

SUFFOLK COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the SCCA Committee Meeting

Held on line via Microsoft Teams on 25th November 2024, 7:30 - 8:30.

Present: President – Simon Wilks (SW)
Vice President – Piotr Dolewka (PD)
Secretary – John McAllister (JM)
Treasurer – Anthony Taylor (AT)
County U1850 Team Captain – Bob Jones (BJ)
Internet Officer – Steve Lovell (SL)

1. Apologies for absence

Competitions Secretary – Sam Gaffney (SG)
County First Team Captain – Steve Ruthen (SR)

2. Minutes of the last SCCA Committee Meeting 12th August 2024

Minutes of the previous committee meeting were circulated before the meeting and accepted as correct.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Treasurer's Report

AT confirmed that he now has full access to both of the SCCA bank accounts. Their current balances are - deposit: £1003, current: £1352.

He has sent out invoices to all affiliated clubs for this season totalling £653 and reported that all have been paid in full.

There are two outstanding invoices awaiting payment by the SCCA. The first is £60 from the ECF for non-registered players that have played in SCCA events. These are players from Felixstowe, Woodbridge and Ipswich at £18 each, and £6 from Suffolk Juniors, whose treasurer was unknown to him. PD asked who this junior was as he believed he may be an Ipswich player and was told it was Alex Bujnowski. PD confirmed this was an Ipswich player and the charge should therefore be made to Ipswich.

PD reported that a charge for Adam Wilson was being challenged because his membership expired at the end of May and he renewed it after the summer and has had it for the whole of the season. AT wondered if we should withhold payment of this invoice until this challenge was resolved, but the committee agreed that the invoice should be paid in full, and that if any overpayment has been made it can be deducted from next year's invoice. BJ suggested that there may have been some confusion due to rolling membership, which gives membership for a calendar year based on when it is taken out, not membership for the coming season. AT requested that he be notified of the outcome of this challenge, PD took an action to do so (AP26).

The second invoice is for £328 from the EACU, comprising the levy for the 24/25 season £70, entry of two teams £48, hire of the King Edwards VII Hall £225. AT said he had consulted the previous treasurer who advised him that as we had only entered one team instead of two that the invoice should be less than £200, but as only one item refers to two teams he was unsure if this was correct. BJ pointed out that we had started the season declaring that we would enter two teams, and the fact that we could not raise a team for the first match was our fault. The cost of the venues etc would have been committed to based on us entering two teams and if we refuse to pay the invoice, our share of those costs would have to be divided among the other three counties.

The consensus was that we had a moral obligation to pay our share of the venue costs (£225), but that AT should deduct £24, explaining to the EACU that this is because we withdrew one of our teams.

5. Competition Secretary's Report

SG was unable to attend but sent the following written report;

I've penalised two teams so far this season. There was some confusion between P-ratings and estimated ratings in a Felixstowe B match leading them to break the 80pts rule. Bury D fielded a player who'd already played for Bury B in Division 2.

The prison teams couldn't play their Div 3 rapidplay matches. Hollesley Bay weren't prepared and at Warren Hill, Ian was too busy at HMP Bedford to arrange the team.

I've raised a question about how fair the Handicap Rapidplay rules are when teams default.

SW explained that the question was regarding fairness, and arose because of the result of the Felixstowe v Woodbridge match, which Woodbridge won on the handicap but they defaulted board one. The consequence of that was that the ratings for that board were excluded from the Woodbridge mean, but included for the Felixstowe mean, and as the Felixstowe player was rated 2193, it inflated their average, meaning that they had a much higher bar to reach. Had Felixstowe's board one also been excluded from the Felixstowe mean then Felixstowe would have won, and there seemed to be an unfairness in this outcome. PD had looked into this result and agreed that it was unfair. SW went a little further saying that it opens the opportunity for gamesmanship and gave the example that had Woodbridge informed Felixstowe in advance that they were defaulting on board one, and Felixstowe put in someone rated 1593 instead of Peter Gemmell at 2193, then that would have brought their mean down by 150 a head, which changes a lot on the handicap.

SW stated that he had sent SG a reply stating his view, which he felt should be circulated among the committee so that it could be discussed to decide whether a rule change was needed. This was agreed (AP27).

BJ understands that Mark Weidman of Felixstowe is preparing an appeal about the result. SW stated that SG believes that the rules have been applied correctly but that it feels unfair, and that an appeal would have to be dealt with based on the rules as they are.

6. Clarification of Rules

Rule 3.2 has a typo - “than” should be “then” and this will be corrected and notified to the SCCA at the AGM. However the purpose of this rule was questioned by JM. It was suggested that it was to prevent the extension of the season, but JM stated that if a team’s final match was March 1st, rescheduling a match after that would not extend the season so why not specify a date? After further discussion BJ explained that the real purpose of the rule was not to prevent the season extending, but to prevent behaviour that would impact promotion and relegation issues, although he also stated that sometimes the schedule includes fixtures that this rule is designed to prevent.

PD stated that he once had to reschedule a match after the last one, which SG agreed to, and suggested that we change this rule such that any request to reschedule a match after the last one needs the Competition Secretary’s approval, explaining that postponing a match between teams in the same club should not happen, but why should teams from different clubs not be allowed to do so? SW suggested that most clubs would probably not want the Competition Secretary to be able to allow a match after the last match of the season as it would lead to situations where gamesmanship could be perceived.

JM posed a situation where an emergency prevented the penultimate match of the season taking place and it could not be rescheduled before the final match, should it be cancelled altogether? BJ stated in such situations, the team unable to fulfil the original fixture would be defaulted 4-0. He also stated that he didn’t think it wise to have an end of season date, it is more important not to have two teams competing for something like relegation playing each other at the end of the season. JM pointed out that sometimes the two teams vying for promotion or for the championship are playing their match as the last one of the season, and that makes it even more exciting, quoting Bury v Manningtree a few seasons ago, so he didn’t see why this should be prohibited. BJ pointed out, but if the two teams were from the same club then that would be different. After much discussion the committee agreed that if teams are from different clubs making their match the last one of the season is not a problem, and that therefore this rule should only be applied to teams from the same club. A proposal to the effect would be put before the AGM (AP28).

The application of Rule 8 was questioned. SL believed this was for the Suffolk Individual Closed competition that used to be run by Tim Lunn, but hasn’t been run for some time. It is invitation only. SW suggested that if there is no possibility of this competition being resurrected should it not be made clear that this rule applies only to the Suffolk Individual Closed competition? BJ pointed out that the rule is for “Individual” competitions, so if the SCCA were to run a different individual competition in the future, then this rule should apply to it. This was agreed and the rule would be left as it is. In conclusion SL found 8.3 curious and wondered what “home player” meant in the context of his rule. Nothing conclusive was determined and SL suggested contacting Tim Lunn for his views.

A typo in 11.3 was discovered and this would be corrected at the next AGM.

7. Proposed Rule Changes from the Committee

Competition Rule 5.2. Change “mid-season” to “January”

Competition Rule A1.7 - Insert “only” between “make” and “one” and change “for another team” to “across all other teams”.

JM explained these are the changes agreed at the start of the season to put to the next AGM.

8. Proposed Changes to the Constitution from the Committee

Clause 9. First sentence. Replace “Treasurer” with “SCCA”.

It is not usual or necessary for administrative arrangements to be specified in a Constitution. The process for changing an administrative matter should not be so cumbersome as to require a resolution at a General Meeting. The treasurer does not normally deal with the trophies and would therefore be entirely dependent on others for information as to their whereabouts.

This was agreed and would be put to the AGM.

9. Review of the SCCA Child Welfare Policy.

JM reported that the ECF have requested that all county associations provide them with contact details of their safeguarding officer. BJ said he had tried on numerous occasions since May to arrange a meeting with Tim Kent via email and text but has received no reply. He will make further attempts to contact Tim as he is seen as the ideal candidate for this role and we do not have any one else willing take it on.

He will make further attempts by telephone or a knock on his door if necessary.

10. Review of Action Points

AP 24 ongoing.

AP 25 completed.

11. AOB

BJ expressed his disappointment at the way the county first team has gone this season, and feels that although SR continued in the role of captain, he was doing so under some duress because he had already resigned but no one else had come forward to take over, and as a result SR had lost the motivation necessary to do the job well. BJ had already approached SR at the start of the season and suggested using some of the strong players in the U1850 squad who would be willing to play if he couldn't get sufficient regular first team players, but SR turned the offer down as he didn't consider those players strong enough. This proved to be a mistake for when the first round took place, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire had ten players between them that were under 1850.

SL stated that he had offered his help at the start of the season to do the job on a rota basis, and was told that BJ would step in. It was seen as very unfair that BJ should manage both teams, and SL's offer was declined. The committee as a whole find the current situation quite appalling and renewed efforts were needed to find a suitable team captain, who does not necessarily have to be one of the stronger players, a non-playing captain is not uncommon.

SW took and action to write to all of the clubs regarding this matter, stressing that the role is not restricted to strong players, it just requires someone with the motivation and organisational skills to go with it (AP29).

PD raised the issue of defaults and requested that the committee give consideration to ways these can be reduced. It was quite a problem last season and PD explained that in the first two months of this season we have had examples of matches where two or

three boards were defaulted from one team. These have a significant impact on the competition. Occasional defaults cannot be eliminated but teams that constantly default boards shows there is something wrong somewhere. PD stated that he doesn't have a solution to the problem but urged the committee, but raised the matter for the committee to think about ways to prevent this.

BJ suggested perhaps a financial penalty, but recognised that for larger clubs defaults are not as big a problem. SL thought that if such a penalty was imposed there should be discretion to waive it should the default be due to a car breakdown etc. PD cited that one of the reason for many defaults was probably the travelling distances, but it could also be an indication of a lack of care.

SW explained the difficulty Saxmundham are having this season due to a death in the club, illness among others and some giving up the game altogether. These factors have contributed to a marked number of defaults on their behalf.

At this point the Teams session ended, but as there were no other items on the agenda, the meeting was not re-started.

12. Date and venue of next SCCA Committee Meeting

TBA

SUMMARY OF ONGOING ACTION POINTS

AP24. BJ to liaise with Tim Kent to review the SCCA Child Protection Policy.

AP26. PD to inform AT of the outcome of the challenge regarding Adam Wilson's ECF membership.

AP27. SW to circulate his views on the rapid play handicap issue for discussion regarding any future rule changes.

AP28. The committee to draft an amendment to rule 3.2 such that it is only applicable to teams from the same club.

AP29. SW to write to all clubs in the SCCA, explaining the need for a first team captain, what the role requires and an appeal for clubs to look among themselves for a suitable candidate.

PROPOSALS FROM THE COMMITTEE TO PUT TO THE AGM

Competition Rule 5.2. Change "mid-season" to "January"

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