



Essex Contract Bridge Association

A constituent member of the English Bridge Union

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 29th June 2016 starting at 19.30 held at Paul and Val Mollison's house – Tekoa Lodge, Mayes Lane, Sandon, Essex, CM2 7RW

Present: Paul Mollison, Val Mollison, Linda Fleet, Pat Johnson, Chris Taylor, Keith Thompson, Bernie Hunt and Margaret Curtis

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence.** Paul Mollison welcomed those present. He accepted apologies from Dennis Valtisiaris, Audrey Hartley, Nicole Cook and Theo Todman.
2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, 27th Apr 2016.** 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 by the chairman.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes not already included in the agenda.**

- a. **Item 3.d Promotion of leagues to encourage more entries**

Ideas for encouraging more teams into the league were discussed. It was felt that it might be less daunting for new teams, especially in the new "Friendly Fours", if they could play their matches at a club so that they would have access to a director if necessary and also not be faced with providing refreshments etc. Also we would allow the option of playing a shorter match in the Friendly Fours and also provide some brief instructions on how to play a league match for those who may not be familiar with the format. Val will put a request to clubs to allow matches to be played at club venues in the letter to club secretaries.

- b. **Item 4.a para. 3 Masterpoint allocations for ECL season 2013-14**

Val confirmed that this had now been done.

- c. **Item 4.c para. 3 Update on Alan Rodger and County director training**

Val reported that Alan had done the preparation day in May and had indicated he would be happy to do the County Course in September. Val will book his place, to be paid for by the county.

- d. **Item 4.g. para d. Update on candidates for ECL A team captain**

Chris reported that he had approached a possible candidate for this position and was waiting for a reply. He has another candidate in mind should the first person decide not to accept.

- 4. Reports from Hon. Officers:**

- a. **Hon General Secretary. (Val Mollison)**

Val reported that the Teams of 4 and Switch Cup knockout competitions have been setup.

There are still a few prize vouchers to distribute. George Curtis 2nd place will have to be posted, and a couple of others will be given out at the seniors in July.

Val reported she had received a call from Beth Purvis, the club liaison officer from the EBU, who is planning to visit Barleylands as one of the new clubs in the top 50 clubs as ranked by number of player sessions. She was interested in talking about things we were doing to help new players get involved in competitions, such as the seminars. Beth said that EBED would be willing to help if we wanted. She asked if we had considered coordinating with other counties - perhaps getting someone in from another county to give a seminar. This was discussed but it was decided to continue with what we are doing for the time being.

Keith mentioned that when the program is produced that we should ensure that the rules to qualify as a non-expert should be made clear. Val agreed to do this along with other some of the other points raised at the previous meeting.

b. Hon Treasurer. (Linda Fleet)

See Appendix A for the treasurer's reports.

Bernie agreed to follow up on the registering of P2P for the Tony Kelvin last November which still hasn't gone through.

There was a discussion on whether and how much Bernie and Val should be paid for events they direct when Nicole is not available. The consensus was that all directors should be paid something. Val pointed out that Nicole is qualified to a higher level than Val/Bernie so it may not be correct to pay the same rate to all. Linda said she would try to find out what other counties pay their directors.

Linda also proposed that instead of giving ECBA Vouchers/credit as prizes, which would be very difficult to monitor, we should give cash (as is done at other events such as SWF and Felixstowe congresses, GP weekends etc). This was agreed.

c. Tournament Secretary. (Nicole Cook)

Nicole was not present but had sent an email to Paul re the directing arrangements. Nicole feels quite strongly that she is in the best position to decide who should direct each event. Although she has only put herself down as director for 4 events in the winter program, she has also indicated which events would be suitable for giving experience/training to new directors.

Assuming Alan Rodger passes the County Director course in September, the committee hopes that Nicole will be able to use Alan as an assistant to give him some experience. The committee also discussed the possibility of Alan directing the occasional smaller event, perhaps with help from Bernie and/or Val.

There was some uncertainty about whether or not Nicole was going to be directing the ECBA Really Easy pairs. Bernie said he could do it if Nicole can't. This needs to be confirmed with Nicole.

Nicole also asked for a budget for training new TD's.

The committee could not discuss this as Nicole provided no details of what kind of training she meant and no details of potential cost.

d. Hon League Secretary. (Bernie Hunt)

Bernie reported that the SE Essex Leagues for last year had been finalised. The West Essex League will be finalised when the teams have entered their players names for each match.

Bernie proposed that something be put into the rules to say that the sanctions for late arrivals (removing boards from the match and awarding IMPs to the non-offending side) are compulsory, not optional, to avoid the potential for creating friction and bad feeling. The decision was made that sanctions for lateness should be included in the rules and should be made compulsory.

Bernie said it was likely that the SE Essex would be reduced to 2 divisions next year unless any new teams come forward, due to teams dropping out. One team from the bottom division might be likely to go to the new Friendly Fours.

Val mentioned that Audrey said her vote was for keeping 3 divisions and playing home and away. Bernie says he had put this suggestion to the teams before but nobody wanted it.

Bernie also mentioned that he had received a query/complaint about the lack of update to the NGS stats from the scoring of this years mixed teams. This was due to the fact that a version of Scorebridge, which predates the introduction of NGS updates for teams events, was used to score this event this year (because a different computer was used this year and there is a cost involved in getting this updated). The NGS cannot be updated retrospectively, but this software will not be used again to score future events. The request for a refund/rebate of entry fees was rejected. The fees paid to the EBU have always been for Masterpoint awards.

e. Hon Teachers' Liaison Officer. (Keith Thompson)

Keith said he didn't have much to report. He responds to a steady trickle of enquiries mainly using standard replies he has drafted depending on the area in which the enquirer lives. He mentioned that there is a shortage of evening bridge teaching. Keith says he usually refers those who want this to the London area where there are some evening classes available.

f. Hon Webmaster. (Theo Todman)

Theo was not present at the meeting but reported the following by email:

The revised Calendar will be set up on the website when agreed (Val will send him this after the last couple of points have been agreed at this meeting).

He is about to set up Eve Goblets tables for the current season sometime now that George Curtis event has taken place so that there are some results to put in the tables.

He has set up links for the knockout events to results pages on the EBU website. The same will be done for the Leagues later in the summer when the divisions have been set up.

Control of the Tournament spreadsheet has been handed back to Linda.

g. ECL Team Selection Committee (Chris Taylor)

Chris reported that he had been told that two very good players intended to switch their county allegiance to Essex. One player had been an Essex player in the past, but the other had not. A discussion was held about whether this was possible as previously Essex had had rules that only allowed people who lived or worked in Essex to become a member, although membership could be retained if the player moved away. If these players do request to switch their allegiance this needs to be checked.

The consensus of the committee was that although these are good players careful consideration is required before any decision to select these players to represent the county

unless they also play in Essex clubs and/or support ECBA events as this has caused ill feeling amongst other county players in the past.

5. Herts/Essex joint venture. (Linda Fleet)

Notes on the Essex Green Point weekend are included in the treasure's report in Appendix A.

Although entries are a little low at the time of the meeting compared to last year, it looks like entries are likely to hold up despite the LMB holding their GP events the weekend before.

Linda said she only just noticed that there had been a suggestion at the AGM about holding a B flight event alongside the main GP event. Margaret said she was not aware that there would be anything in the EBU rules preventing another event being run alongside the GP events, but it would not be part of the GP event. There would be an obvious organisational overhead in doing this which would need to be discussed and agreed by the joint venture organisers.

6. Share Holder's report (Margaret Curtis)

Margaret reported that no further decision had been made on the subcommittee changes. The board plans to put out documents to the shareholders and counties before the next shareholders meeting.

There had been a discussion about the progress that had been made with regards to getting bridge recognised as a sport by Sport England. There had been a certain amount of surprise and disappointment expressed that the cost to the EBU was likely to be in the region of £180,000 as it had been assumed that the campaign was being done on a minimal budget. However, because of the legal process the EBU is liable for the opposition's legal costs. As a consequence the EBU is expecting a loss of over £200,000. The EBU does apparently have some financial reserves although Margaret did not know the exact figures.

Paul commented that he had not heard about a meeting for County Chairmen this year and Margaret said that it had been decided not to hold one this year because of low attendance in the past.

7. Discussion on which teams to invite to the Fletcher (Val Mollison)

A discussion was held as to what to do about invitations to clubs to enter the Fletcher and Cup for Clubs. Val proposed that we should continue to invite the 12 teams who played last year but put more effort into promoting entries to the cup for clubs, possibly allowing players to form their own teams for the cup for clubs, and either decide on the club they want to represent or play as an independent team. The consensus was that it would be difficult to drop any particular club from the invitation since most of these clubs have many players in common and so the clubs are of similar strength.

Val also mentioned a situation that arose with one club last year at the Cornell when the secretary said none of their players were interested in entering competitions, and the next day another committee member from the club submitted an entry. This indicates that in some cases the secretary may not be the best contact in the club for this kind of invitation.

It was agreed that we would continue to invite the 12 clubs to the Fletcher but to put more emphasis on encouraging clubs to also enter a team in the cup for clubs in the letter to the secretaries. Also, to send an invitation to individual players to form their own teams. Val also said she would try and establish if there is an alternative contact (such as competition or tournament secretary) within each club to whom a copy of the invitation could be sent.. The effect of these efforts will then be reviewed next year.

8. Updates on Complaints re player behaviour (Paul Mollison)

Case A

The player did provide written assurance that the behaviour would not be repeated. This information was relayed to the person who lodged the complaint and the director of the event. It was agreed that the case is now considered closed.

Case B

The complaint was discussed in a face-to-face meeting with the offender. The results of those discussion were written up and discussed by the committee. A few changes were agreed to the format of the report. This will be sent to both the offender and the complainant.

9. Possibilities for Mentored Teams event (Val Mollison)

This was a competition suggested at the last meeting and Val agreed to think about the best way to introduce this into the calendar.

Val proposed that we should hold a trial event as a single session pivot teams event, with computer dealt boards so that there are hand records available for later analysis, and playing slightly fewer boards than a normal switch match (probably around 21) to allow a bit of time for discussions.

It was agreed that the competition should be aimed at the same sort players who might become interested in playing in competitions and the new friendly fours league, rather than absolute beginners. E.g. players with up to about 5000 masterpoints, possibly slightly higher as long as the player does not have much experience of teams.

This was agreed and a date of 20th September at Barleylands was proposed and agreed. It was suggested that players should be encouraged to arrive early to allow time to agree systems.

10. Knockout Rules/draw (Val Mollison)

Val has drawn up rules for the ECBA knockout competitions which are based on the EBU's knockout rules but with changes to make references to ECBA rather than EBU competitions, organisers, directors etc. These had been circulated to the committee via email before the meeting and some changes/corrections had been made as a result of the various replies Val received.

One outstanding issue was what stance we should take in the rules regarding teams who want to play their matches at a club whilst a club session is in progress but the opposing team objects. This

is much more likely to be problematic for the knockout competitions because the matches are longer than a normal club session. It was agreed that if the opposition team objects to playing at a club during the session then they can do so by offering to host the match, which is much the same as is in the standard rules for problems arising with venues due to disabilities or allergies etc.

Sections of the rules, such as rules about late arrivals and regulations about rulings and appeals, are just as relevant to the League Competitions, so Val proposed that the rules could be split into separate documents so that Theo can put links to the different sections on the relevant website pages. Val will sort this out with Bernie and Theo.

The standard EBU rules also contain lists of directors who can be contacted for rulings etc. It was agreed it would be useful to supply a list of numbers for directors within Essex who are willing to be contacted for a ruling. Val will organise this in due course.

Val also raised the issue about the format of the draw for the knockout competitions. Traditionally a manual draw has been made and that has been presented as a Wimbledon style draw, i.e. the first round draw fixes the opponents for the subsequent rounds. The new EBUKnockout management system does not support presentation of the draw in this manner. It is possible to enter matches manually into the draw, but it will still not be presented in the old format, but just as a list of matches for each round. It is possible to resolve the problem of knowing who your opponents are in the next round by drawing the subsequent rounds before the previous round has been completed (Val has already done this for rounds 1 and 2 of the Teams of 4 draw). Given that we have to use the new system for recording results and allocating masterpoints, it is much simpler to use the open draw for each round that the system provides (the way that events such as the NICKO or Crockfords have always been drawn). Val looked at examples of what other Counties do and in all the cases looked at, other counties use the results of the open draw. It was agreed that we should use the new method.

11. Monthly teaching seminars update/next step (Paul Mollison)

Three seminars have been held and they have proved popular. A lot of work has been put in by Marc Chawner and Paul Spencer to make these a success. It was agreed that it is worthwhile continuing with these as they generate enthusiasm for the game, the competitions on the calendar and show that the ECBA is interested in providing something to interest the ordinary player.

It was also agreed that we should start levying a small charge for each seminar as there is a limit to how much the ECBA can afford to pay to fund these. Possibly a seminar on teams tactics may be offered free to new players to the leagues. No dates have yet been set, but hopefully there will be more seminars in the Autumn.

12. Proposal to Investigate Options for online banking (Linda Fleet)

Linda asked Barclays if they had a facility to allow online payments to be made from accounts that require two signatures and they said no. It was decided that as the number of cheques we write is quite small it is easier to stick with the accounts we have.

13. Matters arising from AGM

Concerns raised at the AGM were discussed at the meeting. The director has been made aware of those concerns.

Gordon Rainsford was contacted for advice on how to address these concerns. The feeling is that we have a very competent director who is very skilled in using the computer and setting up events and that the best way forward is to help the director in any way we can.

One problem is the pressure and irritation that can be felt by a Director when being interrupted by questions from players at busy times, especially at the start when setting up the movement on the computer. It was suggested that providing some supplementary help in the form of some kind of official player liaison individual who could be armed with relevant information (Which way is North, Can we sit anywhere? etc), as often happens at EBU events, might relieve some of this pressure. This would be useful for all our directors. This suggestion will be put to Nicole to see if she would find it helpful.

We should also include something on the entry form to get players to inform us in advance if they require a stationary table as this can cause disruption if the director is not aware of this before hand.

Gordon Rainsford's suggestion of creating a set of guidelines for TD's in Essex to supplement the EBU guidelines was discussed. The committee decided to monitor the situation for the time being.

14. Life Members, Friends of Essex etc (Linda Fleet)

This item was postponed until another meeting as it is not urgent and the meeting was running late.

15. AOB

Bernie informed the committee that there is possibility that he, Nicole and Ian Mitchell might take over the running of the Metropolitan Cup at the Anglo European School. This would be done independently of the ECBA committee. It has been run as an independent enterprise in the past.

16. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 2nd November.

Paul then closed the meeting

Appendix A. Treasurer's report (incl Essex & Herts GP) and competition breakdown

Bank Balance on 27.06.2016

£8111- Barclays (Compared to £8,921 at 29/06/15)
£15,518- Skipton

Skipton Building Society

I received a letter from Skipton with regard to the tax deducted from the interest and noticed it was addressed to Ted Cockle and Audrey Hartley and me so I have arranged for the mandate to be changed to show just Val and I. They have said they cannot reclaim tax but as the rules have changed this year interest will in future be paid gross.

Competitions

We have had a good attendance at most of the Spring Competitions – The Championship Pairs was well attended but after paying the £400 entry for the Corwen Trophy and the prizes we still made a loss.

The other competitions (Mixed Teams, Club Pairs and George Curtis) had an overall excess of income over expenditure.

Hopefully the increase in entry fees for Seniors will help to balance the books there next month

There are still some P2P charges to come in. P2P has still not been registered at EBU for Tony Kelvin (now Sue Taylor) from 15/11/15) Apart from the Championship Pairs all competitions were directed by Bernie and Val who have not charged a directors Fee.

After the discussion at the last meeting re “Prize Vouchers “ rather than money vouchers I need to keep a record of entries next year using the vouchers so that the income is not reduced next year as well as this!!

P2P

This quarter we have received £752 in P2P (2015 - for same period £819) I'd like to record my thanks again to Tony Philpott who very kindly keeps this list up to date for me. This seems to have evened out now but we will have a discussion at the next meeting re the Essex portion

Seminar

Going forward this will be discussed later in the agenda. I'd just like to reiterate that the Development Fund which stands at present at £351 will be used to cover the costs of the April & June seminars

(This is separate from the Youth Development Fund which was given to ECBA by Thurrock Bridge Club specifically for youth bridge. A few years ago ECBA ‘topped’ up this fund and then last year when the mentoring was begun it was separated out again.)

Essex & Herts GP

THERE WILL BE INCREASE IN FEES TO £25 FROM NEXT YEAR

Ware is now booked for September 2016

Entries are a little low - We have 52 Pairs and 23 Teams compared to 54 Pairs and 30 Teams at the same time last year

Last year our final figures were 112 Pairs and 50 Teams

Mike Minting has emailed out to his data base of Herts players and I have asked Paul to do the same for the Essex competitors

We knew the London Congress being held the weekend before would have some effect on our numbers. Gary Conrad has two directors booked and a third on standby if the numbers shoot up.

