

Select Committee on Competitions Report to National Council
25th January 2025

The Select Committee on Competitions is made up of:

Alan Ransome OBE – Chairman

Jonathan Bayliss

Karen Tonge OBE

Lois Peake

Good Standing

The Board disbanded the good standing arrangements last year which has resulted in both the VETTS Society and the BUCS University organisation losing their association with Table Tennis England. We expressed concern about this at the last meeting. This matter has now been considered by the Select Committee on the Constitution who are raising this matter with Council in their report. This committee supports the proposal from the Select Committee on the Constitution.

Loss of Control over the Competition Play in England

At the last meeting we also raised the question of other organisations stepping in to run competitions without approval or good standing, and effectively operating outside the national governing body. Our fear is TT365 and Simon Morgan and others doing the same thing.

We remain concerned about this and would like to see all of this returned to the way that it has been managed up to now since our inauguration approximately 100 years ago whereby all events are in some way associated with and recognised by Table Tennis England.

We would like to see measures taking place to return to the previous status quo.

Grand Prix and Senior 4 Star Tournaments

We have expressed concern at the discontinuation of the Grand Prix Series and at the same time the introduction of Senior 4 Star tournaments. It is clear that this move has not worked well in the first half of this season as the only county planning to run a 4 Star was Cambridge, and this event was cancelled due to the significant loss that would have been incurred.

The Board has set up a special committee under the Chairmanship of Ritchie Venner to look into this and other open tournaments. From their discussions the regulations have diluted to take potentially some of the cost away from running these tournaments. In particular replacing qualified umpires with Table Managers for the 4 Star tournament.

This can be a help for organisers who are in difficulty with formulating a budget which is not in deficit, but it does down grade the 4 Star tournaments from a status perspective, as having umpires is always important as with national tournaments.

However, Grand Prix did not have a large number of umpires so this has reduced the 4 Star level down to Grand Prix level which may help to create tournaments which can go ahead. Whilst nothing has been confirmed as yet, there is a slot in the calendar for a 4 Star in

Nottingham in March which we understand is going ahead which will mean there will be two this season, as Cleveland are committed to a 4 Star at the beginning of May.

The prospects are better for next season as we understand that, in addition to Cleveland, and presumably Nottingham, there is the prospect of a Senior 4 Star in Yorkshire. Hopefully, new arrangements with the reduction of umpires will help other organisations to come forward.

Changes have also been made to the 1 and 2 Star tournaments to reduce the level of regulation associated with these competitions which should also be helpful.

National Junior Series

This competition has been introduced for the first time in the coming season and there has been significant negative feedback about the competition which is being run at club venues which require very long distance journeys for some competitors. There has also been a problem with many invited players not being able to accept the invitation which has weakened the playing standard. We have been concerned about the level of cost associated with these single day competitions for the players and the crowding of the calendar which can have a negative effect on other important junior and cadet competitions.

We understand that this is all being reviewed in connection with the Talent and Performance Advisory Committee. Playing all of the competitions in a single central venue and reducing the competition to three single days rather than four or changing a number of players in each group to play two day weekends would be an improvement.

For players who need to travel a long distance to the club venue, the full weekend would give better value.

We welcome that 30 players in each age category are invited and, therefore, this is wider than the previous top 10 competitions. We believe that this is beneficial.

Difficulties and confusion with National Cadet and National Junior League, now called the Cadet British Club League and the Junior British Club League

We raised concern in our last report about the problems that occurred with entries for the above competitions. This is now obviously behind us as the Leagues have started. The introduction of Sport 80 for logging the results is a benefit and thanks go to Neil Hurford on the amount of time he has spent helping organisers with this process.

Our recommendation to the Competition Department is to review the method of entry for next year to make it less complicated and more straight forward as we believe that this will encourage more entries, and that the website for these events is easier to access.

Junior British Club League

We have expressed concern in the past about the regulation that prohibits any players who play in the National Cadet and National Junior from playing in the Youth British League. We can understand with regard to boy's standards where the better boys would be too dominant in the lower standard competition, but with girl's it is not the case as this is a mixed competition where boy's and girl's play each other.

Where the boys from the Youth British Club League would be too strong, it is felt that this would not be the case with the girls outside the top 10 ranked players and allowing these lower ranked players to play in both the Cadet British Club League, the Junior British Club League as well as the Youth League, formerly described as Junior British League would not be a problem.

Discussions have been ongoing with the Competition Department for some time with regard to this and we are hopeful that girls outside the top 10 will be permitted to play in both competitions in the coming season.

National Qualifiers

We have raised in the past about the National Senior Qualifier competition being separate from the National Championships, and not attracting a large number of senior players ranged between 30 and 100 in the senior lists due to the time and expense commitment required with this system. Previously, qualification for the National Championships was held on the day before the National Championships which encouraged these players to come to the event to try to qualify but to stay for the rest of the weekend, and we believe that this was a far better system than the one that is operating at the moment and should be reconsidered.

In addition, we are concerned about the qualification method which is used. In the girls' competition, of the 38 entries 32 qualified from the first days play and then one single sudden death match in the last 32 decide whether they qualify on the Sunday with the rest of Sunday's play being of very little benefit other than identifying the final two places and the reserve list in the 2nd round.

The men's competition received for the year 120 entries with the top two qualifying for the last 32. The reduction from 32 needed to be reduced down to 14 qualifiers was achieved by the first round sudden death matches which reduced it to 16 and two more were reduced in the second round. The remainder of the matches during the day were purely a knock-out to decide the winner of the competition. Similar to the women's competition consideration for a better system should be considered.

We believe there is a far better system which will give a fairer outcome from the qualification event, and this should be considered in future, if the separate competition continues.

County Championship

In an extension to the County Championships, age categories is being considered and some Counties have been asked for their opinion on this. The suggestion is to run County Championships at U13 and U11 age groups and this falls in with the proposals from Gavin Evans to improve the standard of play at U12 and similar age categories. The Committee's view is that the U13 competition could be beneficial, but felt the U11 was too early.

Senior National League

There is also an extension being considered by the Competitions Department for the Senior National League. One of the recommendations that we put together as National Council Select Committee was to extend the divisions below Championship from getting playing days to 10 with the objective of giving more play and more value to the British League clubs as we had received a lot of feedback to say that it has become very expensive and, therefore, by adding more play it improved the value as well as the competition.

Our proposal was to extend these competitions to 5 weekends (10 days) rather than 3 ½ weekends (7 days) as at present.

The Championship Division has already moved to this 4 or 5 years ago and this is now played in Nottingham and is proving successful. The rest of the divisions could be moved in the same way but consultation has gone out to the clubs regarding this as there are two factors. One is the possibility of the host venues being able to play with 5 tables with the correct conditions rather than 4, and the opinion of the clubs to play the extra days. Subject to getting agreement from the venues and majority of the clubs, we believe that this would be a good step in the right direction and are pleased that the Competition Department have followed this suggestion.

Alan Ransome OBE
Chairman
National Council Select Committee on Competitions

8th January 2025