

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held online on Thursday 3rd March 2022

In attendance were Ian Sidgwick (President), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Mike Wignall (Treasurer), Patrick Shields (Secretary), Jan Bailey, Richard Butland, Hylary Kingham, Nigel Mortimer. Roger Williams – plus Alan Wearmouth as chair of the REC. Apologies were received from Andrew Bull.

Report from Chief Tournament Director

1. We went over the arguments for and against seeding in the County Knock-Out. In its favour was the commonality of the practice in sports (including bridge), and the fact that it improved the County's chances of success in the Pachabo. On the other side, it increased the chances of success (and prizes) for the already established teams and lessened the chance of a new team breaking through. A vote was taken and it was agreed not to seed the County Knock-Out. The draw for this year's event was then made.
2. Patrick noted that it was time for the planned review of our online vs face-to-face policy for GCBA games. He suggested that at this time the appetite for F2F games is low and prospects of achieving decent numbers on a Monday night are non-existent. He proposed therefore to hold back and to introduce a regular once-a-month F2F game from June, but whether it should be weekend or weekday evening is an open question. Richard expressed concern about the long-term role of a County Association when it runs few face-to-face (ie geography-based as opposed to online) competitions. The committee agreed with the overall analysis but liked the suggestion that the GCBA heat of the County Pairs should take place face-to-face at Cheltenham BC on the evening of Monday 11th April, and that will now be arranged.
3. We agreed to submit for the same Green Point day applications in 2023 as in years gone by. Mike reminded us to keep an eye on any financial commitments associated with the venue for the Cheltenham Congress.

Update from the Representative Events Committee

4. Alan reported that the REC had met recently, and that the Porter team in the MCL had a good chance of winning its division (and the other two teams were performing respectably too). There has been enough positive feedback to encourage the GCBA to enter a team (of eight+) for the President's Cup – to be held online in July, and organised by the Merseyside & Cheshire CBA. The cost is £158 for the team, and a charge of £10 per player per day looks appropriate.

Finance

5. Mike had no news to give. We discussed the need to start the search for a replacement as Treasurer as our Constitution forces Mike to stand down at the next AGM.

Meeting of GCBA and Clubs

6. We had put this on hold, but with spring coming it is time to make plans. Hylary indicated that Tibberton Village Hall might be a nice and affordable locations, although it is very much at the North-West corner of the county. Using that location encourages the idea of thinking of the county as comprising various clusters of clubs (East and South in addition to North-West). From the discussion it was unclear whether everyone had the same expectations as to the purpose of the meeting, and we agreed to discuss and clarify this at the next meeting. The candidates which were voiced were
 - a. To show that the GCBA is not fully Cheltenham-centric and can run events in other venues.
 - b. To increase the visibility of the GCBA and what it offers to all clubs.
 - c. To help clubs, and help clubs help each other, on any ventures they wish to undertake to promote the game.

Report from Club Buddies

7. Most buddies had failed to take any action, but Ian reported that in the North-East of the county all clubs are back playing face-to-face [see front page of website for a full list] albeit with numbers about two thirds of pre-Covid days. They share a concern about the lack of recruitment.

Teaching and the EBU Recruitment Drive

8. Ian reported that development of Smart Bridge continues and the current plan is for a pilot to be run in the county of Kent (at least) in the Easter timeframe – after which (sometime in the summer) the course would be available to all counties. It was noted that alternative online training already exists.
9. It was noted that in the Cheltenham BC teaching programme, the newcomers were being introduced to online play and how to arrange casual/practice sessions and they were very keen on these.
10. The Schools Bridge initiative is resolutely limping forward despite Covid, and Alison Nicolson will soon invoice the GCBA for the DBS charges being invoked (£10 per head). Woodmancote Primary School is starting an after-school bridge club.
11. Nigel reported there had been some hesitancy about face-to-face learning when it was restarted at Tudor BC (in the autumn) but it is now fully established and has some spare capacity.

OTHER BUSINESS

12. Ian reported on the EBU sponsored County Chairs meeting of 23rd February, at which nothing radical emerged – strong feelings were expressed about limitations/charges on County Green Point online events, and the Yorkshire CBA has developed a new set of 10 introductory, online, lessons. Ian has been asked to take charge of the next County Chairs meeting in May.
13. The success in the Tollemache (for which the committee offered its congratulations) and the picture on face-to-face bridge were identified as items for the next GCBA newsletter.
14. The next meeting will be on Thursday 7th April 2022 at 1800 hrs.
15. Reminder for next time: we must settle the date for the AGM and decide whether it is better face-to-face (as traditionally) or online (where it might get a better attendance).

THE END