###

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at 19.30 on Teams on Wednesday 28 February 2024

**Present** Pat Johnson, Bernard Kaye, Marcia Levan-Harris, John McCoy, Paul Mollison, Val Mollison, Ian Moss, Sue Thorburn

**Apologies** Linda Fleet, Jill Fletcher

1. **Welcome** John McCoy welcomed the committee members.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 8 November 2023** These had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was agreed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting. A copy was signed on behalf of the chairman.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes not already included in the agenda** No matters arising.

1. **Introduction from the Chairman** All the topics John wishes to discuss are included in the agenda.
2. **Reports from Officers**
3. **General Secretary** (Sue Thorburn)

Nothing to report. Website maintenance continues as usual.

1. **Treasurer** (Linda Fleet)

**Bank Balance at 26.02.20243**

Barclays £8,316 (£9,952 – March 2023)

Skipton £16,554 (£16,286 – March 2023)

**Essex Competitions**

Mixed Pairs (Online) - the entry was disappointing but made a surplus.

Swiss Pairs (Online) - well attended (21 pairs) and made a surplus.

Open Pairs (F2F) - 17 pairs and made a surplus.

Cornell (F2F) - 11 teams - attendance was very disappointing and, because of the cost of hiring the big hall and entry to Garden Cities, made a loss.

Sue said she did not think the Cornell could be described as “very disappointing” as there are only 16 clubs that could attend and a number never take part. The attendance was borderline for needing the large room. Val confirmed that if the 14 teams that entered had participated the large room would have been needed.

The EBU have been notified that Essex are not charging the clubs UM for 2024/2025. There was no negative response when Linda emailed for comment.

1. **Tournament Secretary** (Val Mollison)

**Competitions**

Val outlined her thoughts on recent competitions:

**Fletcher** – she felt that a number of clubs could not raise a team of 8 and suggested a change to a team of 4. This was agreed.

**Mixed Pairs** – attendance is poor as it often requires players to find a new partner and they opt not to take part. It was agreed there would be no gender restricted competitions.

**Handicapped Pairs** – this had not been as successful as hoped and requires lengthy preparation. Its future should be reviewed.

**9 high Corwen –** the EBU had asked for comments on running an event. It was agreed the response would be that we cannot do this on our own but could join forces with another county. If that option was taken the event would have to be online.

**Tournament secretary role**

Val said she planned to stand down at the next AGM. She is currently carrying out two roles: Tournament secretary (arranging directors/venues) and a partial tournament director/scorer role. She felt the main issue would be to find someone to prepare and direct events. John will follow up on this and talk to Val about handover plans including any updating of the guides she has written.

1. **Programme Secretary (**Pat Johnson**)**

The final programme with the ECL events is complete. Paul made a number of proposals to change the calendar either by removing events or transferring the organisation to clubs. After a full discussion, it was agreed Pat and Paul would produce and circulate a draft programme for discussion. This will be dealt with by email as a prompt decision is required. Draft programme and proposals attached.

The AGM will be held on 7 July.

1. **League Secretary (Marcia Levan-Harris)**

The leagues are running well. Teams are arranging matches and publishing results as required.

1. **Essex Bridge Academy**

This is in abeyance until Jill returns.

1. **Update from Chairman of Selectors**

Ian’s report is attached.

The committee noted the success of the international competitions organised by Marc Chawner and asked Ian to pass on their thanks. It was agreed a gift of £200 should be made to Marc for his work setting up to the event. The ongoing workload is less but the possibility of a further payment will be considered later in the year.

1. **Schedule of competition entry fees and prizes**

Linda felt players appreciated low entry fees rather than prizes. It was agreed no prizes will be given. The general guidelines for entry fees are:

Online pairs - £12.50 per pair

F2Fpairs - £25 per pair

Team of 4 - £40 per team

Team of 8 - £70 per team

The entry fees can be increased if Linda feels the contribution to the cost is inadequate.

1. **AGM for affiliated clubs**

There was little support for this from club chairmen, so it did not take place.

1. **Festival of Bridge**

Bernard suggested two events during the festival which is 9-15 September.

Competition for unaffiliated clubs – he had spoken to the EBU and to Manchester CBA. The latter are working on a similar idea possibly linked with French clubs. Sue expressed doubts about the support for such an event. It was agreed Bernard should do more research to establish the viability. There is a list of unaffiliated clubs and schools on the website and, via John, committee members will provide information on others they are aware of.

Charity event – it was suggested that affiliated clubs be asked to run a charity event during the festival. Bernard will contact club chairmen to establish their views. Many clubs already run such an event often for a local charity.

1. **Any Other Business**.

Ian said if anyone has any questions about the squads for ECL matches they should contact him directly.

1. **Date of next meeting** The next meeting will be held on Teams on 8 May 2024 at 7.30pm. John then closed the meeting.

 Selection Committee Report to ECBA Committee 28.2.24

1. The Selection Committee met on January 31, and decided on the ECL squad membership. There were a small number of changes for next season, both in and out, resulting in 60 players being invited.
2. It was unanimously agreed that we have a sufficient number of pairs to fulfil our commitment to the ECL and consequently we would not be adding more players unless they were strong candidates.
3. This decision is being borne out by the high availability levels we are seeing for the coming season. With over 90% of invitees having returned their forms we have an average availability per player of 4.8 matches out of 6. Two players have withdrawn for personal reasons, 3 are yet to reply.
4. We have instigated a reserves policy which is consistent with our one-squad policy and is designed to avoid having several pairs on-call, panic re-organising and playing last minute scratch pairs. Put simply, we nominate replacement partners for players who have an obvious alternative. Where we can’t activate that, then in the Div 2 and 3 teams, one pair are nominated reserves for the division above and so we only need one pair of reserves on standby which are allocated to the Div 3 team.
5. We will continue to field the strongest teams available for all three divisions. This is clearly what at least one other county is doing in spite of possible conflict with the ECL “rules” as they have stood since 2014. The critical entry states that players who “normally” play in a higher division should not play in a lower one in the same season. This document does not show who wrote it or how it was ratified by all the member counties, if indeed it was. Last season Herts fielded several pairs in both the 1st and 2nd Divisions. One pair played 3 matches in each. Their entire 2nd Division pair cohort are all ranked AC or AD on NGS. That county is clearly taking the same approach as us; ie fielding their strongest teams.
6. The above “rules” are clearly out of date and do not reflect reality. One past consequence of these rules has been the expansion of three separate pools of players so that at one time we had a squad of 90+. From any point of view this was not a satisfactory situation.
7. Our approach to team selection will still result in a large majority of the squad being included in at least one ECL match. It has always been the case that not everyone “gets a game” though now that proportion will be less than in the past.
8. We will continue to ensure all squad members, together with aspiring pairs, get a chance to represent the county, if not in in the ECL then in friendly matches and the International Pairs.
9. ECL results 2023-24

Currently Essex lie 3rd in Div 1, with a mathematical chance of finishing from 1st to 4th

In Div 2 Essex lie second and can finish anywhere from 2nd to 4th.

In Div 3 Essex lie 3rd and can finish anywhere from 2nd to 7th.

1. The International Pairs venture, goes from strength to strength with up to 17 tables and players from 10 countries. These sessions present different challenges to club bridge; Essex players are meeting new players talking different languages in both their conversation and in their bridge. The Scandinavian players in particular are providing stronger than average opposition. From the SC perspective we have been able to identify some consistently good performances from some Essex players and somewhat less consistent from others.

The Canadian club, which we initially arranged these sessions with, are setting up and paying for sessions in proportion to their participation ie they arrange about one in eight.

1. Friendly matches:

Having narrowly beaten the MCC in a match a few months ago, we had a re-match on 4th Feb. This time the match was comprised of two teams of 8 from Essex, one team from MCC and one transnational team, comprised of Italy, Sweden and Bahamas. The MCC triumphed narrowly in spite of two Essex pairs finishing 1st and 3nd in the XIMPs. The Transnational team had very mixed results and finished 4th. With one win each for Essex and MCC, there will no doubt be a decider in the months ahead.

We will continue to seek county level opponents from outside the ECL for friendly matches.

Ian Moss

Chair, ECBA Selection Committee.

28.2.24

**Eastern Counties League Rules - April 2014**

1. The league was founded in 1968 and consists of 8 teams: Bedfordshire, Cambridge & Hunts, Cambridge University, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Suffolk. The addition of another team requires the approval of the existing teams.

2. The season runs from 1 April to 31 March. Teams will play each other once a year, alternating home and away, except that the university will normally play all their matches at home.

3. The league will consist of 3 Divisions, A, B, and C. Regular A team players should not normally play in the B or C teams, and regular B team players should not normally play in the C team in the same season.

4. Systems permitted: level 4. Scoring is by IMPs, converted to VPs according to the following scale:

  **IMPs VPs**

 0 - 3 10 - 10

 4 - 10 11 - 9

 11 - 17 12 - 8

 18 - 25 13 - 7

 26 - 35 14 - 6

 36 - 45 15 - 5

 46 - 57 16 - 4

 58 - 70 17 - 3

 71 - 87 18 - 2

 88 - 107 19 - 1

 108 + 20 - 0

5. 32 boards will be played in each match. Any boards not played owing to late arrival will incur a penalty of 3 IMPs per board for the offending side.

 For any match not played (except in extenuating circumstances), the non-offending team receives an average of all their results for that season, or the average of all the points scored against the offending team, whichever is the greater. The offending team receives 0 VPs.

6. Any scoring disputes which cannot be resolved by the two captains should be referred by them to an EBU referee. Any other problems will be resolved by the league secretary, with guidance from the EBU Chief Tournament Director.

7. All players must be members of the relevant county association, and no player can play for more than one county in a season. Cambridge University players should be currently at the university, either as graduates, post-graduates, on the permanent staff or members of the Cambridge University bridge club as paid-up members and where they normally play. Past members of the club are not eligible.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Month | Sat | Sun | National | Essex |
| April |  | 28 |  | **ECL v Beds A 1.00** |
| May | 4 | 5 | Bank Holiday  |  |
|  | 11 | 12 | 11th Garden Cities 12th ODOL SP |  |
|  | 18 | 19 | County Green Pointed |  |
|  | 25 | 26 | Spring Bank Holiday Congress |  |
| June | 1 | 2 | 1st Garden Cities Final |  |
|  | 8 | 9 | Pachibo |   |
|  | 15 | 16 | Corwen 15th ODOL ST |  |
|  | 22 | 23 | Counties Green Pointed |   |
|  | 29 | 30 |   | **ECL v Norfolk H 1.00** |
| July | 6 | 7 | London Congress | **7th AGM** |
|  | 13 | 14 | 14th Kent Swiss pairs 13th ODOL SP | **14th Club Pairs** |
|  | 20 | 21 |  | **ECL v Cambs & Hunts A 1.00** |
|  | 27 | 28 | Counties Green Pointed |   |
| August | 3 | 4 | 4th ODOL ST |  |
|  | 10 | 11 | Summer Meeting |  |
|  | 17 | 18 |  |   |
|  | 24 | 25 |  |  |
| Sept | 31 | 1 | 1st ODOL SP | **ECL v Northants H 1.00** |
|  | 7 | 8 | 8th National handicapped pairs |   |
|  | 14 | 15 | 14th Met Cup | **15th Essex Swiss Pairs GP** |
|  | 21 | 22 | Counties Green Pointed |  |
|   | 28 | 29 |   |  |
| Oct | 5 | 6 | Suffolk Congress Overseas Congress |  |
|  | 12 | 13 | 12th ODOL SP |  |
|  | 19 | 20 |   | **20rd Fletcher** |
|  | 26 | 27 | Kent congress | **27th Cup for Clubs**  |
| Nov | 2 | 3 |   | **ECL v Herts A 2.00** |
|  | 9 | 10 | Tollemache |  |
|  | 16 | 17 |   | **17th Charity Event**  |
|  | 23 | 24 | 24th ODOL SP |  |
| Dec | 30 | 1 |  | **1st Mixed Pairs**  |
|  | 7 | 8 |  |  |
|  | 14 | 15 | 14th ODOL ST |  |
|  | 21 | 22 |  |  |
|   | 28 | 29 | Year End |  |
| Jan | 4 | 5 |  |  |
|  | 11 | 12 |  | **12th Swiss Pairs OL** |
|  | 18 | 19 |  |  |
|  | 25 | 26 | 26th ODOL SDT | **26th Teams of 4 OL** |
| Feb | 1 | 2 | Tollemache Final |  |
|  | 8 | 9 |  | **9th Cornell** |
|  | 15 | 16 | 16th ODOL SP |  |
|  | 22 | 23 | Ranked masters/Masters |  |
| March | 1 | 2 |  | **ECL v Suffolk H 1.00** |
|  | 8 | 9 |  |  |
|  | 15 | 16 | 15th ODOL SP | **16st Championship Pairs** |
|  | 22 | **23** | **National Pairs** |  |
|  | 29 | 30 | 30th Mother’s Day |  |
| April | 5 | 6 | 6th Portland Pairs |  |
|  | 12 | 13 | National Pairs Final |  |
|  | 19 | 20 | Easter Festival  |  |

**Proposals for 24/25 Calendar**

 I have spoken to Bernie Hunt and he is willing to run a variety of events at Barleylands. A mixed pairs is scheduled for May. He would consider running the following;

J high pairs, 9 high pairs, handicapped pairs, play with an expert and open pairs. These would be First Class Bridge Academy event and he would welcome us advertising them.

**Or he would take over the organisation and running all Essex events.**

In light of this we propose:

* All Club competitions stay on the calendar.
* We do not have any blue pointed events.
* We do not run a Handicapped Pairs or a Mixed Pairs. Both are not viable.
* The Charity event should be a Club event. If retained there should be no food.
* We keep the Swiss Pairs online as it attracted a number of non-Essex players that helped to make it viable. If blue pointed is to be retained this should be blue pointed. Please see note below as a suggested alternative.
* A face to face Open or Swiss Pairs on 1st December. This could be a First Class Bridge Academy event.

I have had 2 suggestions from Ian:

The online Swiss Pairs are open to our international friends. This would certainly boost the numbers but wouldn’t have master points. Is this any different to what is already run on Wednesdays?

A social pivot teams with simple systems only, sometime pre-Christmas. Bernie would consider running this.

Pat & Paul

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