

Cleveland County Table Tennis Association

Founded 1974

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To all members of National Council

Dear Members,

I recognise that Saturday's meeting is very full and that we have a lot to consider. However, there are some matters relating to the ITTF which I believe Councillor's ought to be aware of and need consideration at this meeting as they have the potential of having very serious ramifications for table tennis in England going forward.

Please find attached a copy of a letter from the German Table Tennis Association complaining to the ITTF about measures that are proposed that would make a major change to how the sport is organised at an international level. The German Association are backed by at least 10 other European Associations including France, Belgium, Netherlands, Croatia and Switzerland. I have copies of most of the correspondence from these Associations and any Councillor who would like to have sight of these I would be happy to provide them. I am also aware of details of some of the Associations in Asia who are objecting and that a Board of Director member from Australasia has also lodged a complaint on this matter.

If these changes are adopted the organisation of the sport and some of the decision making will be taken out of the hands of the ITTF as we know it at the moment. It will be passed over to a commercial company, which includes some of the current ITTF full time professional staff and senior personnel from the Chinese Association. This includes changing the format of international competitions, weakening the priority of the World Championships and awarding maximum status of the so called new Grand Smash events which would dominate the World Ranking. None of these are planned to be held in Europe, all in Asia or the Middle East, at least for the time being.

The changes to the ranking system would mean that there would be no points given for the World Team Championships going forward and this, combined with the main events being held outside Europe, would remove some of the incentive of some of our best players to represent England and make it much more difficult for our up and coming players to acquire

points for their World Ranking. This ranking system awards points for participation in the new big events and the stage the players reach in those events. The results between players are abandoned.

One of the main concerns is that the ITTF CEO, Steve Dainton, has a major conflict within the ITTF as he is the Director of WTT together with top officials from the Chinese Table Tennis Association. One of the consequences of the WTT is that the revenue from major ITTF events will go into the WTT rather than the ITTF and this will benefit the very top players in the world list, many of whom are Chinese, and the WTT company at the expense of the international table tennis community, including national associations and many of their national team players.

I have enclosed a copy of the ITTF reply to the German letter and I know discussions are going on at the moment between the ITTF officials and officials from the ETTU and representatives of some of the national associations in Europe.

Another unhelpful development that has been initiated by Mr. Dainton is the decision by the ITTF BoD to reduce the number of teams to be able to qualify for the World Team Championships down from 96 or 72 to just 32. This will apply after the next Team Championship. This means that our England Women's Team on their current standing are not likely to qualify, whilst the England Men's Team are fine for the time being. This is not guaranteed for the intermediate to long term future, it also has very negative ramifications from our friends in the Home Counties as the prospects of Scotland, Wales and Ireland being able to play in future World Team Championships looks slim.

As the democracy of the ITTF is being undermined and weakened by these moves, the future of the World Championship systems are being changed to our disadvantage and the prospects for our future players damaged. I believe that England should be prepared to stand up and be counted on this, along with many other National Associations, to protect the future of the sport internationally.

Bearing in mind the seriousness of all this, why is this matter not included in the reports that we have received for this meeting. I know that some of the senior Board Members have quite rightly been pre-occupied over the last few months in dealing with the effects of the virus and more recently in managing the Tony Catt matter, but I do feel that the above is important and does need attention.

My second concern, as raised at the last Council meeting, is that England and the rest of the UK for that matter, are now in their weakest position in terms of seats at the top table in the ITTF, than we have been in the whole 95 year history. As things currently stand, from later this year we will have no members on the Board of Directors, of the Executive Committee, Chairs of Key Committees or senior full time staff. This will be the first time this ever has been the case in the 95 year history of the ITTF.

I feel a great deal of responsibility lies with our Association. We were one of the founder members of the ITTF and have been a leader in terms of running the sport through Ivor

Montagu, who was President for the first 41 years, and in Wales, H. Roy Evans, who was President for 20 years until 1987.

I feel that we have allowed our prominence to slip and this is a matter that does require considerable consideration within our Association.

We do have strong representation within the European Table Tennis Union. We have Sandra Deaton elected to the Executive Board, Richard Scruton is in a key position at Secretary General and these are important roles within the ETTU. The ETTU role is the governance of table tennis in Europe and the organisation of the European competitions. The main power and decision makers within the sport is the ITTF who make all the decisions on the laws of the game and up to now have controlled all of the major world competitions and had major input into the Olympic Games Table Tennis competition and for that matter the Commonwealth Games Table Tennis competition.

To hand over most of this to a Commercial company with very different objectives is a matter of significant concern.

Alan Ransome OBE
Chairman