

## National Council Paper

### Appendix A – Competition Report to NC

After a lengthy and positive conversation with Jon Bayliss regarding the Competition Report, I have included some responses to the summary of recommendations made in the paper. Jon makes some considered points and opinions on the National Series and we have discussed these at length over the last few months. The summary points made are recommendations and in some places are not required because they exist and are in place already or have already been addressed and not acknowledged in this summary.

I have offered responses to each of these explanations below and I hope that the Competition Select Committee and National Councillors take these on board in the context and spirit they are given. I have also had this conversation with Jon Bayliss over the phone as well.

So National Council are aware, the National Series will go through a process of evaluation after each round and a final evaluation at the end of the season, which will be used to make decisions on how this competition is refined. We expect refinements to be made. This won't be perfect first time out, but if we make changes or refinements it will be based on evidence and fact and the feedback of those involved as players, parents and coaches.

Please see below the committee's summary of recommendations to address the points outlined above:

**Venues:** Organise the venues in a more central location, either by selecting clubs or one central venue to run this competition, as to avoid the excessive travel the players, parents and coaches.

There are varying points of view on this with pros and cons to central venue or clubs hosting. At this time, clubs hosting provides an opportunity to showcase our best clubs and the amazing work that's put in by them. They have excellent facilities and are showcases of what the sport can achieve and having top level competitions delivered there elevates that event further. Each of those clubs also deliver the events with support from Table Tennis England and those that run them are highly experienced and dedicated volunteers.

I also understand and hear the argument about splitting parents and coaches etc but we need to understand the full impact of this and the numbers impacted on this. We did an initial analysis on the impact on players and parents after Round 1 and found there were no parents that had to be in different venues on the same day, 2 sets of parents had to be in different venues on two different days and 2 sets of parents at the same venue on different days. We will continue to monitor this after each round so we can get a full, factual picture of the level of impact on this. We will also do the same for coaches. Decisions on this will be taken using the evidence we gather and not on hearsay. If the data evidences that split venues starts impacting on big cohorts then going to a central venue will be seriously considered.

This topic will remain under consideration, however and we will evaluate this at the end of the event to understand the impacts.

**Improve communication:** Provide clear and complete information in the initial invitations, including venue address and start times. Communicate draw and fixture details at least two weeks before the event, using accessible channels beyond social media.

Steps are being put in place to refine this and ensure our communication is smoother and earlier and we expect this not to be an issue going forward. There were circumstances in Round 1 around additional invites and changes to the scheduling that delayed some communications, but we accept this could have been better and this will continue to improve and be part of the evaluation process.

**Avoid scheduling conflicts:** Select event dates that don't coincide with major bank holidays or other significant tournaments to maximise participation.

The clash with Euro Minis was unavoidable as this event was set late. Having it on a Bank Holiday is something we need to consider as we know it impacts on availability and access. This will be taken into consideration when setting the calendar for 25/26 and around the many other competitions that happen.

**Expand participation:** Invite up to 30 players for U13 events, implementing a reserve list to manage dropouts and ensure a robust level of competition.

Jon and I have discussed this at length. Based on feedback at the start, this was extended, and we listened but not every age group and gender have access to the same playing dept. We need to ensure the integrity of the competition is maintained as to the level of player that enters and that there's sufficient players to provide promotion and relegation. This is certainly an aspiration we should have as a sport as this means the sport is growing, our talent pool is deepening, and our interventions are working. The reality is that we are not yet at that point.

**Enforce mandatory attendance for performance players:** Table Tennis England Performance staff should mandate the attendance of England squad players to enhance the prestige of the event and improve match quality.

This already happens and is already the case and unless they have an exceptional circumstance or are in a WTT or international event then they have been asked to attend this event as a priority. This is for the Head of Table Tennis Performance to manage as he knows the players and their schedules the best. This recommendation is already in place.

**Clarify hosting expectations at the invitation stage:** Clearly outline venue, equipment requirements, and associated costs when inviting clubs to host, avoiding last-minute logistical challenges.

This is noted and taken on board and again something we can improve on. The events have evolved through the planning stages and this has been worked out through the process of Round 1 so I don't envisage this issue to come up again.

**Reintroduce relegation and promotion system:** Implement a consistent two-up, two-down system across divisions, with potential leniency for players attending during busy periods.

This principle already exists and where this doesn't happen will be because of absences or other exceptional circumstances but this principle remains fundamental to the event. The two-up, two-down is again the aspiration but where the operations of the event (absences, withdrawals etc) doesn't enable this to happen then this needs to be factored. This recommendation is already in place.

**Ensure Table Tennis England Performance Team presence:** Ensure representatives from the performance staff are present at all venues to monitor players and support event objectives.

This is already the case and the Head of Table Tennis Performance has committed to this. Attendance wasn't possible in Round 1 because of the Euro Minis and WTT commitments, but this will be the case going forward. This recommendation is already in place.

**Address ranking points transparency:** Ensure ranking points are promptly updated and communicated, and that they are reflected in the next ranking period to maintain trust and motivation among participants.

This was raised by Jon and it was explained that it was a system fault by our system provider and out of our control. This had been done and all ranking points were added from the start, so this point is incorrect as this did happen. The issue was the visibility which was down to the system fault out of our control. Jon explains this was dealt with, within about 5 minutes of being raised and he makes this point in the body of the text in the paper, so I fail to understand why this is included. This matter was dealt with as soon as it was raised and as such this shouldn't need to be a recommendation.

There was also a section in the main report regarding the sign-up process for Cadet BCL and Junior BCL and the issues arising from this. It is the same system that is used for the Senior, Women, Veterans and Youth BCL entries and was used in June for those entries. There has been c.150 team entries in Cadet BCL and anticipate c.225 Junior BCL and the vast majority have either happened without a hitch or have required small amounts of support, particularly for those that haven't used the system before. Some have required support around setting up but as a first-time user some of this is to be expected and won't be an issue again as they are now used to it. Only one club has had ongoing issues. A few have had issues, but staff have been on hand to support and walk clubs through the process and they now know this for next year.

This new online entry system now means we have removed the need for 400 separate hard-copy forms, 1,500 separate hard-copy player registrations and 400 cheques. Payments are quicker, the data capture is quicker overall, and this system modernises our approach and future-proofs it. We need to embrace technology that can streamline processes and enables us to reduce the time staff and volunteers spend on administrative processes. As with all technology everyone will work at a different pace but the crucial element here is they get the support from the team when there is difficulty.

I hope this all provides context to the recommendations and some of the issues raised in the Select Committee's paper.

Thanks

**Andrew Wilesmith**

**Head of Table Tennis Development**