

## Select Committee on Competitions Report to National Council

27<sup>th</sup> September 2025

The Select Committee on Competitions members:

Alan Ransome – Chairman

Jonathan Bayliss

Karen Tonge

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### Junior and Girls Performance

I regret to have to report to National Council that our bid to improve the competition programme for the junior and cadet girls for the coming season has not met with any success. The decision that came from the Competitions Department was to suggest a compromise, but the compromise that was suggested was of no use and not practical, as it means that the very talented young girls have to make a choice between playing in the Youth BCL, and assuming they are at Cadet level, both the Junior BCL and the Cadet BCL, which has the opportunity to play 8 days of good competitive table tennis in their home region, as it is a mixed competition, or 4 days in the Youth BCL, and the former competition is much more cost effective.

The Select Committee were looking for the opportunity for the girls to play in the Youth BCL as well as the Junior and Cadet BCL, which would have been significant help in their improvement path, which is really needed when you consider the standard of our junior and cadet girls as they both failed to qualify for the top 16 team places in the recent European Youth Championship.

Our proposal had the support of Gavin Evans, Performance Director; Don Parker, Chair of the Talent and Performance Advisory Committee on Performance; and Ritchie Venner, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Competitions. Nevertheless, this was not successful with the Competitions Department.

This remains necessary going forward, so we will continue to press for this again for the next season. It is quite clear that the needs of the Performance Department and the decisions of the Competitions Department are not on the same page. This does not help in the objective of improving the standard of girls' table tennis in England and improving our position in the female world rankings.

### Qualification for the Youth BCL

The Committee were disappointed to find that there were 14 club teams whose entry for the Youth BCL was not accommodated by the British Club League Committee.

The policy under the previous Chairman has always been to work to accept all of the entries for the BCL competitions, even to the extent of arranging a second venue which was introduced for the Veterans competition at the Draycott Club and has been repeated for the junior competitions. This season there was a need to accommodate extra entries an extra venue would have been required, but there did not appear to be any attempt by the British Club League Committee to provide this play for the 14 teams. Colleagues from Derbyshire feel they would have been able to find a solution for this if they had been asked. In the Select

Committee's view, the policy should go back to where it was under the previous Chairman where the Committee tries to accommodate and facilitate all entries for the British Club League rather than leaving ambitious clubs without the opportunity to play.

Another difficulty with the Youth BCL is the system used for qualification which goes entirely off the junior ranking list. There are two problems with this. The first one is that it benefits players who live in an area where there are a larger number of tournaments where ranking points are more easily available, which in turn is a disadvantage to the areas like the South West, North West and North East where there are fewer tournaments.

The second problem is that the policy of the Performance Department is to concentrate on helping players between 8 and 13 to grow in standard to make future England teams, as with the positive Pathway Development programme, but the ranking points for the Youth BCL are only at the junior U19 level. You can have very talented youngsters who have not been playing very long and have not competed in many junior competitions, unable to build up sufficient points to win entry to the Youth British Club League at present .

We believe this whole system requires a review as it affects the National Series as well.

#### Excess entries in Senior British Club League

Similar to the Youth BCL above, there were more entries for the Senior British Club League this year than the current system could facilitate. The decision from the British Club League Committee was to leave 11 club entries without participation, as well as not facilitating an opportunity in Plymouth to extend the British Club League into the deep South West.

Following intervention from the club's and additional entries being recruited by the clubs, the British Club League Committee did facilitate two new D Divisions, one in the north and one in the south, which solved this problem. If it had not been for the initiative from the clubs, these teams would have been without competition this year.

Another problem with the Senior British Club League was that Plymouth applied to be the host and was rejected because of their location. Clubs in the South West, therefore, have taken their own initiative and set up their own British Club League.

Why couldn't the British Club League Committee itself have taken up this initiative and brought the Plymouth venue into the fold, particularly when Plymouth offered the venue at no cost to the Committee and recruited more teams from the South West?

What we are recommending is that there should be a change of policy where the committee works to find a solution to accept all of the entries rather than follow a rigid system, and those who are unlucky do not have the opportunity of participating, and this needs to be reviewed by the Competition Advisory Committee.

#### Changes to Competition Regulations

There has been another round of regulation changes for this season which is creating significant difficulties with 1 Star and 2 Star tournament organisers in reaching agreement and meeting the requirements to stage their tournaments. This has created extra work for the voluntary officials who are trying to carry out this work.

The major problem seems to have been caused by TAP Committee now being required to check up that the County Officials signing the forms are 'active' and current members of TTE. This is out of the control of the Tournament Organisers and they are in despair as they are new to tournament organising. Surely TTE should have made Counties aware of this significant change. Many county officials don't renew membership until their local league starts; there have been problems updating county officials on Sport80; in one case a National Councillor on the official TTE NC list was regarded as ineligible to sign as 'not active' as the county database had not been updated.

### Loss of Control

The Committee still remains very concerned about the apparent lack of progress with looking to resolve the recent loss of control of much of the tournament programme. As we reported to the previous Council meeting, the VETTS Association is not now in good standing and has effectively left the orbit of the Association, and so have the British universities. We are finding more and more competitions are being organised outside the orbit of the Association, and in particular with Simon Morgan in Herefordshire, who continues to run good competitions, and Matchpoint, who are organising prize money at competitions in different clubs and venues.

Because of this there are now three different ranking lists.

There have been discussions with Sally Lockyer in regard to this, and Sally understands our concern and would like to find a solution. The problem is that this has now been going on for several months, and the longer it takes to solve this the more difficult it is going to become. The Select Committee believes that solutions are not difficult provided the Association follows the routes that were established and worked well for recent decades rather than looking to implement changes which are not acceptable to organisations and these organisers that should be our partners.

### Grand Prix and 4 Star tournaments

As Council is aware, Grand Prix were discontinued by the Association two seasons ago, and there were only two 4 Stars last season, neither of which were entirely satisfactory, although the one in Cleveland did run well, but the entry was not large or strong.

For this season, in the calendar there are only two 4 Star's. Sussex which took place last weekend had a good entry, however, the Committee have received varying reports about the quality of the event. The second one is again Cleveland, which could have the same problem as last year in terms of the strength of the entry. One reason for this is that it was right at the end of the season in May, but this year it is even later due to the dates of the World Championship.

The problem is that there is not a serious tournament competition programme for the players in the top 50 – 100 men and women rankings. There are ample 1 and 2 Star's but these tournaments are small in the main and not at the level of the Grand Prix. Tournaments at Grand Prix level have been a standard feature of the English tournament calendar since the 1960's and it is only in the last 2 years, since the decision of the Competition Department to abandon the Grand Prix, which has created this void. It could be that the larger interest in the British Club League, the County Championships has improved because of the lack of tournaments but that is not really the point because it is important we have a strong

tournament competition programme. At the present time it is the poorest ever, and we are going back as long as members can remember.

#### Changes to Competition Regulations

We have reported previously that there have been problems with the changes to regulations which is part of the reason for the loss of control and the incentives for tournament organisers to proceed outside the orbit of the Association.

However, we are disappointed to report that this matter is becoming even more difficult as more regulations have been introduced this summer, which is making it more difficult for tournament organisers to go ahead with their event and planning. This is to do with people who approve and sign-off from a local perspective the tournaments needing to be registered as TTE, and many of these people are not TTE listed, the organisers and volunteers involved in the tournament have significantly more work to do to start the organising process, and the Select Committee believes that all of this is completely unnecessary. Therefore, it is becoming a problem for those who are doing their best to make tournaments work.

#### Cost of Entry Fees

The Committee is also concerned about the escalating cost of entry fees. The current entry fee for a club to enter the British Club League is £780. When some of the teams were not permitted to enter this year so there were attempts to set up a separate British Club League for those clubs affected. This meant that clubs who were able to host a British Club League competition were able to offer this for approximately half the cost, while providing all of the League benefits except ranking points.

Equally, the cost of entering the Junior British Club League and the Cadet British Club League have escalated over the years and is now up to £105 and this in itself can be a barrier to clubs with young players wanting to participate. The Advisory Committee are also asked to have a look at this and see why clubs can organise British Club League can do it for £400 while the Association needs to charge £800 for almost the same competition.

The Select Committee is subject to election at the upcoming National Council meeting and all members are willing to stand for a further term.

Alan Ransome (Chairman)

Karen Tonge

Jon Bayliss

Lois Peake

**Alan Ransome OBE**

**Chairman**

**On behalf of the**

**National Council Select Committee on Competitions**

16<sup>th</sup> September 2025