

CHELTENHAM WHADDON BOWLING CLUB

PROPOSAL TO RESTRUCTURE SHORT MAT TRIPLES & PAIRS LEAGUES FOR 2024-25

A few weeks ago I outlined some difficulties with the Short Mat leagues that had emerged over the winter and suggested some solutions. I then set up a poll on the Short Mat WhatsApp group to get an idea of how people felt about my suggestions. Based on the results of that poll and what people have been telling me in person, I am proposing the following changes to arrangements for and formats of short mat leagues for next season.

Triples

- a. Players enter individually and do not form their own teams.
- b. Teams selected as for Waghorne's Trophy: players divided into 3 separate pools, based on short mat performance in this year's leagues. We may need to set up a small selection committee to ensure the allocation to pools is fair.
- c. Select teams of 4 players. There would then be no need for substitutes: if a player is unavailable or ill, you already have cover. We may need a rule to ensure each player gets a similar number of games. e.g maximum number of games for any individual player.
- d. As now, you can play in whatever order you decide, you may even swap during a game, provided you inform the other team.
- e. Format unchanged: 12 ends, 2 bowls per player.

Pros:

- Drawing teams of mixed ability should result in more evenly balanced teams and therefore better competition.
- No pressure to play every game.
- Fewer games on calendar means more evenly spaced games and spare capacity for postponements.

Cons:

- You won't play as many games.
- Some team members may not get a fair share.

Example of how this might work:

40 players sign up to play triples (about the number we have now). Players are split into 3 pools: 10 in 'best player' pool, 10 in 'next best', remaining 20 in the third pool. Draw 1 player each from first 2 pools, 2 from third, to form 10 teams of 4. All play each other once = 9 games. To ensure every player gets a fair share: 9 games x 3 players = 27 available slots, then divide by 4 (number of players in team). 3 players could play a maximum of 7 games, one would play 6.

Pairs

- a. Players enter individually and do not form their own teams.
- b. Teams selected as for regular outdoor pairs competition: players divided into 2 pools (arbitrarily called 'skips' and 'leads'), based on short mat performance in this year's leagues, and one from each pool is drawn to form teams. A simple way to divide players might be to put current Division 1

players into one pool, Division 2 into the second (may need one or 2 adjustments for which we could use the selection committee as for Triples).

- c. Split teams into 2 groups with equal number of teams (not a league structure with Division 1 and 2 and promotion/relegation). Each team would play all the other teams in the same group once, as we do now.
- d. At the end of the season, hold a play-off involving the top 2 or 3 teams from each group. For top 2 teams the play-off should look like the example below. It's more complicated for 3 teams but is still possible.

Example Play-off

Qualifier 1: Winner Group A v. Winner Group B – winner straight to final, loser to Qualifier 2

Eliminator: Runner up Group A v. Runner up Group B

Qualifier 2: Loser of Qualifier 1 v. Winner of Eliminator

Final: Winner Qualifier 1 v. Winner Qualifier 2

- e. Format: 3 bowls per player, 10 ends.
- f. There would still be an occasional need for substitutes and as now you would be able to use any qualified member, provided they are not a member of a team in your group (some people volunteer to be a reserve player). Since we are trying to produce evenly matched teams, it makes sense to have a further restriction: that if you use a player from the other group, the replacement must be from the same or lower ability pool (i.e. you could not replace a player from the 'lead' pool with someone from the 'skip' pool).

Pros:

- Drawing teams of mixed ability should result in more evenly balanced teams and therefore better competition.
- Playoff system gives the highest placed teams more chances to get to the final and the games will fit easily into a 'finals night'.
- Fewer end changes should reduce the time needed to play games, even though it's the same number of bowls as our current format (15 ends, 2 bowls), which often overruns the 45 minutes allowed.

Cons:

- Slightly more complicated to run for the organiser.
- You can't choose your partner.

I have submitted this plan to the Committee for their information and they accepted it. I am now asking anyone who has played short mat or intends to do so next winter, to vote on whether to accept the package. The vote will be open until Friday 17 May 2024 and you will be able to vote on WhatsApp or you can e-mail me or let me know personally.

Andy Todd
Competitions Secretary