agree with the 2017 ANC TO via the NEC.

Cross-IMPs v Butler scoring with a datum

The TC noted that the non-linear nature of the IMP scale leads to a directional bias in the scores when a datum is used. Cross-imping overcomes this issue, but is much more sensitive to outlier scores, which are removed when using Butler scoring to produce a datum. In addition cross-imping allowed for more data points to be used in calculating scores; however, the TC noted that this was inconsistent with the use of leaders datums in a number of events (which was designed to reduce the number of outlier scores).

The TC agreed that, while computers made cross-imping easy to calculate and to present to players in a meaningful way (e.g. a 10.2 IMP pickup on board x instead of 132.6 IMP pickup) and addressed directional issues, it was more beneficial to remove outlier scores.

Country Butler

The TC noted that the organisers of the 2017 ANC wished to run an additional Butler in parallel with the existing open, seniors and women's, for country players. The TC thought Canberra was the ANC location where such an event would attract greatest support.

The TC recommends that the organisers be permitted to add such an event if they so wish.

MC agrees.

5. PLAYOFFS

The team which enters with the highest number of PQPs will be Team 1 through all stages of the event in which they play.

Open Playoffs

Entries for the Open Playoffs should Open on 6 Sept after the Territory Gold (31 Aug – 4 Sept) has concluded.

MC notes this has been done.

Entries close on 8 Oct, allowing sufficient time for submission and vetting of System Cards.

MC agrees.

Players entering the Open Playoffs should be discouraged from entering the Women's or Seniors' Playoffs until they are sure their proposed team is not still viable for Open Representation.

Women's and Seniors' Playoffs

Entries for the Women's and Seniors' Playoffs should open on 20 Sept after the Hans Rosendorff (17-18 Sept) has concluded.

MC recommends a later opening date to allow web tools to be available. TC to agree with TO.

Entries close on 24 Nov, allowing for teams compiled following the outcome of the Open Playoffs.

MC agrees.

Format

The TC noted that the previously published format for eight teams differed from that of the NOT by not allowing the third-ranked team the option to remove itself from the pool of teams from which the second-ranked team was able to choose its opponent. The TC agreed that the NOT format was superior.

The TC recommends that the teams ranked #2 and #3 be able to elect not to be chosen by team #1 for the first round match. If team #3 is still in the pool (i.e. they were not chosen by team #1), they will then be able to elect not to be chosen by team #2.

MC agrees.

Security

Directors should outline to players at the commencement of the Playoffs the strategies in place to ensure security. Players should be warned that breaches will incur procedural penalties.

MC agrees.

6. FORMAT FOR GNOT

The TC was asked to consider alternative formats for the GNOT to address concerns about the large number of boards being played each day.

The TC recommends that:

- *The first KO match be 16 boards*
- *Subsequent KO matches be played in 12-board stanzas, with two stanzas the the second- and third-round matches and three stanzas for the fourth-round matches.*

(This reduces the maximum number of boards in a day from the previous 70 to 64 or 60.)

TC did not consider the format for subsequent matches as the convenor has already proposed changes to MC. It noted that the field for the 2017 GNOT final will be cut from 64 to 56 teams, which is more suitable for the venue. For 2016, the field will be retained at 64 teams.

MC agrees.

7. PQPs

John Scudder invited to attend.

Awarding PQPs to pairs

At the previous meeting, the TC considered the following proposal for the PQP year commencing with the 2017 Spring Nationals. In a PQP teams event, a pair must have played together for a certain proportion of the boards (the "Pairs Board Rule") for PQPs to be claimed at full value for the Playoff. Otherwise, points obtained will be discounted by 50%, as they would in the current system for points earned in a different unit. (see draft consultation paper in Appendix 1)

A number of issues were identified that need to be addressed before a workable set of rules can be drafted and instituted. These include:

- Accurate data capture of pairings within a team for each match, a not insignificant task for the 12 rounds of the SWPT for example. While this information is input to the Bridgemates by the players for each match, the accuracy of this input cannot be relied upon. A secondary check by Directors would be required, with changes made if necessary.
- TOs or CTDs in team events will need to collate accurate information about pairs and whether or not the "Pairs Board Rule" has been satisfied.
- The reporting of PQP information to the PQP Co-ordinator will, for teams events, be more complex than currently for multi-configurational teams.

JS reported that he is in a position to incorporate this information into his PQP display on the web for each event, using a player code, instead of a team code. The player code could indicate partners with whom the board rule was satisfied. JS can display this information for the PQP year commencing with the 2016 Spring Nationals, but it would not be used in the computation.

- The calculation of weighting of PQPs for nominees for Playoffs could be significantly more complex than currently.

Pauline Gumby, who maintains the ABF's online PQP calculator, has indicated that this would be very difficult for her to implement. Players use the PQP calculator on the web to test possible team combinations, including so as to maximise the PQPs for their proposed team. If the PQP calculator did not accurately include the new pairs data, it could not be used with confidence by the players.

- A value will need to be set for the "Pairs Board Rule" (PBR). That is, what percentage of boards in an event must two players play as a partnership in order that any PQPs earned may be claimed at 100% value should they subsequently enter a Playoff in a nominated partnership? The TC noted that this was an issue on which player feedback would be sought, including the argument that the figure should be greater than 50%.

The TC agreed to consult Pauline Gumby further before releasing the consultation paper (Appendix 1).

MC notes the proposal.

PQPs for international performance

In response to a number of queries from JS, the TC clarified that:

- PQPs will only be awarded for superior performance in the Target events as defined by the TC/MC each year;
- where a 'top quarter' placing is required for allocation, any fraction will be rounded down; and
- PQPs earned by International Representation in Mixed Teams will be allocated as Open PQPs with the usual provision for transfer to the Women's or Seniors'.

MC notes the proposal. MC believes that the criterion for "superior" performance should be more challenging than a top half finish in the qualifying of World Bridge Games.

John Scudder left.

8. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The following dates are proposed (but subject to change):

Friday 4th November, 2016 at Sydney Airport.

Saturday 28th January, 2017

Saturday 13th May, 2017

9. MISCELLANEOUS

a) Ad hoc invitation to overseas events

Invitations are sometimes extended to the ABF, sometimes to individuals. MC is reviewing existing policy. TC remains of the view that, in general, the relevant the Australian Representative Team should be given the opportunity to attend. It also noted that, on occasions, the ABF may wish to offer attendance as a prize for winning a local event.

TC input noted by MC. Arrangements may vary case by case, eg for APBF second Senior Team.

b) Criteria to be eligible for Restricted National events

The TC considered the draft proposal from Julian Foster (Appendix 3) to address the situation where experienced players enter ABF restricted events.

The current definition of a Restricted player is that they have accrued <300 Masterpoints, by a designated date. However, inconsistencies arise when players gain experience overseas, at unaffiliated clubs, or by playing online. There is clearly a need to be able to reassess the ranking of some players, a task which is quite subjective.

There have been recent instances of local players entering Restricted National events even though they are very experienced players. In particular, some players won and took up free entry and subsidy offered by the ABF to the Restricted Butler at the ANC, despite the fact that they were clearly not Restricted players.

In the case of overseas players, the state association should aim to assess their player standard.

The TC noted that implementation may prove troublesome, in particular, deciding (in advance of the event in question) which player/s need review, who would review a player's status, if the player could appeal, and if so, to whom.

MC notes work in progress and recognises potential problems.

Meeting closed at 15:20.

10. NEXT MEETING

Friday 4th November, at Sydney Airport.

APPENDIX 1

Should there be a partnership requirement for PQPs in teams events?

Background

As part of the ABF's efforts to improve the performance of Australian teams in international events, the Tournament Committee is considering changes to the way PQPs are awarded for teams events. This would reward players that play in PQP events with the partner with whom they intend to enter the Playoffs. Currently, pairs nominating for a Playoff event are able to count any points earned in the same team in a PQP event at full value, whether or not they actually played any boards together in a partnership in the event.

Proposal

In a teams event, a pair must have played together for a certain proportion of the boards (the "Pairs Board Rule") for PQPs to be claimed at full value in the Playoff. Otherwise, points obtained will be discounted by 50%, as they would in the current system for points earned in a different unit.

Rationale

To encourage players to compete in a partnership in which they are considering entering the Playoff.

Feedback

Comments are invited on the proposal generally and details as listed below:

* What is a reasonable "Pairs Board Rule" (PBR)?

That is, what percentage of boards in an event must two players play as a partnership in order that any PQPs earned may be claimed at 100% value should they subsequently enter a Playoff in a nominated partnership?

There is a suggestion that should be set at greater than 50% of the matches played in an event. The consequences of this are that a player could only satisfy the PBR with one other player in the team. Other corollaries are that in order to satisfy the PBR, another player may fail the overall Board Rule for an event and so not qualify for any PQPs. (For example, Players A and B have playoff ambitions as a pair. The original plan was that Player A would play throughout - half the time with Player B and half the time with Player C. In order to fulfil the PBR, Player A must play one extra match with Player B. Unless Player C played in another partnership for a match, they would receive no PQPs for the event.) Also, players in 5 person teams may need to carefully manage partnerships in order to ensure that pairs satisfy the PBR.

* Is it appropriate to have different PBRs for Qualifying and Final stages of events?

APPENDIX 2

See separate document

APPENDIX 3

CRITERIA TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR RESTRICTED EVENTS IN NATIONAL TOURNAMENTS [DRAFT]

These rules applies to players wishing to play in a Restricted category event at any ABF run tournament or ABF licensed gold point events. State bodies and Clubs are free to amend these rules for events run under their jurisdiction.

The underlying intent of these criteria is to try and keep the “Restricted” category to relatively inexperienced players. That means the rules are drafted so that various bridge achievements will cause a player to become ineligible regardless of the number of masterpoints they hold.

Prima facie, you may play in an ABF Restricted event provided you have under 300 Masterpoints at the relevant testing time for the tournament in question (note that the ABF Masterpoint Centre may award a number of masterpoints to a player arriving from overseas commensurate with their playing level at the time of entry to the Australian scheme – these points will be counted towards the 300 threshold).

However, if you have achieved ANY of the items in the following lists, you are not eligible to play in an ABF Restricted event (regardless of how many masterpoints you have).

1. Previous playing performance in Australia
 - You have earned Playoff Points in an Australian Gold point tournament in the Open, Womens or Senior category.
 - You have won an Intermediate (<750 masterpoints) level tournament in a National level event.
 - You have won an Australian State Championship classified as Open, Womens, Mixed or Senior (other than in Northern Territory or Tasmania).
 - You have been selected to represent an Australian State/Territory at the ANC as a member of an Open, Womens or Senior team (other than for Northern Territory or Tasmania).
2. Previous playing performance in another country
 - You have represented a State/Province/Region/District/County (or other equivalent administrative division) in National championships within another country in the Open, Womens or Senior category.
 - You have won a State/Province/Region/District/County (or other equivalent administrative division) championships within another country classified as Open, Womens, Mixed or Senior.
3. Other previous playing experience
 - You have represented any country for bridge (at any level) in an International tournament
 - You have been playing bridge regularly (whether at home, on the internet, within clubs or tournaments) for more than 10 years.

A player may seek a review of his status in advance of playing in a tournament from ????.

DISCUSSION OF RATIONALES

Representation in any National team (even Girls, Youth etc) provides extensive experience and, most likely, the chance to have learned from top players, been coached, etc. I believe that should disqualify the person from playing Restricted. I think it's clear Youth should count (Leigh Matheson is an example of this – he represented Australia in Youth and later played (and won) several Restricted events – I don't believe that was appropriate as he is a strong player with International experience – I even heard a rumour he was paid by someone to play in the Restricted!) Playing in a Girls team is perhaps less clear.

Representation in a (non-youth) State team at the ANC (or equivalent event in another country) where that State is reasonably competitive (i.e. NSW, VIC, QLD, SA, ACT, WA but not NT or TAS) is the same. This time I have not included a Youth ANC team as they often include very inexperienced players for whom Restricted is still appropriate. I have also said “selected to represent” rather than actually represented since I believe someone who has played well enough to make a State team but not yet played (like the Chinese guy in Victoria at present) shouldn't be eligible to play Restricted.

Winning any State championship in a category not restricted by masterpoints (but again excluding NT and TAS and not counting a Youth event), winning any Intermediate (<750) event (I am thinking the ones in the Gold Coast here), and finishing high enough in any National event to get any PQPs are all only achieved by reasonable players which should indicate it is no longer appropriate for them to play Restricted.

These rules would, prima facie, exclude someone who has won a divisional competition in another country either where their particular division is weak (equivalent to NT or TAS) or the country as a whole is so weak that all its divisions are weak. These players would be expected to go through the appeal/ruling process. It's impossible for us to specify this for all countries and not worthwhile considering how infrequently this situation would occur.

I have deliberately made no concessions to sponsors here. If a newish player achieves one of these items by paying to play with a sponsor, so be it. That is entirely their choice. They have still had the experience of playing near the top of stronger fields, will have learned a lot, and should therefore no longer be eligible for Restricted.

I believe extensive playing experience gathered over a period of time (but not in tournaments or earning masterpoints) also should disqualify someone. This is more subjective, however. How long? How can it be proved one way or another? Playing regularly at an unaffiliated club somewhere like Grand Slam is traceable. But playing on the internet isn't. Nor is playing regularly in another country (either if they don't have a masterpoint system or if the player has been playing outside it). Is 10 years too long? I figured if I went much shorter, I'd start excluding people who have played regularly in affiliated clubs but genuinely have <300MPs simply because they only play club bridge and only win green points. The other problem is what is “regularly”? I don't want to exclude players who might have had a long break from the game and then returned. But I do think it's appropriate to exclude people who play every week at a club and have a huge level of experience as a result (I appreciate this view might be controversial!)

On the other hand there will be some fairly good players that have played a lot in the last, say, 2-3 years but outside of the ABF masterpoint system. They would have earned >300MPs had they been in the MP system. This method doesn't currently exclude them and I don't know there's any realistic way of doing so.