

ENGLISH TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION

REPORT OF SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE JOURNALISTS' INSTITUTE, TUDOR STREET, LONDON, EC4, AT 4.0pm ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8th 1945

Delegates from the following leagues and directly affiliated clubs were present: Bath, Barnet, Barnsley, Birmingham, Bedford, Bristol, British Workers' Sports Association, Canterbury, Central, Coventry, Crewe, Dartford, East London, Herne Bay, Hull, Ilford, Liverpool, London, Luton, LPTB, Manchester, NALGO, North Middlesex, St Albans, St Helens, Southampton, Torquay, West Bromwich, Widnes, Wolverhampton, Yiewsley & Drayton, RAETTC, Epsom TTC.

Members of National Executive Committee (NEC) present: Mrs D Anderson, Messrs Forrest, Milton, Robinson, Nicholson, Rose and Stamp.

Officers: Hon Ivor Montagu (in the Chair), Mr A K Vint (Hon Treasurer), Mr W J Pope (Hon General Secretary)

The Chairman explained that as we had no reliable information as to the number of clubs in each league the NEC suggested that block voting should be suspended for this meeting, and that on all questions voting should be taken by show of hands, ie one vote for each delegate. This suggestion was adopted by 25 votes to 2.

1 REPORT OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Chairman said the report had been circulated to each league and club and he suggested it should now be taken item by item.

Items Nos 1-5

No questions were raised.

Item No 6 - Administration

The delegate from Ilford said he hoped Mr Pope's health had now improved, and he thought the meeting should convey its appreciation to Mrs Carrington for her services during the war years.

This was carried with acclamation.

Item No 7 - Office

It was suggested that the Football Association should be thanked for the use of their office facilities.

Items Nos 8-12

No questions were asked.

Item No 13 - Medals

The Manchester delegate was of opinion that Mr Pope should be the first person to receive the medal for meritorious service to the game.

Item No 14 - Committee

The Chairman mentioned that Mr Robinson of Hull was now out of the Forces and was present at the meeting.

Item No 15 - Board of Trade

It was asked whether the Association could make representations to the Board of Trade to increase the quality and quantity of equipment with the ending of hostilities and Mr Montagu stated that a deputation had just visited the Board of Trade. The information received showed that the position regarding balls was very much better, our quota had been increased and it was hoped more would be available in the shops for the ordinary purchaser. The availability of rubber for rackets is extremely unlikely. Wood for tables is very difficult indeed, but some tables may be released later on from the Forces as demobilisation continues.

Item No 16

No questions.

Item No 17 - Registered Players

Asked whether any statement could be made on the position of Registered Players, the Chairman said a meeting with the players had just been held. All questions affecting the Registered Players had been discussed, and were still being considered, and a further meeting would be arranged later.

Item No 18

Those present stood for a few minutes in memory of all the members of the Association who had lost their lives during the war.

Items Nos 19-22

No questions.

Item No 23 - Post-War Policy

The Ilford delegate asked what period would be allowed to dormant leagues to revive. He said that in Ilford the League had not functioned during the war and was even now making no effort to do so, and the war-time

league did not wish to include "war-time" in its title now that hostilities had ceased. The Chairman said that no particular time had been laid down, but if difficulties arose in any particular locality, the NEC would consider the particular case and give a ruling which would be as far as possible acceptable to all parties. The London League delegate asked whether the Association was now bound to accept the post-war policy. The Chairman replied no, this was merely a report of the NEC. The Treasurer suggested that until a little time had elapsed and we were enabled to see the position more clearly, leagues in the position of the Ilford League might call themselves 'Provisional'. The Chairman mentioned here that delegates would no doubt be very pleased to know that the name of Tommy Sears had appeared in the newspapers as a prisoner of war liberated from Japanese hands.

The Treasurer in moving the adoption of the report said he was amazed to find that the summary of six years' toil could be recorded in three pages. He thought that, had the officers and committee known at the 1939 SGM that they were committing themselves to nearly six years' work, they would have backed out. We realise, he said, that we may have made mistakes, and in looking back we realise also that if we had the time over again we should not do some of the things which were done, and should do some of the things which were not done. But we are greatly indebted to a few people who have kept the game alive. Quoting the Ilford League Secretary he said he, too, wished to pay tribute to Mr Pope and Mrs Carrington for the work they have done and, speaking as a provincial member, he was well aware of the considerable difficulties of bombing, etc under which the work was done.

Our Secretary, Mr Pope, had given about 20 years of his life to table tennis and it is no exaggeration to say that a great part of his ill-health had been caused by the part he has played. The NEC was very anxious that within 18 months the Association should be back to its 1939 strength and he asked delegates to seriously consider the general position with which we should be faced within the course of the next six months. He asked for the goodwill of the membership and asked for the help of all the members to build up the Association once again to the organisation of which we were so justly proud in 1939. Mr Hoy, the Manchester delegate, in moving the adoption of the report thanked the committee for the way in which they had carried on the Association during the war. Mr Pickard of Ilford seconded the adoption of the report which was carried unanimously.

2 THE ACCOUNTS

The Treasurer said he had made an effort in the report which had been circulated to delegates to summarise the accounts for the six years in order to give a clearer picture of the position. Our total income had been £7124 and our expenditure £7025, so that the financial position of the Association had been improved by about £100. At the SGM held in 1939 we suggested that we would carry on the Association's work during the war, provided we did not have to interfere with the actual cash position at that date. That money has not been touched and we have contributed a further £100. From affiliation fees during the six years we had received only £321 and it is perfectly clear that steps must be taken to ensure that our income from this source is considerably increased. Old leagues must be revived and new leagues must be brought in or we shall have difficulty in keeping going.

Regarding administration, it is only the very low wages paid to the Assistant Secretary which has enabled us to carry on, but this position must be remedied as soon as possible, and it can only be remedied by our dealing with the question of affiliation fees. In 1939 we were satisfied that we could deal with our staff problem and we are satisfied that next season the position will be more satisfactory. The Treasurer then asked for questions on the financial statement. Mr Milton proposed a hearty vote of thanks be given to the Treasurer for the vast amount of work he had shouldered on behalf of the Association during the six years of war, and to tender to him all the thanks we can express for the fact that having gone through six years of war he is able to say to-day that we have £100 more than we had when the war started. The vote of thanks to the Treasurer was carried unanimously.

The delegate from the British Workers Sports Association asked whether insurance on trophies was included in the Administration costs and was assured that it was. The Treasurer was asked for an explanation of the item "Dr Pick Suspense Account". He explained that Dr Pick was an official of the International Table Tennis Federation residing in Austria. When Hitler invaded that country he suffered rather badly but eventually we managed to enable him to come to England, one of the conditions of which was that we guaranteed him, a living here. A sum of money was advanced for this purpose, and when eventually he was allowed to work at his regular occupation as a doctor, the sum was repaid to the Association.

3 PROSPECTS FOR THE 1945-46 SEASON & THE PROPOSAL FOR THE SELECTION OF AN ADVISORY SUB-COMMITTEE

The Chairman explained that in June last a Conference, planned before the war in Europe was over, was held in London. At this Conference the opinion was expressed that the Executive Committee could usefully be reinforced and freshened, in view of the considerable time which had elapsed since the last election. The officers agreed to explore the possibility, and the proposal that an advisory sub-committee consisting of four members be selected by the Executive Committee on a regional basis from a panel nominated by the SGM to act during season 1945/6 is the result of the consideration. The Executive Committee came to the conclusion after an examination of the Rules and Regulations, that it would not be possible to hold elections earlier than April 1946, and they propose therefore, that an Advisory Committee should be set up under the rule which empowers the NEC to set up sub-committees, so that four persons can be invited to attend NEC meetings.

These persons must, under the Constitution, be appointed by the NEC, but in order that the EC may have a guide to the popularity of the persons nominated by the meeting, the Chairman suggested a formal vote be taken. The Treasurer moved that this course be adopted and this was seconded by Mr Pickard of Ilford. Mr Hoy of Manchester asked that the committee would bear in mind those members of the NEC who had not attended meetings during the war. Mr Kurzman, London League, did not agree that any useful purpose would be served in electing people to the committee who would not have a vote as they would be without power, and he considered the meeting should elect their representatives regionally at this meeting.

The Chairman explained this would be unconstitutional but if a resolution was put forward to dissolve the present Executive Committee and to elect a new committee straight away, he would accept it. That was the only way an election could be carried out constitutionally, but otherwise any committee has to be formed by the NEC and cannot be elected here as no procedure is laid down for it. Mr Kurzman then suggested that the proposed sub-committee should be appointed regionally at this meeting, the NEC to give an undertaking that those members would be elected by the NEC. The Chairman said he would agree to this if there any preponderance of feeling at the meeting but that it would be very difficult owing to the fact that the meeting would have to be divided regionally before this could be done and he emphasised the fact that the EC did not wish to fly in the face of any definite view of the meeting.

Mr Gill of Torquay suggested it would be possible to split the meeting into divisions if it were the opinion there should be a vote from the hall. The Chairman thought it would be a wiser plan to have nominations and see what the result of this was. Mr Hoy of Manchester suggested it should be ascertained whether all parts of the country were represented at the meeting. Further he considered that if the elected member already on the NEC was not present at an NEC meeting then the member of the sub-committee should be allowed to speak and vote on the committee in his place. The Chairman ruled this could not be allowed.

Mr Swayne of the Central League said he wished to put forward a resolution to the effect that the SGM recorded its grateful thanks to the members of the NEC, for their work, but that the meeting did not accept the view of the NEC that despite the provision in the Constitution that the election should occur annually, this had not been done and the meeting urge that the necessary steps should be taken to call for the re-election of a new committee to function during the season. The Chairman ruled that this was out of order and the only way an election could take place this season was for a Special General Meeting to be called in accordance with the Constitution, which would have before it the election of a new NEC and how the election should be carried out.

The Central League delegate then asked under what rule the Executive Committee were still remaining in office. The Chairman explained that in 1939 a specially called Special General Meeting assembled to consider the position arising from the war decided that the NEC should become the governing body of the Association until the end of hostilities, and that all the powers of the General Council and the AGM should be vested in them until the end of the war. The end had now arrived, our powers to act for the General Council and the AGM had come to an end and we were now handing back those powers to the SGM once again. His ruling was that, in accordance with the Constitution, the election should take place in April next. The only way the present EC could be removed from office before that time and in accordance with the Constitution was by the meeting passing a vote of "No confidence". Then a Special General Meeting would have to be called and the arrangements made for an election to take place.

Mr Kurzman, London, said he did not want to move a vote of "No confidence", but he was of opinion that the members present constituted the General Council. Mr Vennell of the London League said difficulties were

bound to arise at this very difficult period and give and take were needed on both sides and he objected to the way the Chairman had dealt with the question and with his attitude to Mr Kurzman. Mr Wilmott considered that the remarks of the last speaker might be called a reflection on the Chairman and he considered that if delegates put forward suggestions they should first study the rules under which the meeting was conducted.

The Chairman said he had been Chairman of the Association for a great number of years, and any personal views he held were well known to members of the Association. He did not propose to pursue any question which was an issue between himself and an individual delegate on a question of opinion. Mr Kurzman could support his view, but only by a vote objecting to the Chairman's ruling. The proposal of the Executive Committee that an Advisory sub-committee of four members be appointed was then carried. Nominations were received from the hall as follows:

Mr A B Haskew, Wolverhampton	Mr A A Haydon, Birmingham	Mr T I Gill, Torquay
Mr J W Hoy, Manchester	Mr J Kurzman, London	Mr A L Ollis, Bath

The Treasurer said he wished to make a suggestion that the number be increased to six to include all the nominations put forward; this was seconded by Mr Milton and the following resolution was then carried: That there should be a sub-committee of six members and the names nominated go forward to form the sub-committee.

4 VICTORY TOURNAMENT

The Secretary said it was originally intended to hold this in the autumn, and we had been approached by the Wembley Stadium authorities who were anxious that we organise a championships there, but this would mean that we must have at least 5-6,000 spectators. At the Conference we got the impression that the provincial leagues would not be able to get the support of their members in the autumn as they had done before the war.

Mr Haydon of Birmingham said he considered a tournament should be run if there were sufficient first-class players available. He thought people wanted entertainment and, if such a Championship were arranged, Birmingham would give their support. Mr Stamp of Liverpool thought it would be possible to get provincial members to Wembley if something could be done to provide excursion trains, but present fares would, he thought, deter people from making the trip. Mr Robinson of Hull said he was very much in favour of a championship being arranged and he considered travelling and hotel accommodation important factors. Mr Rose, London was definitely against holding a Victory Tournament in the autumn as he felt that if we attempted it, we must make sure it was a success and we must fill Wembley Stadium, as it would be very bad for our prestige if we did not. He considered it more a question of travelling difficulties than having first class players, and he thought that until we get the Association on a footing more like pre-war, we should not try anything so ambitious.

Mr Stamp said that on a question of finance, we must bear in mind that approximately 40% must be paid in entertainment duty. The delegate from the British Workers' Sports suggested a team tournament in each town, perhaps three in a team, to be called a "Victory" tournament. Mr Forrest, Bradford, thought such a competition would be catered for with the return of the Rose Bowl and the Wilmott Cup competitions. The Chairman said he did not think we should be too pessimistic about the attendance at sporting, events. Sports had a tremendous boom after the last war and there is now every evidence of the same thing happening. Also, there might be improved travelling conditions by the time the tournament takes place. Regarding teams travelling to London from abroad, letters indicate that several countries are anxious to send teams, and he considered everything possible should be done to get the ITTF on its feet again.

Mr Gill of Torquay said he was not a pessimist and considered there would be a lot of support from the ordinary spectator. Mr Hoy of Manchester suggested Birmingham as the venue for such an event, but the Chairman pointed out that there was a considerable body of potential spectators in the London area who would not travel to Birmingham for such a show, and such numbers did not exist in Birmingham. The delegate from Dartford promised the support of that league. Mr Forrest considered it would be unwise to hold the Championship out of London as he was of opinion that thousands of provincial fans would be glad to make the special trip to London. The Secretary said he presumed the conflict of opinion was on the question of such a Championship in the autumn - he was taking it for granted that thousands of fans would be coming to London for a National Championships in the spring and for that details of travelling arrangements and hotel accommodation would be exhaustively considered.

5 ADVISORY SUB-COMMITTEE

The Chairman stated that after the meeting the NEC would be consulted to see if they agreed to the invitation of the Advisory sub-committee to the NEC meeting, to take place on Sunday 9th September.

6 OPEN TOURNAMENTS

The NEC were rather concerned at the number of tournaments now being applied for and were considering taking steps to cut down the number, or to find a solution to the problems of overlapping. Mr Kurzman considered that each club wishing to run an open tournament should be allowed to do so, but he agreed that overlapping was a serious difficulty and he hoped careful thought would be given to it. The Secretary agreed with Mr Kurzman's but wished to emphasise the great difficulties involved. In 1939, forty-four tournaments were sanctioned which amounted to about two per week in the playing season. Players such as Barna, Bergmann, Bellak and Szabados were all wanted by the tournament organisers and some said the success of their tournaments depended upon their entry, and if we were forced into the position of sanctioning more than one tournament at a time the wanted players would then have to decide to which tournament they would go, thereby upsetting the organisers of the tournament in which they did not play. He said this question and also the question of titles would be considered by the NEC.

7 COUNTY BODIES

The Treasurer said everything possible would be done to assist County Bodies to function; we hoped to get the framework going this season, and all leagues were asked to collaborate in the formation of County Bodies. The London delegate said he was hopeful of the formation of Area Associations and not County Bodies in the light of present day experience, as he thought County Bodies were already out of date.

8 TROPHIES

Mr Wilmott asked whether anything had been done to prevent cups from leaving the country. He mentioned particularly the "Veterans" Cup which had been taken out of the country by Mechlowitz and which, owing to the war, had not been returned. The Chairman agreed that if it proved impossible to get back the Cup it would have to be replaced by the Association. Mr Milton mentioned that some years previous to the war Szabados took the "Star" trophy out of the country; he asked whether the Association would write to Szabados asking for its return. The Chairman said he thought the best procedure would be for the person responsible to write first and, in the event of no reply being received, the Association could then take up the matter with the Ambassador of the country concerned when we could say that the individual had failed to get satisfaction. The Treasurer explained that no Insurance Company would cover a Cup which was being taken out of the country but our cups were insured in this country.

Mr Kurzman asked whether the list of league secretaries could be circulated at the earliest possible moment. The Chairman agreed that this would be done. Mr Haskew of Wolverhampton considered there should be officially recognised ETTA umpires. Examiners should be appointed to test umpires and to appoint new ones. Miss Ferguson, Southampton, said she would like to see the method of playing league matches - the number of players and games - definitely laid down and standardised. The Chairman promised that both questions raised by Mr Haskew and Miss Ferguson would be looked into and, on the question of what constitutes a match, all leagues would be asked to let the Association know how they play and an effort made to get ideas on the subject. The question of whether exhibition players were available was asked. The Secretary explained that Barna was on the stage, Bergmann was in France, and very few players were available at the present moment. The Chairman said meetings were in progress with the Registered Players and this question would also be considered.

The meeting then closed and a vote of thanks to the Chairman was unanimously carried.