

Dear Club Contact,

As restrictions are lifted, it now looks as if it may be possible to return to face-to-face matches by the time the new league season starts in late September. Following the success of the on-line season just completed, the option of continuing on-line matches next season is considered by many players to be very attractive, not only because it minimises any lingering risks or concerns there might be about the pandemic but also because of the convenience it offers, especially with regard to travel during the winter. However, it is accepted that some teams may prefer to play face-to-face matches, particularly when little or no travelling is involved or when venues are ideal from a social distancing perspective.

As a consequence, the Committee has put together a draft proposal for the BBL to become a 'hybrid' or mixed league where both face-to-face and on-line matches can be accommodated. Hopefully, this flexibility will slow down or even reverse the reduction in the size of the league that has taken place in recent years. As you may be aware, the Berks and Bucks CBA are considering a similar approach for their Lo8 league and the EBU are putting forward ideas for clubs to run 'hybrid' duplicate events.

The key points of the draft proposal put forward by the Committee are listed below.

1. From season 21-22 onwards, the BBL becomes a 'hybrid' league in which matches may be played face-to-face or on-line
2. Before the start of each season, the Committee will recommend to the AGM a 'default' for the arrangement of matches (i.e. face-to-face or on-line). The recommended 'default' for the forthcoming season is on-line.
3. Matches may be played either on-line or face-to-face as mutually agreed by the two teams. In the event of non-agreement on this matter, the 'default' in place for the season will apply.
4. On-line matches may be played on either RealBridge or BBO, as agreed between the teams. Each team will nominate a preferred platform for their home matches and the away team must defer to that choice should there be no mutual agreement to do otherwise.
5. The cost of playing matches on either platform will rest with the home team. The league will offer the necessary management for setting up matches played on RealBridge and the handling of associated invoices from RealBridge. Those clubs who have their own RealBridge accounts may, if they so wish, manage both aspects for the home matches of their own teams.
6. Prior to the start of each season, each team must pay an initial entry fee to the league to cover EBU UMS (formerly P2P fees) as well as the costs of running/administering the league. In addition, for those teams playing on BBO, this fee will also include an 'upfront' contribution to the potential cost of playing on their chosen home platform. There will be no 'upfront' contribution for teams whose chosen home platform is RealBridge, as they will be invoiced 'as and when' they play their home matches.
7. The initial entry fee will be dependent on the number of teams competing in the season, but a provisional estimate for the forthcoming season is £30/team for BBO teams and £22/team for RealBridge teams.
8. Any overpayment because, for example, a team plays most of their home matches face-to-face, will be refunded at the end of the season.

The league will hold the AGM on 1st July on Zoom, by which time the proposal will be issued formally and put forward for adoption at the meeting. In the meantime, the Committee need to progress their planning for the new season, particularly in terms of the extra issues that need to be addressed should the move to a 'hybrid' league go ahead. The league has already opened a RealBridge account

as a first step in this process and it would be most helpful if clubs could give some early feedback on a number of points related to the proposed approach, specifically:

- How many teams do you think your club will enter into the league next season
- What is likely to be the preferred on-line option for the home matches of each of these teams (i.e. RealBridge or BBO). You should note that our current understanding is that the cost of hosting a RealBridge 24-board match will be nearly £4/match whilst the equivalent BBO charge is less than half of that amount.
- If your club already has a RealBridge account would you wish to use it for the administration of home matches (i.e. setting up links and handling invoices) or would you rather the league managed both aspects and just invoiced your club

If you can provide that feedback within the next fortnight that would be appreciated as it would enable the Committee to provide a clearer picture at the AGM of the size of the league, how the league will operate (particularly on the RealBridge side) and the total costs of entering a team in the league. As a guide, had the same choice of platforms been available last season, the total costs for a team playing all of their home matches on RealBridge would be £42 whilst that for a team playing all home matches on BBO would be £30.

Amendments to the (Committee's) formal proposal can be tabled by any club at the AGM provided they are received by the Secretary in advance of the meeting.

Many thanks

The BBL Committee - 05/06/21