

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the South African Bridge Federation held via Zoom at 18h00 on 14 August 2022

Present: James Grant (President)
Jocelyn Ashberg (Vice-President)
Kit Gilmour (Secretary)
Helen Kruger
Roz Bernstein
Graham Burrows
Andrew Cruise

along with 30 other SABF members

Apologies : Peta Feinstein
Philip Feinstein
Deirdre Ingersent
Bridie Bullen-Smith
Isobel Speirs
Harold Bernstein
Felicity Newman

Welcome

James opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees.

Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous Annual General meeting, having been published, were taken as read and approved.

Proposed by Helen Kruger and seconded by Graham Burrows.

President's Report

As always let me begin by thanking my committee for their continued support and hard work through what has proved to be another difficult and challenging year. Back in 2020 our challenge was to encourage players to play on-line while our clubs were closed, not thinking that COVID would drag on as long as it has and things would return to normal quite quickly. Two years on our challenge is to remind players that bridge is a social game and to encourage them to return to their clubs. Of course virtual bridge has its place, but it should not be allowed to replace real bridge.

One of the downsides of virtual bridge is it makes it much easier and tempting to cheat. To combat this we created an Ethics committee last year whose sole purpose was to investigate claims of cheating, and if the evidence proved sufficient submit this to the Disciplinary committee. It is a sad reflection on our game that this has proved necessary, but it is of utmost importance both here and abroad that we are seen to be taking this matter seriously.

One of the advantages of virtual bridge is that it has exposed us to different conventions from overseas players and encouraged us to adopt some of these ourselves. It has also made us far more adept at defending against unusual conventions and to reflect this we have updated our rules concerning the control of conventions where we take a more liberal stance than that previously held. The SABF has always been an untiring advocate of training in all its different forms but we have particularly focused over the last year on teaching beginners and strongly supported the initiatives of the Western Cape with Carol Stanton's lessons, and been equally supportive of similar courses held in the other provinces. We have created a database of over 200 beginners and offer them along with their very own website, free supervised games online to encourage them to practice what they have learnt. It remains to be seen how many of them finally join our clubs.

Talking of websites we have also created a new website for SABF where, if you are not able to do so through your local union website, you can log in to your own corner of our database. Here amongst other things, you can access telephone numbers and email addresses of fellow members and catch up with communications you might have missed.

So you see we have been quite busy behind the scenes.

Let me finish on a happy note. Last year we had only 1900 paid up members, this year that number has increased to 2150. And finally, we will be holding our next National Congress in Cape Town in April of next year – I look forward to seeing you all there.

Treasurer's Report

As our auditor of many years had passed away, we have struggled to find a suitable replacement and the final report was only received the previous day. With Philip Feinstein indisposed, James informed the meeting he felt ill equipped to answer any detailed questions on the report but as the financials would be published along with the minutes of the meeting he would willingly answer any written queries our members may have.

As a brief summary he went on to state that we had incurred a small loss of about R3000 over the year and that generally speaking our finances were extremely healthy.

Election of Office Bearers

The current office bearers whose terms had come to an end, were all prepared to stand again, with the following exceptions:

Annie Allen has been replaced by Peter Ward for Southern Cape
Graham Burrows has been replaced by Neil MacLeod for KZN

Since Philip has resigned some months ago through ill-health, Bernard Donde had been approached to act as a temporary replacement. This had to be ratified by the meeting.

His appointment was proposed by Jocelyn Ashberg and seconded by Kit Gilmour. This was carried.

General

James announced that Interclub, the final event of the year, will be online, but monitored. This means that any team wishing to play must be willing to play in a venue designated by their union, and play under controlled circumstances. The rules will be the same as face to face bridge. From September 1st this will be the minimum requirement for all red point events not held face to face. The committee is endeavouring to find further ways to encourage players to go back to

live play. Jocelyn suggested that the major clubs who run pairs events should be persuaded to all not play on an agreed day.

Jane Bodin, while congratulating the SABF on their handling of the game during the pandemic, pointed out the costs for our players of travelling to other provinces to play in competitions were prohibitive, whereas online meant being able to play in major events at minimal expense. She also expressed the preference of many players for BBO, rather than RealBridge. Jocelyn responded that RealBridge has a programme for Swiss Teams, whereas BBO doesn't, and that was part of the reason for using their platform. James added that kibitzing with a time delay was another major advantage of RealBridge.

Craig Gower noted that despite being online, this year's Congress was the smallest in memory, so this didn't bear out cost being the primary factor.

In response to a question from Bernard Donde, James said that our next Trials would be team trials, and will be held early next year with dates to be determined once ABF inform us when they intend to hold the Zonals.

Lotte Sorenson asked if there was any intention to send a mixed team in addition to Open, Women's and Seniors. James said this would be discussed again in committee.

Bernard also expressed his feeling that there should be no restrictions on players entering trials. He also felt the PI was not changing as rapidly as it should. Points should decay faster than after 5 years.

Mark Kenyon pointed out that Phil King from Cape Town holds the view that the PI's algorithm is inefficient.

Neil MacLeod asked that robots should be disallowed in online competition.

Bernard Donde complained that the new website is difficult to navigate and generally not user friendly. Jocelyn concurred. Additionally, results were not posted timeously, and were insufficiently prominently placed. Further, the Honours Board needs to be updated.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.58pm