



## Tournament Committee

### DISCUSSION PAPER

#### Format for Australian Playoffs

The feedback from players on the earlier paper on the timing and sequencing of playoffs strongly supported the idea that the objective of the playoffs should be to select the best teams to represent Australia in the forthcoming target event (and any consequent events, such as the Bermuda Bowl). There was also a strongly expressed view that the most effective way to do this was through long teams matches, in the years when the team is chosen by a teams-based (rather than pairs-based) playoff.

The TC reviewed selection methods in other countries, including those where the number of top players is similar to Australia. It also considered whether the principles that influenced the current format should outweigh that of selecting the best team. These principles included:

- having a two-stage process that started with round robin matches and then moved to longer knockout matches, so as to replicate the format of the target events;
- rewarding teams that performed well during the year preceding the trials (as reflected in the number of PQPs teams won);
- allowing anyone who had won at least one PQP to enter the playoffs so as not to restrict participation to those with the time and money to play in a large number of events, and to give emerging players the opportunity to develop; and
- guaranteeing all entrants three days play (unless in division two) so as to avoid discouraging players concerned at the prospect of arranging travel, accommodation, leave etc for what might only be two days of play.

Having decided that selecting the best team should be the most important criterion, the TC's view is that the format in Appendix One is more likely to achieve that objective than the current format. In summary, this proposal is for the playoffs to consist only of two-day knockout matches. This format would apply to the women's and seniors' playoffs as well as to the open.

In reaching this view, the TC took account of recent trends in the number of entries, the spread of four-, five- and six-person teams entering playoffs, and the change this format would mean especially for women and seniors. It also considered issues such as those below.

The TC seeks the views of players and other interested parties on all aspects of this proposal, including (but not limited to):

- whether the same format should apply to the women's and seniors' playoffs as well as the open;
- whether entries should be restricted to teams of six;
- whether a cap (of eight teams) should be imposed on entries so that the maximum duration of the event is known in advance to potential participants;
- whether entrants to the playoffs should be seeded (ordered by perceived merit, for example, by a seeding committee as used to happen with the SWPT) or ranked (ordered by some objective measure of performance, for example, by PQPs), and if seeded how this seeding should be done and by whom; and
- whether PQPs should be used for ranking purposes.

The TC would also welcome the views of players about whether a new format should be used for the playoffs to be held in February / March 2016 to select the Australian teams for 2016 or should be introduced in the playoffs in November / December 2016 to select the teams for 2017.

After players' views have been considered, the TC will forward its recommendation to the Management Committee for decision.

## Appendix One: New Playoff Format proposed by Tournament Committee

- The same format will apply to Open, Women's and Seniors' divisions.
- The format will use only Knockout matches.
- Only teams of 4 or 6 players will be accepted.
- Teams will be ranked based on the total PQPs of their members, herein referred to as Teams 1 to n. The PQPs of any players added to a team after the close of entries will not alter the team's ranking.
- All matches will be over 112 boards, played as 4 x 16-board stanzas on the first day and 3 x 16-board stanzas on the second.

The exact format and length of the Playoff will depend on the number of entries:

**3 entries** – The highest-ranked team, Team 1, will qualify direct to the 112-board Final. Teams 2 and 3 will play off in a single KO match of 112 boards. Team 1 need not attend the venue on days 1 and 2.

Length of event – 4 days

**4 entries** – Team 1 chooses its KO match opponent from amongst the other entries, with the proviso that the second-ranked team may elect not to be chosen.

Length of event – 4 days

**5 entries** – Teams 1, 2 and 3 qualify directly to the second KO round. Teams 4 and 5 will play off in a KO match of 112 boards. Team 1 then chooses its round 2 KO match opponent from amongst the other teams, with the proviso that the second-ranked team may elect not to be chosen. Round 3 will be a final KO of 112 boards. Teams 1, 2 and 3 need not attend the venue on days 1 and 2.

Length of event – 6 days

**6 entries** – Teams 1 and 2 qualify directly to the second KO round. Teams 3-6 will play off in two KO match of 112 boards. Team 3 chooses its round 1 KO match opponent from amongst Teams 4-6 with the proviso that Team 4 may elect not to be chosen. Team 1 then chooses its round 2 KO match opponent from amongst the other teams, with the proviso that the highest-ranked team remaining may elect not to be chosen. Round 3 will be a final KO of 112 boards. Teams 1 and 2 need not attend the venue on days 1 and 2.

Length of event – 6 days

**7 entries** – Team 1 qualify directly to the second KO round. Teams 2-7 will play off in three KO matches of 112 boards. Team 2 chooses its round 1 KO match opponent from amongst Teams 3-7 with the proviso that Team 3 may elect not to be chosen. Then the highest-ranked remaining team selects its opponent from the remaining teams. Team 1 then chooses its round 2 KO match opponent from amongst the other teams, with the proviso that the highest-ranked team remaining

may elect not to be chosen. Proceed as for four teams. Team 1 need not attend the venue on days 1 and 2.

Length of event – 6 days

**8 entries** – Teams 1-8 will play off in four KO matches of 112 boards. Team 1 chooses its round 1 KO match opponent from amongst Teams 2-8 with the proviso that Team 2 may elect not to be chosen. Then the highest ranked remaining team selects its opponent from the remaining teams. Then again the highest-ranked remaining team selects its opponent from the remaining teams. KO matches then follow for two further rounds, proceeding as for four teams.

Length of event – 6 days

**9-16 entries (8+n) entries** – The first KO round will reduce the number of teams to 8. The bottom-ranked n teams will play against the next lowest n ranked teams. The highest ranked of the teams contesting KO round 1 will have choice of opponent etc.

For example, for 11 entries ( $n = 3$ ) – the 6 ( $n \times 2$ ) lowest ranked teams will play KO match 1, with Team 6 having first choice of opponents, then Team 7 etc with the usual provisions about the next-ranked team being able to elect not to be chosen. The 3 matches in KO round 1 will reduce the field to 8 with subsequent play in KO rounds 2, 3 and 4 (as for 8 entries above) to determine a winner. Teams ranked 1-5 will not be required to attend the venue on days 1 and 2.

Length of event – 8 days