



Newsletter No: 7

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Over the last few weeks I have heard and received comment about the need to advance its work on reviewing the ranking system. Many feel that the current system does not address the playing environment. Last week the Board had a relatively brief meeting to receive the report from the taskforce on rankings, grading and handicapping. I would like to thank the members of the taskforce and the many that contributed.

We have asked the taskforce to do some additional work. In the meantime the Board thought it would be good if we shared the main points of the report. As previously reported, the taskforce was formed in 2015 to look at the workings and effectiveness of the nationwide tournament schedule. In 2017 the grading system was added to the taskforce review work and in 2018 handicaps were added. In addition to meetings, exchanges of ideas and an extensive survey of players the taskforce has reviewed the grading/handicap system in several countries.

We have been told on a number of occasions that the current grading system is:-

- * Too complicated for a large number of junior and intermediate players.
- * A simpler system is desirable as well as making information available in a simple form.
- * A significant number of intermediate players feel they are graded to high too soon.
- * High support (70%) from lower graded Open players to have the open grade split into two levels.
- * Widespread criticism received on the advancement to open level through length of play and reaching local master 5 stars.

Subject to more work being undertaken by the taskforce there is a strong belief that we would benefit from a national handicap system. Golfers amongst us would appreciate the benefit (if not perfect) of a national handicap system. The advantages to us of a national bridge handicap system are:-

- * Clubs have ad hoc arrangements and have requested help.
- * A handicap system could be used as a basis for determining "current form" for grading.
- * Neutralises inflated grading by measuring results from standard of actual group playing any session.
- * Aid to prize giving/groupings at tournaments.
- * Addresses the issues raised by players.
- * A system would be fairer and reflect current ability.
- * We can dispense with the current grading system.



* In the future we would only have two measures of performance - current ability (handicap system) and lifetime achievement (rank).

Of course there are some challenges to be considered. Namely cost, the development and hosting of a system, education and rolling out such a system.

Of all the systems reviewed by the taskforce the handicap system operated by the English Bridge Union best meets our needs.

So where to from here. Further work by the taskforce including ongoing discussions with the EBU, development considerations, developing a discussion document.

The intention is to complete the above as quickly as possible and put in place a 6 month trial to iron out any bugs. All being well we would have a fully operational handicap system up and going for 2020. That seems a long way away but there is a considerable amount of work to get there.

Unfortunately we are a little behind schedule on reviewing the constitution. We will nevertheless have work ready for discussion at the National Conference on 15 July.

Hopefully shortly after that we will have a briefing paper available for consideration.

The Board next meets on the 17th July following the National Conference on the 15th July. I am sure there will be plenty to share following those two meetings.

In the meantime enjoy your Bridge.

Cheers

Allan