

Regulations for HBA Competitions

October 2024

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PART 1 The HBA, its Competition Structure and General Rules for Competitions

The Hertfordshire Bridge Association (HBA) organises each year a range of competitions, including Leagues, for the benefit of its members and affiliated clubs. This document describes these competitions and sets out the regulations governing them. They are published with the authority of the HBA Executive Committee and may be found on the HBA website where they are corrected and updated as necessary. Consequently they may be considered an authoritative statement of the regulations.

List of HBA Competitions

A Championships with Heats in Clubs

- A1 Championship Pairs: Premier championship for pairs: club qualification & semi-final & final.
- A2 Marjorie Lukyn Charity Cup: heats & single-session final for pairs.

B Inter-Club Championships

- B1 Desmond Flockhart Trophy: two-session competition for teams of eight.
- B2 Club Winners Cup: single-session pairs competition for club champions and runners-up.
- B3 Eccles Cup: single session for three pairs of restricted NGS grade.

C Direct Entry Championships

- C1 Humble Cup: Premier championship for teams: knock-out competition
- C2 Mixed Pairs Championship: single session for pairs.
- C3 Seniors Pairs Championship: extended session.
- C4 Seniors Teams Championship: extended session.
- C5 9 High Pairs Championship: single-session for pairs of restricted NGS grade
- C6 7 High Pairs: single-session for pairs of restricted NGS grade
- C7 Humble Plate

D HBA League

Laws and Regulations

In the conduct of its competitions, the HBA is bound by the “The Laws of Duplicate Bridge 2017” as promulgated by the World Bridge Federation. The HBA also accepts the regulations of the English Bridge Union. Those of interest to players are contained in the “Blue Book - Handbook of EBU Permitted Understandings” whilst the more technical aspects of interest to organisers and tournament directors are contained in the “White Book - Technical Matters”. The regulations for online bridge, previously contained in the EBU Sky Blue book, were absorbed into the “Blue Book” and the “White Book” in 2024. The authority for the award of master points is the “EBU Licensing & Master Point Handbook”.

Tournament Committee & Tournament Directors

The EBU is the Regulating Authority for England as described in Law 80A. The EBU has not assigned its powers to counties but has recognised the HBA as a “Tournament Organizer” with the powers and duties as set out in Law 80B. The HBA Executive Committee, as such, approves the rules for its competitions but has then delegated all the other powers and duties to its Tournament Committee. The Tournament Committee is thus responsible for organising all competitions, including the leagues. It appoints Tournament Directors, arranges for scoring and publication of results and

makes suitable arrangement for Appeals. The responsibilities and duties of Tournament Directors are detailed in Law 81.

The Tournament Committee is not charged with investigating cases of misconduct, though they often arise from incidents under its control. Misconduct is the responsibility of separate Conduct and Disciplinary Committees.

Conduct of Meetings

The Tournament Director (TD) is the official representative of the Tournament Committee and is required to manage the events in the way required by the Tournament Committee, for example as regards speed of play. The HBA subscribes to the EBU Code of Conduct in regard to Best Behaviour. It recognises that TDs are fully entitled to penalise or suspend a contestant for all or part of a Session (Law 91A). Additionally (as recommended in EBU White Book 8.91.6) it has given a TD prior approval to disqualify for cause (Law 91B). The TD is required to report any action under Law 91 to the Tournament Committee.

Membership of HBA and EBU

Affiliated clubs pay an annual fee to the EBU, specifying the County of Allegiance and also include a UMS levy in the table money for all sessions. Their members become members of the EBU at no extra charge.

New members are assigned the County of Allegiance of the first club to register them with the EBU but members may amend this. Membership of a county association is not exclusive. Those with allegiance elsewhere may if they wish also join the HBA as a dual member by registering their details with the Membership Secretary

Direct Members of the EBU may also specify Hertfordshire as their county of allegiance.

Entry Requirements

There are no membership requirements for Heats of HBA Events held in clubs. Competitors in the inter-club representative events need only be registered members of the club they represent, ie included in the list of members of the club which is registered with the EBU for purposes of the Universal Membership Scheme.

For the Humble Cup and the later stages of the Championship Pairs, a competitor must have Hertfordshire as the County of Primary Allegiance.

Some competitions are only open to those of restricted rank or NGS grade

B3 Eccles Cup: single session for three pairs of restricted NGS grade.

C5 9 High Pairs Championship: single-session for pairs

C7 7 High Pairs: single-session for pairs

Permitted Agreements

Conventions for club heats are determined by the promoting clubs.

In the 9 High, 7 High, and the Eccles Cup, methods above Level 2 are not allowed.

Level 4 methods are allowed in all other events.

The EBU Blue Book (revised August 2024) explains what is permitted under Level 2 (in section 6, pages 19 and 20) and under Level 4 (in section 7, pages 21-24).

Seating Rights in Head-to-Head Matches

A match between teams of four players will be played in two equal stanzas with the pairs of the “away” team changing tables at half time. For the first stanza the home team is required to declare the disposition of its players first whilst the “away” team has the privilege of placing its pairs later than the opponents (i.e. it has the seating rights).

When more than four players are allowed to compete in a match a Team Captain may require the match to be played as four equal stanzas. The home captain chooses a stanza in which his team has seating rights or passes that choice to the other captain. The captain not having this choice then selects two other stanzas in which his team has seating rights. Other reasonable arrangements are permitted where there is a genuine agreement between the captains. Should any dispute arise not covered by the above rules each captain is required to declare its team’s deployment without knowing the deployment of the other team.

Matches Played Privately

League matches, and Humble Cup and Humble Plate knockout matches are played privately, when no TD is available to give an immediate ruling should an irregularity occur.

In the event of an irregularity, the players at the table, including dummy, must together perform the function of a TD in determining the facts, ensuring that all are heard, deciding upon the relevant Law and selecting the correct rectification. The more experienced, in offering their expertise, should ensure that the interests of the less assertive are not overlooked. As a TD would not make a value judgement without first consulting other experienced players and directors, so the players should consult with others, particularly the team captains, before doing so.

Team Captains will be provided with the contact details of TDs from whom they can obtain help and advice. A TD will advise upon the substance and interpretation of the Laws and Regulations but will be wary of giving a firm ruling if there is any uncertainty about the reported facts. If the Team Captains cannot agree they should make a detailed record of the facts, both agreed and disputed and request a ruling from the County TD.

Appeals

The right to request or appeal a Director’s ruling expires 20 minutes after the publication of the results of an event. Nevertheless, wherever possible, the TD should be advised as soon as possible of the intention to appeal before evidence is lost. Results can only be confirmed as final after the correction period has expired and any outstanding appeals have been resolved. Subject to the above, the procedures of appeal shall be in accordance with Law 93, and a deposit required as specified in the EBU regulations. Other scoring corrections may be requested until 5 pm on the second working day after the end of the event, all in accordance with the EBU White Book 2.5

All requests for appeals should be made to the Tournament Director. Wherever practicable the TD will ask an appeals committee to adjudicate before the participants depart. An alternative method (Appeal after the Event) will be employed when there is insufficient time for proper consideration, when suitable adjudicators may not be available and for appeals arising later. The Tournament Committee will then arrange for an appeals committee to deal with the matter by email, telephone or written submission. Whatever method is used, the TD will implement the decision of the appeals committee and inform the participants.

The HBA encourages experienced players to participate in settling appeals and will provide them with detailed guidance upon the role of appeals committees and the procedures to be adopted.

HBA Representation

Where the HBA issues invitations to represent Hertfordshire to the winners and leading contenders in some competitions, the HBA and not the recipients of the invitation will decide upon substitutes if any are required. The HBA will pay the entry fees.

PART 2 Regulations for Club Heats

Organisation of Club Heats

The Marjorie Lukyn Charity Cup has club heats. The HBA invites clubs to include these heats in their normal calendar of events so as to provide a choice of times and venues for competitors throughout the County. Whilst the HBA hopes that clubs will welcome visitors they are under no obligation to do so. The Club is formally responsible for the heats and can organise them according to its normal procedures.

Limitation upon the Number of Heats

There is no restriction on the number of heats in which a player can participate in order to achieve qualification for the final

Entry Fees for Heats

The HBA imposes a levy, in addition to the normal table money, on the club heats of the Marjorie Lukyn Charity Cup.

Qualifiers from Club Heats

A club heat of an HBA competition must comprise at least six pairs. The proportion of qualifiers is shown in the description of each competition. In determining the numbers qualifying, all fractions are rounded up to the next whole number. Ties for the last qualifying places are not broken and all sharing the last qualifying places qualify for the next stage. Non-qualifiers are not promoted to take the place of qualifiers not wishing or not entitled to proceed further.

Master Points & UMS Registration

Clubs should register a heat for UMS purposes and arrange for the award of master points at the club rate.

Club heats of the Marjorie Lukyn attract master points at Club Scale.

After a Club Heat

The results of Marjorie Lukyn Charity Cup heats should be sent to the Tournament Secretary within seven days of the event, showing the full names of all competitors with the position and scores of qualifiers and non-qualifiers. Payment of the HBA levy should be made to the Treasurer.

PART 3 Regulations for events organised directly by the HBA

These regulations relate to the final stages of competitions with club heats and to Club Representative and Direct Entry Championships.

Entry Procedures

Pre-entry is required for all HBA events, other than heats run by the clubs.

Entry forms are to be found on the HBA website. Entries with the correct entry fee, if applicable, should be made online by the published closing date. Entry by email and payment by electronic transfer is available.

Players under 18 years of age at the date of the competition will get free entry. Players under 26 years of age at the date of the competition will pay 50% of the normal entry fees. The Tournament Secretary may refuse entry from those who have been formally excluded, are not entitled to compete or who are in debt to the HBA

If a team or pair having entered and paid the entry fee for any event find they cannot take part, they are asked to notify the Tournament Secretary or the Tournament Director at the earliest opportunity when their entry fee will be refunded in full providing such notification is made at least two hours before the start of the event.

Late Arrivals

All competitors should be ready to start play at the advertised time. If late players are allowed to join the competition, the TD may at that time remove boards from play assigning adjusted scores. Boards once removed from a round must not be played even if the players later consider there is time. The same rule applies if boards are removed for other reasons, such as slow play.

Duplicated Boards and Hand Record Cards

Wherever suitable, pre-dealt boards are used and competitors are provided at the end of play with copies of the hands.

Break

There will be an advertised break during a two-session event, usually of the order of 30 minutes, though the duration may vary slightly at the discretion of the TD.

PART 4 Regulations specific to each Championship

A1 Championship Pairs

This is the HBA premier championship for pairs. The competition comprises club qualification, a semi-final and a two-session all-play-all final. Any pair scoring 53% or more at a Herts club pairs session during October will be eligible to enter the Semi-Final in January 2025, provided that they have HBA Membership with Hertfordshire as the County of Primary Allegiance. This applies to both club members and visitors.

The sessions will have no restriction on level but must be submitted to the EBU to count.

Qualifiers for the semi-final of the HBA Championship Pairs will be notified by the HBA after the end of October. There is no requirement for clubs to submit results of their sessions, held during

October, to the HBA. Qualifiers are themselves responsible for submitting their own entries to the later rounds and for ensuring that they have the necessary membership qualifications.

The semi- final will comprise a 36 board Howell event, with the top 20 pairs qualifying for the final. The final will be a 10 table final of 20 pairs, all-play-all, ie 19 x 2 board rounds, 38 boards in total.

Players may enter as many sessions as they wish in their attempt at qualification for the final in this event and sessions can be played with different partners, but a player must have the same partner throughout the later stages of the competition.

The leading 20 pairs from the semi-final qualify for the final with any pair dropping out being replaced by the next available pair. Should there be a tie for the final qualifying positions; the Split-tie Procedures in the EBU White Book will apply.

The HBA will select the leading four available pairs in the Final rankings (down to a limit of 8th place and otherwise meeting the EBU entry requirements) to represent Hertfordshire in the Corwen Trophy.

A2 Marjorie Lukyn Charity Cup

This is a competition for pairs with club heats followed by a single-session final. A surcharge of £2 per player is made in the heats in addition to normal table money.

A club heat should preferably be played as a single-winner movement with the top 50% qualifying for the final (See “Qualifiers from Club Heats” above if a two-winner movement is played).

Players may enter as many heats as they wish in their attempt at qualification for the final in this event and heats can be played with different partners.

B1 Desmond Flockhart Trophy

This is an inter-club competition for teams of eight. All competitors must be registered members of the club that they represent and the composition of the teams is entirely the concern of the clubs. There is no limit on the number of teams that a club may enter.

The competition is played in two sections with the same multiple-teams movement and the same hands in each section. Each team of eight has a foursome in each section. The net score of each encounter between two teams of four is converted to IMPs before the two IMP scores are added and converted to Victory Points.

The HBA will invite the winning team to represent Hertfordshire in the Garden Cities Trophy where the rules for eligibility may not necessarily be the same as for the Desmond Flockhart.

B2 Club Winners Cup

This is a single-session pairs competition for the winners and runners-up (or the next in line down to fourth place) of the most recently preceding annual principal pairs competition run by each club. If, owing to extenuating circumstances, a club has not been able to hold its principal pairs competition, it may nominate one or more of its regular sessions to serve as its qualifier. All competitors in the Club Winners Cup must be registered members of the club concerned.

B3 Eccles Cup

This is a single-session competition for teams made up of three pairs, with no player having an NGS grade above a Jack. All players must have a public NGS grade, and must be registered members of the club that they are representing. All players in **section 1** must be **NGS Jack or lower**; all players in **section 2** must be **NGS9 or lower**; all players in **section 3** must be **NGS7 or lower**.

Provided that an entry form is filled out in full (including EBU numbers for all players), the team need only meet the NGS requirements on the date that the entry is received. Once the Tournament Secretary has confirmed that the NGS requirements are met, the team will be eligible for the competition even if some players' grades have increased by the date of the event.

The same set of boards will be played in every section and a ranking list produced across the entire field.

A team's position will be determined by the sum of the ranks of its three pairs. A tie would be broken by comparing the total percentage scores of all pairs. There will be no overall winning pair.

C1 Humble Cup

The Humble Cup is the HBA premier championship for teams. The competition comprises a qualifying round followed by a knockout competition. Participants require HBA Membership with Hertfordshire as the County of Primary Allegiance.

A team can have up to six members over the course of the competition. When a player is added to an existing team, that player must not have previously played in the knockout stages for a different team.

Entry will be by direct entry to the HBA, with no club heats. There will first be an online multiple teams qualifier played on RealBridge. The top 16 teams (or 8 teams if there are fewer than 20 entries) will qualify for later rounds, which will all be knockout, following a draw for each round, and matches will be played on RealBridge, unless both teams agree to use a different platform. All knockout matches should comprise 24 boards.

The quarter-finals are to be completed by 28 February and the semi-finals by 28 March.

The toss of a coin at the end of the semi-final determines the home team for the final which has a play-by date of 30 April.

Players eliminated in Round 1 are eligible for the Humble Plate, see paragraph C7 for details

The winning team will be invited to represent Hertfordshire in the Pachabo Cup and, if they wish, may supplement the team with additional members at that stage, provided any changes meet the EBU's requirements for entry to the Pachabo. If that team is unable to accept the offer within 14 days of the Humble Cup Final, the HBA will select a team from the two finalists, according to the procedure set out by the EBU.

C2 Mixed Pairs Championship

This is a single-session competition, scored by match points, for pairs comprising one lady and one gentleman.

C3 Seniors Pairs Championship & C4 Seniors Teams Championship

These are extended-session competitions for players above a qualifying age. The qualifying age for Seniors events is that players must have reached the age of 60 by the qualifying date of 1st January of the calendar year of the event

C5 9 High Pairs Championship

The competition comprises a single-session competition, for pairs with an NGS rating of 9 or less on the date of entry.

There will be a separate prize for the highest placed pair with a max NGS of 7

C6 NGS7 Duplicate Pairs

A relaxed single session pairs competition for newcomers and less experienced club players with a maximum of NGS7 at the date of entry. Players do not need to be members of the HBA.

C7 Humble Plate

Players not qualifying for the knockout stage of the Humble Cup may enter the Humble Plate. This event is also open to direct entry by any team of players who did not participate in the qualifying round of the Humble Cup. This is a consolation black point event.

The viability of this event will depend on the number of entries, and may comprise a straight knockout or a combination of mini leagues, followed by a final, at the discretion of the Tournament Secretary. Matches will be played on Realbridge, unless both teams agree to use a different platform or play F2F. The dates for completion of matches will be notified when the structure of the competition is known.

PART 4 HBA League Rules

This part of the Regulations defines the Rules for the HBA League. It is presented in the form that is issued to the Team Captains at the start of each season. For their convenience it includes extracts from other parts of these regulations.

Courtesy & Hospitality

It will help to ensure everyone's enjoyment of the Hertfordshire Bridge League if the following points are borne in mind:-

The dates for playing matches are given for guidance to help in spreading the matches through the season and to ensure that they are completed on time. Matches should be arranged in good time and there is certainly no objection to playing matches before the allotted dates.

As a matter of courtesy, every effort should be made to arrive in time for a prompt start to matches - (see rule 2.4(e) about late arrival).

Slow play can be a source of irritation and can lead to unduly late nights. Eight boards per hour is a reasonable rate of play which should always be maintained (i.e. 90 mins for 12 boards).

1 General

The HBA Executive Committee has delegated to the Tournament Committee the responsibility for organising all competitions, including the leagues. It has nominated a League Director. The Tournament Secretary as chairman of the Tournament Committee and the League Director administer the HBA League.

2 HBA League

2.1 Divisions

The HBA League consists of Division 1 and Division 2. The number of teams in each Division will be adjusted each season by the Tournament Committee.

Entry into Division 1 is by promotion from the second division. The winning team and the runners up of the second division will be promoted to Division 1 (subject to 2(e) below) and the lowest two teams from Division 1 demoted to the second division. Teams may be adjusted between the two divisions at the discretion of the Tournament Committee to equalize the number.

Entry into the second division is by relegation from Division 1. New teams may apply to enter Division 2 at least one month before the start of a new season.

In the event of a tie in VPs for promotion or relegation the tie will be split in the first instance in favour the winners of the match between the two teams during the season. If this match was drawn then the tie will be split based on net IMPs over the complete season. (see EBU White Book for precise details).

Promotion is not mandatory and may be refused by any team, in which case they will be replaced by the next highest in that division. However, a team refusing promotion will not be eligible for any prize in the following season. Relegation is mandatory.

Should a team resign during a season without playing all of its matches the results of any matches which it has played will be declared void, as will its outstanding matches. Entry fees will not be refunded.

A team must contain at least two players from its previous year's registered members to maintain its divisional status. Should a team be disbanded, status will be held by the majority of its members or, if the numbers are equal, by the half containing the previous year's captain.

2.2 Teams

Teams consist of not more than six members, all of whom must be registered with the League Director before playing a match. All players must be members of the HBA.

At least four members of the team must be registered with the League Director before any matches are played. Transfer of members between teams during a season is not allowed.

A team should field registered players wherever possible but, in an emergency, a team may include an eligible substitute. The substitute may be a player from a team of a lower division. The prior agreement of the opposing captain and the League Director is required. A team may only invoke this procedure once in a season.

2.3 Entry Fees

Entry fees will be decided annually by the HBA Executive Committee.

2.4 Arrangement of matches

Away captains must offer three dates (not all on the same day of the week) at least three days before the period allotted for the match to be played. In the event of failure by the away captain to do so, the right to offer dates will revert to the home captain.

If it is not possible to arrange matches before the end of the allotted period the League Director must be notified and the two captains may, by mutual agreement, arrange an alternative date. If an alternative date cannot be agreed, the deadlock will be referred to the Tournament Secretary, with all pertinent data, for his arbitration.

A team postponing a match at less than 48 hours notice must then accept one of three dates offered by the other team or forfeit the match. The three dates offered should not all be on the same day of the week.

All matches must be played by the end of April and results should be notified to the League Director within seven days after each match has been played. Failure to do so may result in the offending team forfeiting any points due to them for their performance in late matches or where results are notified late. Permission to play matches after the end of April will be at the discretion of the League Director.

Should a team arrive more than 30 minutes after the agreed starting time, its opponents have the right to curtail the match by two boards for each 15 minutes of lateness, and may exercise or renounce this right at half-time. If the right is exercised, the second half of the match will be reduced by two boards for each 15 minutes delay when the non-offending side may claim 3 IMPs per board not played. Where a team is more than 60 minutes late, its opponents may claim the match. For the avoidance of doubt, “a team” mean all four members being present and ready to play.

Where it is found necessary to award a match, the offending team(s) will not receive any Victory Points for the match. The non-offending team(s) will be given the higher of either the average of its Victory Points won over the season or the average of Victory Points lost by the opposing team over the season.

2.5 Conduct of matches

Matches in Divisions 1 and 2 consist of 24 boards.

(For convenience the regulations on “Seating Rights are repeated here).

All matches are to be played on RealBridge in accordance with the instructions issued to all Team Captains, or with the consent of both Team Captains, the match can be played on BBO, with Team Captains taking the responsibility for correctly setting up the matches themselves.

A match between teams of four players will be played in two equal stanzas with the pairs of the “home” team changing polarity by moving one seat clockwise at half time. For the first stanza the home team is required to declare the disposition of its players first whilst the “away” team has the privilege of placing its pairs later than the opponents (i.e. it has the seating rights).

Other reasonable arrangements are permitted where there is a genuine agreement between the captains. Should any dispute arise not covered by the above rules each captain is required to declare its team’s deployment without knowing the deployment of the other team.

Permitted Agreements as defined by the EBU shall be used subject to the proviso that in Divisions 1 and 2 methods up to Level 4 are permitted.

All players must have fully completed convention cards before the start of play of a match.

2.6 Irregularities

(For convenience the regulations on “Matches Played Privately” are repeated here).

In the event of an irregularity, the players at the table, including dummy, must together perform the function of a TD in determining the facts, ensuring that all are heard, deciding upon the relevant Law and selecting the correct rectification. The more experienced, in offering their expertise, should ensure that the interests of the less assertive are not overlooked. As a TD would not make a value judgement without first consulting other experienced players and directors, so the players should consult with others, particularly the team captains, before doing so.

There is a particular responsibility upon dummy. During play, Dummy acts as declarer’s agent, may ask declarer about a possible revoke, may try to prevent an irregularity and not much else. Dummy is entitled to give information, in the Director’s presence, as to fact or law. In the context of a private match, this is interpreted as the right to participate in the resolution of an irregularity but only after it has been raised by others. Because of the obvious conflict between the restrictions upon dummy and the welcome contribution to the consensus, it behoves dummy to behave impeccably.

The relevant law indicates the action required for play to continue, e.g. “the offender must pass when next it is his turn to call”. But rectification of any damage to the non-offending side must also be addressed. For this purpose, Law 12 Awarding an Adjusted Score should be the guide. An extract

from the Laws of Contract (Rubber) Bridge, where most matches are effectively played privately, might be apt

“The Laws cannot cover every situation that might arise nor produce equity in every situation covered. Occasionally the players themselves must redress damage. The guiding principle: the side that commits an irregularity bears an obligation not to gain directly from the infraction”

Team Captains will be provided with the contact details of TDs from whom they can obtain help and advice. A TD will advise upon the substance and interpretation of the Laws and Regulations but will be wary of giving a firm ruling if there is any uncertainty about the reported facts.

If the Team Captains cannot agree they should make a detailed record of the facts, both agreed and disputed and request a ruling from the County TD or any EBU Panel TD

2.7. Results

Matches will be scored by International Match Points. The difference in IMPS is converted to Victory Points using the scale supplied to the captains.

Results should be sent by the winning captain to the League Director within one week of the match being played in accordance with rule 2.4(d). Results may be either emailed to the League Director with a copy to the losing Captain or mailed on the result cards provided and signed by both captains or their appointed deputies. The result must contain the IMPs won by both Teams and the VP split.