

## **Select Committee on Competitions Report to National Council**

The Select Committee on Competitions is made up of:

Alan Ransome – Chairman

Jonathan Bayliss

Karen Tonge

Lois Peake

### **Good Standing and Regulation Change**

For the last National Council meeting in June the Committee were very concerned about the potential break-up of the Competition programme due to the disbandment of the good standing arrangements and the new regulation change. Details of the good standing procedures introduced more than half a decade ago are detailed below.

However, the Committee is very pleased to learn that the Board have recognised the difficulties with the competition programme at the moment and have set up a separate special committee to look into all of this and look to find a solution to the problems that have developed.

We are aware that there are significant difficulties with the number of competitions at the moment and this, in fact, this is no surprise to the committee as we recognised that this was a distinct possibility over 18 months ago when we spent a significant amount of time and produced an 17-page document submitting proposals to avoid this, but unfortunately these were not given sufficient consideration.

The establishment of the good standing arrangements were formulated in the 1950/1960's. This principle was very valuable in that it gave approval to credible non-affiliated organisations who wanted to organise table tennis competitions, and affiliated members of ETTA could participate alongside non-members without there being any penalties. This has worked extremely well and a lot of different organisations have been encompassed like Lancashire and Cheshire Interleague, the VETTS Society, BUCS and organisations like Fire Brigade Sports Association, the English Schools Association are also members of good standing until they amalgamated with TTE recently. TTE has said IGS was redefined because it was 'dead' or 'meaningless', but in reality it was a mutually beneficial bond between members of the table tennis community to work together in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration.

Now TTE has lost its connection with some reputable organisation, including the highly respected, VETTS, whose members unanimously decided to maintain full independence from TTE rather than affiliate and come under the control of TTE.

A better approach would have been to have a discussion with the effected organisations to look for a way forward before cancelling the good standing arrangements.

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There have been some difficulties lately where officials who work with the VETTS Society have been threatened by TTE with sanctions against them if they operated in the VETTS programme, and this was compounded by the new contradictory and unworkable regulation change to restrict entries into closed tournaments from one county and players from outside that county would not be allowed to participate. This was also tied up with a Disciplinary case brought against Herefordshire tournament organiser, Simon Morgan. Fortunately the Disciplinary Committee found in favour of Mr. Morgan. But all this combined left us with grave concerns at how TTE is conducting itself in relation to volunteers and the regulation of our tournaments.

The introduction of the new regulations which if implemented would have a major effect on all the VETTS tournaments as they are closed events, was first apparent with the VETTS putting on one of their ranking tournaments at the Ormesby Club where the officials who were involved in running this competition were threatened with sanctions if they continued to operate.

After the Simon Morgan result, the Board stepped back from this and are considering all of this within their review. If this had continued then events like the Veterans Masters tournaments, which are hugely successful, would have been threatened, or at least the officials conducting these tournaments would have been in danger of losing their status with Table Tennis England.

#### Grand Prix Series and Senior 4 Star Tournaments

Table Tennis England Grand Prix Series which are being 5 Senior Tournaments played each season for a number of years that are geographically suitable venues throughout the country has gained in popularity over recent series. This series has been fully discontinued by the Table Tennis England competitions department for the current season.

These were Tournaments for Senior players of all levels and were very popular with the entry being closed before the final date. These have been replaced by the new Senior 4 star Tournament which were expected to be run by Counties Leagues or Clubs with the help of a small financial subsidy from Table Tennis England, up to now there's only been two that have appeared in the calendar, The Cambridge 4 star which was due to be held in August which had only two bands rather than the usual 6 in a Grand Prix. This was cancelled because the entry was lower than required, the projected loss was such a high level that neither TTE or the organisers were willing to meet this. Only remaining 4 star Tournament in the calendar is the Cleveland on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of May where this County association with its strong long standing local authority relationships were able to secure a hall at a venue at a much lower cost and due to other local support, Cleveland are able to go ahead without the prospect of a deficit. Cleveland are also planning to run the 6 bands and have produced a method of running the Tournament which complies with the regulations which substantially reduces costs.

There are no dates in the calendar now before Christmas, whilst there are some dates in the calendar in the New Year there are listed without a venue, so it looks as if the organisers are currently in place although we do understand some discussions have been taking place.

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The loss of the Grand Prix Series is serious so far as the Senior playing membership of Table Tennis England are concerned, and has left a huge gap in the competition programme a recommendation the only organisation which runs similar events to the Grand Prix's of the 4 stars are the VETS which are hugely popular amongst their members and often full as the VETS are purely a voluntary organisation, these events need to be financially viable. Discussion with the VETS on how this could be achieved may well result in a way forward which would avoid loss of this important part of the competition programme.

### New National Junior Series

The first National Junior series events were held on the Bank Holiday weekend of 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> August and from the feedback we have received there were a number of difficulties relating to this. One of our committee members, Jon Bayliss, was fully involved in this at the Draycott Club and has prepared a separate report which is an appendix A to this document.

One of the main points was the main method used to play this competition rather than having one central venue. The sections were divided into three venues with one being played at Draycott, another at St. Neots but the third at Plymouth, and the selection of Plymouth as a venue, particularly for players travelling from the north of England, was not well received as the costs were very significant.

If it was going to be split between the three venues, then it would have been better if they had all been in the central area which was previously, from a competition perspective, defined as Milton Keynes being furthest south and Sheffield being furthest north. Jonathan Bayliss' report provides much more detail.

There's also concern that there may be a negative effect on the Junior 4 star Tournaments as a result of the introduction of the new National Junior Series. This is because it's clear that families who's youngsters participating in the New National Series only have a limited budget and the addition of more events would put pressure on them. This could have the adverse effect.

### Difficulties and Confusion with the new National Cadet and National Junior League

There has been a major change of the National Cadet and National Junior League which has included a name change to Cadet and Junior British Clubs Leagues. The committee felt that in its previous presentation to National Council the organiser, who has been serving for many years in this capacity, Mike Atkinson, was doing a first class job with this competition and should remain under his management, however, this has been ignored and the changes are causing a great deal of difficulty.

One of the main problems up to now is trying to find how to enter the competition and this used to be very simple by filling a form in and sending it to Mike Atkinson but there has been huge difficulties even finding the entry form on the website for some clubs, and concern has

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been expressed to us by a number of senior volunteers involved in running these competitions that some entries for the coming season will be lost.

The Cadet British Clubs League (U15s) and Junior British Clubs League (U19s) have caused frustration and difficulties to many club volunteers this season. Trying to find the usual simple form to complete to register with fees was replaced by an on-line system. This defeated some clubs others then discovered it is an overnight process to link club to leagues; then the players in a team have to be registered with the team also an overnight process. This has not been the in practice situation as previously teams were entered then in the weeks before NJL or NCL started players in ranked order would be submitted to an organiser. If clubs were not open during the summer or players absent clubs struggle to list players by the early closing date of 16 September. Then if other players return to the club they cannot be changed in teams without contacting TTE for their staff to do the changes. Long term this may be of benefit but currently it has been difficult for clubs this year. Also the National Organiser states there will only be a set rate of £13 per team entered at a venue per each day. Hire fees at venues have increased so who is going to meet the shortfall if there is one?

**Comments received**

***a) We are hoping to enter both a cadet and a junior team but are struggling getting into our club membership online, hopefully have it sorted in time.***

***b) I would like to enter a team into the Junior league before the deadline later this week.***

***We have not entered a team in the junior league before. Last season we had one team in the cadet league and will be entering one or two this season in that league as well.***

***I have not used TT Leagues before. I looked at the video and it said contact Henry Arthur for getting started. Please advise asap as we do not wish to miss the deadline.***

***c) We have entered every year we couldn't find the usual entry form in the end we gave up and are not entering this year***

As members of National Council the Competition Select Committee are ready to be part of helping to provide a solution to these problems and would welcome the opportunity to engage with this latest review in a positive and collaborative manner to help to return the association to a workable competition programme.

**Alan Ransome OBE  
Chairman**

**17<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

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