

Selection of players to represent Hertfordshire

County teams are selected for two competitions: Eastern Counties League and Tollemache. There are other events where teams represent Hertfordshire (HBA) based on success in County Competitions.

In all cases, there is an expectation that the players will observe and practise “Best Behaviour in Bridge” and be active players in County level competitions.

EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE [ECL]

The ECL competition season runs for 12 months from April and requires HBA to field three teams of eight [24 people]. Each 32 board match takes place on Sundays. Matches usually start at 2 pm so, for Away matches, the travelling time may require a full day’s commitment from the players.

Within the ECL group of seven participating counties - Beds; Cambs & Hunts; Essex; Herts; Norfolk; Northants; and Suffolk – the HBA teams play 3 ‘Home’ and 3 ‘Away’ matches. We also play an extra ‘Away’ match against teams from Cambridge University which also takes part in the ECL.

Selection

For the ECL matches the HBA operates a three Squad system and players are selected for inclusion in a particular Squad based on the factors given below. The Squads are established each year by the Selection committee which is a sub-committee of the HBA County Executive Committee. The Chairman of the Selection committee is appointed from amongst the County Executive Committee. The remaining members of the Selection committee have to be approved by the County Executive Committee. Captains are appointed annually for each team and these have to be endorsed by the County Executive Committee.

For the individual ECL matches, team selection from amongst each squad is delegated by the HBA County Executive Committee to the A, B and C team captains. Selection is based on a policy and criteria endorsed by the Committee given below.

It is agreed that:

- For the ECL “A” “B” and “C” squads and teams: selection is based on current ability and on availability. Invitations to play are based on a combination of factors which include performances in national and county events and butler scores obtained in previous ECL matches.
- For the “C” squad it is also the entry level for those wishing to take part in County level teams and so past evidence of ability may not be fully available
- For all squads and teams, the selection should generally be made from regular, successful, and practised partnerships

Previous selection for the A, B, or C squads and teams does not mean players will be included in the squads for subsequent years. This is particularly so if the player’s ability has declined or they no longer have an established and successful partnership.

There are currently about 60 county members in the combined A, B and C squads. Selection for inclusion in the squads is usually made in March/April each year. Anyone interested in being considered to play for the county should contact the Chairman of the Selection committee prior to this spring meeting. Anybody who represents the county must adhere to

the laws and ethics of bridge and have a thorough knowledge of their system. They must also be able to explain any aspect of their system clearly to the opposition.

In practice, ECL teams for specific matches are selected from squad players that are available and willing to play on the agreed dates. Sometimes when late substitutions are made (sickness etc) the selection may be based totally on availability.

TOLLEMACHE CUP [Tolle]

The Tolle is a Teams of Eight competition played over two full weekends. The first weekend is a qualifying round with 37 counties from which eight counties qualify to play in the final. It is very demanding and the standard of play is very high. Indicators of players' suitability for selection will include:

- Experience gained at a similar level in EBU events
- Butler scores achieved in the ECL "A" team
- Established and current partnership success

Selection is made by the HBA appointed sub-committee. The brief is to 'select a team to give the HBA the best chance of qualifying for the final'.

The sub-committee members are well equipped to identify potential players and to determine who our team should be in order to give us the best chance of success. The team can contain up to 12 players.

OTHER EVENTS WHERE TEAMS REPRESENT HBA

For two other team events, players qualify to represent Hertfordshire through their success in specific County Teams Competitions.

Garden Cities Trophy

For this Teams of 8 event, HBA is represented by the winners of HBA Interclub Teams of Eight (Desmond Flockhart Trophy). If any players are unable to take part, substitution is agreed with the team captain in accordance with EBU rules

Pachabo Cup

This is a National Teams event at which HBA is represented by the winners of the Humble Cup. A team of up to six players can take part and strict rules about substitution apply.

REVIEW OF SELECTION AND QUALIFICATION PROCESSES

The HBA committee reviews the overall selection process for all teams events from time to time in discussion with the Chairman of the Selection committee. Such review is to make sure that we maintain good practice. The criteria by which players qualify to represent Hertfordshire through their success in county teams events is reviewed annually as part of the competition planning cycle. In some cases, the EBU sets the qualification criteria.

The most recent review was completed in spring 2010 and is reflected in this document.

Note: this document was revised Sep 2021 to delete a reference to the Beck Cup which is no longer staged.