

Welcome to everyone attending our Bi Annual General Meeting. 2017

Firstly I would like to report back on our congress that was held in Cape Town straight after the zonals. It was an extremely well run tournament as we have come to expect from our Cape Town Committee. We had quite a large contingent of players from various parts of the world which raised the level of the game. It was thrilling to have our players pit their wits against the likes of Sabine Auken and her partner and many others.

When we planned the zonals, we were very concerned about the expense that was to be incurred and we conservatively budgeted for R300, 000. But thanks to the hard work of the zonal committee and various provinces that assisted financially, our final figure was R76.434.34 an amazing feat and our heartfelt thanks goes to our treasurer Roz Bernstein who did an amazing jobs of balancing the books.

This year we ran a poll regarding the timing of our congress to be held next year in Johannesburg. The result was 2/1 in favour of utilizing the 2 public holidays and therefore we will be holding congress at the Links from Friday the 27th April till the following Friday the 4th May 2018. We will hold pairs first and then the teams. I believe that the format worked perfectly and look forward to discussing this matter later.

We also ran a poll regarding the Interprovincial tournament, which has been an institution on our calendar for many, many years. It seems that now that there is so much bridge available in one's own province and the general expense of travel, it was cancelled this year due to the lack of interest.

It has been suggested that we hold the interprov online, which seems the way to go. It would be held at the various clubs around the country under the supervision of local T.D's. I vbelieve tht it is already on the calendar for August next year.

Other news, the trials for the Commonwealth Games are to be held from the 14th to 17th November 2017. There will be no colours awarded. We have 8 entries for these trials. Which I find quite interesting as there were no restrictions for players to enter, I really thought we would have had many more entries from players that had not previously entered any form of trials.

The Commonwealth games will be held from the 14th February till the 18th February 2018 - the venue being the Gold Coast, Australia.

Interclub next year, is to be held in Durban from the 1st till the 4th November 2018

I was approached by the University Campus of Vega.

They have offered the SABF a free Brand Challenge. Which means we would have to submit to them the problems that the SABF are having in getting more and younger members and the problem of how our numbers are diminishing.

Three teams comprising 15 students each, would then prepare Key marketing issues and proposals for development of the bridge community in SA

They will look at brand communication, tone of communication, desired response of communication, brand and marketing objectives and what sort of campaign we should be using. This is offered to corporation at a cost of approximately R80,000 and they offered to do this pro bono. Who could refuse?

The report back was extremely interesting and certainly something that we have to take cognance of, if we want to survive as a thriving bridge community. Rob Stephens will present the report back later on in the meeting. It is very exciting.

Regarding the composition of our executive committee: I took over the chairmanship of the SABF in a caretaker position some two and half years ago. James Grant, our Vice President feels happy enough to take over the mantle from now and as a result I will remain on the executive until our AGM in May as his vice until he forms his own committee. Diana Balkin has resigned as secretary, she did an amazing job, always ready to take on anything that was required and I thank her for her unwavering support. We called for nominations for secretary and had no response but I am pleased to say that Sheila Francis will take on this important position of secretary.

I thank the whole committee for all their support over the past few years. This year certainly took its toll on all, what with the zonals to contend with and everyone just put their backs in and the result was a resounding success.

My heartfelt thanks goes to Lotte Sorensen who undertook to organise this interclub and did a magnificent job. Thank you

Also thanks to Diedre Ingersent who dealt all these boards by hand. It's just incredible.

Sid as always stepped up to the plate and ran a great tournament. Thank you Sid. At this point I must mention that he has done an incredible job of making sense of all the new rules which came into effect in September. Please all unions use him! He is really willing to run courses in any centre. As you know the union shares the expenses with the SABF. And to date no centre has really made use of this offer.

Helen