

ELECTRONIC SCORING – FINAL COMPARISON

1. Introduction

The 2018 Seaford Bridge Club AGM tasked the new club committee with identifying the most appropriate electronic scoring system in terms of both cost and functionality. The Club had already had the opportunity to evaluate the market leader in this field – BridgeMate – when a representative of that company visited the Club in January and ran the weekly Tuesday duplicate session using BridgeMate. In order to consider alternatives, the Committee selected four club members – Greta Bennell, Roger Chapman, Leslie Fowle and John Gillespie – to visit clubs using BridgeTab and BridgePal.

Arrangements were made to visit the Avenue Bridge Club, Hove (BridgeTab) and Otford Bridge Club (BridgePal). These visits took place in late March and early April. In both instances the Club representatives took part in a weekly club session and felt that they were provided with a more than satisfactory opportunity to observe and use the systems and to talk to club members about their experiences. The pros and cons of each system are summarised below:

1. BridgeMate

(a) Pros

- the market leader with a worldwide client base in excess of 4000
- tried and tested solution to electronic scoring needs
- fully supported
- no requirement to recharge handsets after each session
- handset batteries will last for several years and inexpensive to replace
- carry case provided for handsets to enable easy transfer between playing venues
- no need for a standalone router
- results available immediately

(b) Cons

- the most expensive of the options considered but over 10 years becomes cheaper than BridgeTab
- the display although satisfactory is the poorest of the three options considered

2. BridgePal

(a) Pros

- the least expensive option by some margin
- clear display (although using mobiles it was small)
- popular with users (although Otford would have selected BridgeMate if funds had been available)
- results available immediately

(b) Cons

- no support available (other than that provided by the members of Chislehurst BC who had written the software)
- mobile devices must be recharged after each session creating difficulties if used in a multi-venue scenario
- very small user base – about 20 users
- Bridge Overseas Holidays, who are users, reported a series of problems operating the system
- Otford BC suggested that a computer techie would be required to implement BridgePal

3. BridgeTab

(a) Pros

- the tablets used provided a large, clear display in colour
- the tablets were popular with all the players
- results available immediately

(b) Cons

- recurrent annual payments required for support and license fee. These charges make BridgeTab the most expensive option after 10 years
- tablets must be recharged after each session creating difficulties if used in a multi-venue scenario
- difficult to establish the size of the user base

4. Summary

All three systems:

- enabled the Director to make a late change to the movement
- provided information to players as to who they were playing, what boards they should be playing, where they should move to next and whether they would be N/S or E/W
- did not require the Director to operate the lap top during the playing session thus releasing the Director to play.

Given that all three options meet the functionality criteria of Seaford Bridge Club the purchase decision will therefore come down to the issues of:

- costs (both upfront and on-going)
- logistics (device charging and ensuring availability of ready to use devices at the right venue/time)
- quality of device display
- support etc
- product confidence

John Gillespie
Seaford Bridge Club
April 2018-04-15