

OBA Officers' Reports for Management Committee meeting on 9th December 2010

Chairman

No report received in advance.

Treasurer

Balance in Current and Savings Accounts:

Account	Balance 01/12/2009	Balance 01/12/2010
Cash in Hand	£87.00	£44.60
Lloyds Current Account	£3,937.03	£3,008.85
Standard Life Savings Account	£21,759.21	£24,759.21

It will be seen that income is some £900 down on last year, due to the drop in membership fees. In 2009/10 membership fees totalled £2777: so far this year we have received £902, with the expectation of another approximately £500. As much as £255 has come from direct payment from dual county members and direct EBU members. I consider it important that we raise the county element of P2P to 6p from the current 3p from next April.

Last financial year our overall profit was £3793.07: so far this year our profit is £2211.84, much of which comes from the summer congress.

Mens' and Ladies' Pairs

This year there were 11 pairs in the Mens event, and 13 in the Ladies. The committee had decided to offer non-expert prizes at these events to encourage entrants. Although the committee had also hoped to make these events financially neutral, in the event the Mens event was (-£39) and the Ladies event (-£32). - *Dinah Lintott*

Secretary: including correspondence

The only items of note recently have been those from the EBU, which are mentioned on the Agenda. - *Sandra Nicholson*

Chief Tournament Director

No report received in advance.

Membership Secretary

There are currently 1314 members of OBA listed on the EBU spreadsheet. In addition there are 46 Dual members and 5 Direct members. This compares with 1299 OBA listed members and 24 Dual members as reported to the previous meeting. Please note that for the previous report, Direct members were counted with Dual members. Future reports will make a distinction between these two categories.

Managing the list of Dual and Direct members has been difficult. There have been differences of approach in applying the rules relating to membership of OBA. These differences have led to anomalies. Dual membership is an agenda item for the meeting on 9th December and hopefully these issues can be resolved. - *Vicky Fleming*

Tournament Secretary

Since the last meeting, we have run the Ladies' and Men's Pairs competitions for the year. Numbers were slightly up compared with last year 13 and 11 pairs respectively, compared with 9 pairs for each competition in 2009. As there were, 6 and 3 non-expert pairs in the two competitions who may well have decided not to play without the introduction of a non-expert category, I believe that the innovation may be cautiously rated a success, and with one proviso, I would recommend that we continue this in future years and consider also awarding non-expert prizes in the Swiss Pairs, Mixed Pairs and Harwell Cup Teams starting in season 2011-12.

The Swiss Pairs competition is scheduled to be run before the meeting. At the time of writing this report (16 November) I have received 13 entries, which (I'm sure coincidentally) is the same number as at this time last year, when we eventually had 30 participating pairs.

We had not discussed the meaning of the term "non-expert", but the Tournament Committee discussed the criteria by email and agreed to consider a pair non-expert only if neither player held more than 10,000 master points. A further point arose regarding whether to require a non-expert pair to score more than 50% in order to qualify for a prize, I'm unclear what was decided, but as all the relevant pairs achieved this score, the point is moot.

Should we decide to continue awarding non-expert prizes in County events, please can we agree the details, at least:

- i) The criteria that define a "non-expert" pair/team;
- ii) The criteria upon which the prize is to be awarded; and
- iii) The number and value of non-expert prizes.

I suggest that we award a non-expert prize of £20 to the leading pair/team of which each member has fewer than 10,000 Master Points on their EBU record on the date of the competition, irrespective of the score they achieve, provided that at least two non-expert pairs/teams take part. In the event that 5 or more non-expert pairs/teams, we should award two prizes, of £30 and £15 to the two leading non-expert competitors.

Discussion continues on qualification rules for OBA competitions. I have some personal opinions on this question which I do not believe have any place in the Tournament Secretary's report, but out of respect for my successors, I appeal to the committee to come up with a set of objective criteria that can be easily policed. At present, I have access to the EBU's record of the County of Primary Allegiance of each member, and this may be easily checked. I am not currently able to access EBU records of dual and direct members and have to rely on the Membership Secretary for this information. This is a workable solution and enables me to respond to any entry telling them that the entry has been accepted or that they must join the OBA before playing in the event. I believe that entrants value this clarity and fear that making the eligibility criteria more complicated than "entrants must be members of the OBA", even if the more complex rules are more liberal, would lead to a further decrease in competition entries. - *Alan Grunwald*

Webmaster

Since the last meeting I have switched the OBA web hosting to a new provider which has allowed me to create facilities for Stephen, Clive and Geoff to upload respectively County Night results, County Pairs information and Wessex/Chester/President's results to the site directly. I have also produced a script to generate an index for the Tuesday results similar to Maryatt's system for Oxford Bridge Club. Once Stephen has confirmed that the output is appropriate, we will be able to switch to using it live and I will start to work on a system to allow Kathy, or others to upload the results on evenings when Stephen is not around.

The move went much more smoothly than I expected, and I have heard of no loss of service. As far as I can make out, visitors to the site were gradually switched from old to new versions over the course of a day or two. The new site makes it possible to apply certain layout changes across the whole site in one moderately simple operation, and I have already received a suggested new look from someone "who got bored waiting for some long computer activity to complete". It would certainly be possible to provide alternative styles and allow users to switch to their preferred version, and this is something I am (vaguely) considering.

At the time of writing (16/11) my currently planned activities are:

- i) Move Tuesday results to the main site;
- ii) Provide a mechanism to upload Tuesday results when Stephen is away;
- iii) Provide a mechanism for Geoff easily to upload Wessex/Chester/President's information.

I anticipate the need to link provide a link to County Pairs information when Clive is ready to publish it, but I don't expect this to take more than an hour or two and expect to be able to do this as necessary without disrupting the above plan. - *Alan Grunwald*

EBU Shareholders

The EBU AGM took place on Wednesday 6th October. The following report highlights points of particular relevance; full draft minutes can be seen on the EBU website.

Dimmie Fleming awards were presented. Bill and Freda McCarthy were both there, and very happy we had arranged this.

Consultation on governance changes, election of County club representative for Regional Club Committee – Counties were asked to provide responses by the end of the year [see current agenda].

Membership issues – “yellow” names on the membership spreadsheets have not renewed. and should have been lapsed/removed from the sheets as from 31 July. This would be done shortly. BFA members have now been constitutionally included in the definition of “player members”. From April 2011, the EBU will be able to collect and remit the County membership fee from Direct members.

Stratification – the software allowing clubs to define and operate stratification in club playing sessions has just been tested inhouse and should be out for testing with trial clubs in the near future. The National Grading System (NGS) has been delayed due to the untimely death of John Carter, but new committee members holding computer/maths skills have now been taken on board to advance this project.

Treasurer's report: Contrary to expectations, 2009/10 produced a surplus of about £46K (budget was for a deficit of £48K), mainly because of savings achieved through carrying out the P2P project work in-house rather than using outside consultants. The forecast for 2010/11 was for a deficit of c. £71K and so far it looks as if the outturn will be £10-15K worse than that, largely due to lower shop sales and reduced income from advertising in English Bridge.

P2P subscription: This item produced a lively debate. The Board were recommending an increase in 2011/12 to 32p, which they felt was needed to “recover 4 years lost inflation” (since the 29p figure was based on accounts information from 2006-7) and to ensure financial stability. As an alternative they suggested that there should be two years with higher-than-inflation increases – to 31p in the first year, and probably 33p in the second year – followed by yearly rises in line with inflation from 2013. Many shareholders felt that a 10% increase so soon after the introduction of P2P was inappropriate, and an eventual vote on the proposed 32p increase showed 15 for and 23 against. The 31p figure was then carried by a large majority. Annual subscription rates for direct members were increased from £23 to £24 and the affiliation fee for clubs remains the same, at £30 pa.

Number of Shareholder meetings:

Instead of 3 meetings per year, there will now be the AGM and one other shareholder meeting, plus an annual repeat of the successful Chairmen's meeting held earlier this year.

Number of shares held by each county:

A new schedule was agreed based on revised numbers of members in each county following the introduction of P2P. Note that if our total number of members falls below 1200, we would lose one of our 3 shares.

NICKO and Garden Cities competitions:

Entries to these competitions must now come from affiliated clubs, and all participants should be “bona fide” members of such clubs – to be verified by the clubs themselves, with guidance to be supplied on how to decide. - *Sandra Nicholson/Brenda Harris/Sue Maxwell*

Publicity Officer

- a) In an effort to increase entries in the Men's & Ladies' Championship Pairs contest, Non-Experts were encouraged to participate (generous cash prizes on offer). This drive resulted in 5 N-E pairs out of 13 in Ladies & 3 N-E pairs out of 11 in the Men's. It should be noted that none other than our newly co-opted Membership Secretary, Vicky Fleming & partner were not only the highest-ranked Non-Expert Ladies pair, but also finished 3rd overall with an excellent score of 55.56%!
- b) Various methods for publicising Tuesday nights have been undertaken in an effort to increase attendance eg OBA web-site, Dec newsletter, EBU Oxon column in February issue of English Bridge.
- c) Very little publicity for Andrew Robson's Seminar on 7 April is needed. His ardent fans book 1 – 2 years in advance & somehow word gets out to others thus ensuring that it is inevitably heavily over-subscribed.
– *Brenda Harris*

Match Secretary

No report received in advance.

President's/Chester/Wessex League Secretary

All competitions are running okay at present. One or two captains seem to be a bit slow to offer dates in the Chester Cup competition, but I'll chase them in the next few days. - *Geoff Nicholas*

Youth Officer

No report received in advance.

Education Officer

(currently vacant)

SJN, 30.11.2010