

To: all captains of Wessex League teams (Main League and Daytime League)
cc: OBA competitions committee members

Wessex League: Latest update (June 2023)

Many thanks to all who replied to my previous message asking for your views on some aspects of the way we run the Wessex League.

The summarised results of this consultation are attached and this document was put to the OBA competitions committee when it met last week. All the recommendations it contains were accepted. This means that:

- **by default, we will continue to run both the Main League and the Daytime League online on RealBridge**, but teams will be able to play matches face to face (F2F) by mutual agreement;
- **results from matches in the Main League will count for NGS.** For online matches, the results will be submitted by the County, using a file that can be generated from the link on the county website. For teams wanting to play F2F matches, detailed guidance will be provided on how to set up Bridgemates to score teams of eight and provide a suitable file to be submitted via EBUScore. Teams without access to Bridgemates will have the option of filling in a spreadsheet of results and sending this to a nominated OBA scorer for conversion and submission to the EBU.
- **we do need to try to tighten up on the provision of system statements, particularly in the Main League, but we don't want to put people off.** What we're going to do is provide some additional guidance on the format of system summaries (the brief statements that go in the chat box at the beginning of a round), ensuring in particular that they include information on carding (leads, signals, etc) as well as bidding systems. We will then ask you, as team captains, to check that the summaries given by your team members provide the necessary information, and that (for regular partnerships in the Main League) they can provide a link to a suitable convention card. We don't think this will be too hard if you do it at the beginning of the season, but don't worry - if you're not happy about doing it yourself, you can ask me to help.

In addition, all teams currently in Division 3 of the Main League - plus the top two teams in Division 4, who are likely to be promoted - will be separately asked whether they would prefer to use self-alerting or partner-alerting, and **if the majority prefer partner-alerting, we'll change it, for Division 3 only.**

Some other useful suggestions were made and we'll try to incorporate these into the guidance notes when these are updated before the beginning of next season.

I should also tell you that the competitions committee has reviewed the entry fees for all competitions, with the aim of ensuring that we cover all relevant costs, and has decided to **increase the entry fees for the Wessex League to £60/team for the Main League, and £30/team for the Daytime League.** Please do make sure that your club Secretary and/or Treasurer is aware of this. Invitations to submit entries to the Wessex League for next season will be sent out, as usual, at the beginning of July.

And finally, I'm very pleased to say that the committee has agreed that we should have **trophies for the winners of each Division in the Daytime League.** I hope to have these available in time for the OBA AGM in September.

Best regards
Sandra

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Sandra Nicholson, Wessex League Secretary, snich@gmail.com

To the captains of: Banbury, Oxford E, Oxford F, Summertown B, Wallingford B, Wallingford D, Wallingford C, Aylesbury Aces

(i.e. all teams currently in Division 3, plus the top two teams from Division 4)

bcc: Members of OBA Competitions Committee

Wessex Main League Division 3: Alerting method

As you know, all divisions in the Main League, except for Division 4, are currently expected to use self-alerting, where you alert or announce your own bids and type the explanation into a box that can be seen by your opponents but not by your partner. Division 4 uses partner alerting, where you alert or announce your partner's bids and provide the explanation aloud, exactly as you would when playing face-to-face.

Some of the responses to the recent consultation suggested that teams playing in Division 3 would prefer to use partner alerting. I am therefore writing to all the teams who have been playing in Division 3 this season, plus the top two teams from Division 4 who are likely to be promoted next season, to ask you to let me know which you would prefer. If there is a majority in favour of changing to partner alerting, we will change it, for Division 3 only.

Please note that:

- unfortunately it's not practical to give you a choice for individual matches, since the alerting method is part of the setup that has to be included when the match links are created for you; and

- for those teams who get promoted to Division 2 next season, or those who have to move to Division 4, there won't be a choice: but I'd still like to know what your preference would be, please!

I appreciate that you'll need a little time to consult your team members about this, but I hope that you can let me have your reply before the end of June.

With best regards
Sandra

P.S. I've left your email addresses visible in the mailing list for this message, so that you can easily correspond amongst yourselves about this issue if you'd like to. The Competitions Committee members have been bcc'd so that they (and I) won't see any such messages. If you need to know who they are and how to contact them, their names and email addresses are shown in the message I sent you earlier today, headed "Wessex League: Latest Update (June 2023)".

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Sandra Nicholson
Wessex League Secretary
snich@gmail.com

Wessex League – consultation re possible changes in 2023/4

Responses received May 2023

A short questionnaire was sent out to the captains of all 26 teams in the Main League, with a briefer version sent to the 17 captains running teams in the Daytime League. 15 responses were received for the Main League and 7 for the Daytime League.

1 Playing arrangements

Everyone was asked if they were happy for us to continue the current arrangement where the default is for matches to be played online, but they can be played face-to-face by mutual agreement. No one disagreed with this and several responders commented that, for various reasons, they and their team members much preferred to play matches online.

Recommendation: we should keep the existing arrangements for at least one more year.

2 Match results to count for NGS

Main League teams were asked if they would be happy for match results to count towards the NGS of individual team members (it isn't possible to do this for teams of four, so it doesn't apply to Daytime League matches).

13 of the responders were in favour. One, in Division 4, was against, and another team from Division 4 replied "No strong opinion. But if pushing for NGS has the unintended consequences of discouraging teams to play their games f2f (cos of Bridgemates complexity) then I would counsel against it."

Recommendation: match results in the Main League should count for NGS. Detailed guidance needs to be provided on how to use Bridgemates for F2F matches.

3 System statements

Main League teams were asked whether they would like us to tighten up the rule about system statements.

This produced a much more varied collection of responses, with a number of detailed comments, reproduced later in this document. Overall 7 were in favour of tightening the rule, 3 against, and 4 were ambivalent. There was a general feeling that system summaries were of variable quality, and that carding was too often omitted, although it was perhaps the most important information; but several responders were concerned that being too strict would affect the current friendly atmosphere in which most matches are played, and might put people off altogether.

Recommendations: we should specify more clearly that system summaries need to include carding (leads, signals, and discards); and ask pairs to submit their summaries to their captain at the start of the season (or before a match if they are a scratch partnership), so that the captain can check them and ask for amendments where necessary.

If this does not improve matters, we should consider inserting a bylaw into the regulations for online matches about the need for system summaries and (for regular partnerships) links to system cards, with the possibility of a penalty – with an appeal procedure - for repeated infringements.

4 Methods of alerting

Although this was not specifically mentioned in the questionnaire, several responders took the opportunity to comment. It was mentioned that some individuals playing in Division 1 disliked the use of virtual "screens". One team playing in Division 3 disliked self-alerting so much that they went to some trouble to agree with almost their opponents that their matches would be played using partner alerting.

I feel strongly that we should keep screens in Division 1 (not least because these matches attract blue points for the winners), and self-alerting in Division 2. I would be open to the idea that Division 3 should change to partner alerting if the players would prefer it.

Recommendation: we should ask all teams who played in Division 3 this year, plus the bottom two teams from Division 2 who are likely to be playing in Division 3 next year, what their preference would be, and change to partner alerting in that Division if the majority would prefer it.

5 Other suggestions and comments

There were no other general themes, but a few responders made useful individual suggestions which are reproduced at the end of this document.

Several responders took the opportunity to thank the organisers for their hard work in making the league run smoothly and said that it had been an enjoyable experience, even for less experienced players.

Sandra Nicholson

Wessex League Secretary

May 2023