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For the consideration of *The Otago BC Playing Committee*

Teams nights

The Pairs programme has traditionally offered members the opportunity to play shorter 3-, 2- and 1-night matches and recently a number of 3-night Swiss Pairs events have been introduced and played on the alternate Monday nights to Teams proving quite popular.

However, in terms of the Teams programme at the Club it's a case of *Tempora mutantur, sed nos non mutamur in illis* (if I might be excused tampering with the old Latin adage). *The Championship Teams of Four* competition has been running since 1939-40 as the single teams event in the OBC programme. Admittedly there are now a number of distributaries flowing mid-year from the main river but the team members are the same and the teams format is the same for 20 sessions. Several of the larger clubs, particularly Christchurch and Auckland now run successful short teams events and in different formats (e.g. restricted teams, back-to-the-future, knockout & multiple teams (see attached MS-Word files: **Christchurch BC programme notes**; and an article titled **Multiple Teams movements** for additional explanation).

The 2003-04 sub-committee set up to look behind the scenes at issues like the divisional structure, the failure to retain membership and the OBC programme of events was basically in favour of changes to the Teams programme but an ultra-conservative element feared a loss of table money revenue if there were any tampering with the status quo. The current committee's decision to allow 5-person teams from next year has brought the whole issue to the fore again and, to my mind, suggests a return to previous failing tactics and a lack of vision of what is possible.

We need a far more flexible bridge programme these days as it's not realistic to expect an increasing number of members to guarantee their availability to play for 20 nights or even 10 nights (if they play only in the Swiss competition) in any one year. The increasing need to find substitutes, and more so substitutes of an ability to match the level of competition, particularly in the 10-night double RR Championship, Gold & Silver sections, causes the event to lose credibility. In almost all other round-robin events finish the culmination is knock-out QFs, S-Fs and a final not another double RR of 10 sessions between the handful of teams that have qualified. Also, the present event is a closed-shop for visitors and new members & possibly older members who would like to play teams but on a shorter time-frame.

Many members, I would have thought, would prefer shorter teams events and a more varied teams format as with the Pairs programme. Admittedly there is only half the time-period being a bi-weekly event though the support for the alternate Mondays suggests many members would be happy to turn out every Monday.

Matchplay teams

Another form of the teams game, head-to-head challenge matches, has virtually gone into receivership since the advent of Master Points in the late 1960s. We do, I understand, still have matches with Invercargill BC for the Oyster Plate and Paua Trophy, though almost no publicity is given to these events, nor any indication of how teams are selected. At one time the Club had annual matches with Crockfords (till 1963), Timaru (till 1967) & Christchurch (till 1967). There are, of course, opportunities for match play in the inter-provincial encounters played at Congress each year, though these are available to only a few. Also, over the years, the OBC has staged matches with

visiting overseas teams, and, as recently as 1991 (?), a very successful series of matches was hosted at the Club over a weekend with the NZ Women's team playing against Otago combinations and watched on Vugraph by nearly 100 spectators.

Match-play bridge can be in Teams-of-Four, -Six or -Eight (*see attached score sheet and summary sheet for Teams of Eight*) format played as challenge matches against other clubs or entities, sometimes in a League competition. This happens in the Bay of Plenty, for instance, and I imagine in other areas of NZ. It is an extremely popular format overseas. Admittedly, Dunedin has only one Club in range but I have suggested for a while that there is scope within a large Club for creating identities, rather as the Pub Quiz teams do. Such matches generally bring a much greater social mix of players than the existing structure where some members have been glued to the same team mates for decades. Perhaps that is what they want but it doesn't do anything for broadening social mix or indeed the competitive experience of the Club.

One of the latest initiatives which I find very exciting is the Warren Buffett Cup format for matchplay. This was the brainchild of Paul Hackett, a former England international, and has, so far as I know, been used only as a USA vs Europe encounter timed to coincide with the Ryder Cup in Golf (*there have been three events so far in 2006, 2008 & 2010 and all highly successful*).

I have adapted the formats to fit to a three-session tournament set-up involving Individual, Pairs and Teams sessions (*see attached MS-Word file*). The framework for a match is two sides of 12 players, as per Ryder Cup, though there is nothing to prevent several matches being played at once (e.g 4 matches or sections would occupy 24 tables). I have set the movements up in MS Excel into which results can be quickly logged. The program calculates scores and ranks contestants in the three formats as well as giving overall 'side' and individual winners (*see attached screenshot of a demo of an imaginary Oyster Plate encounter*). The Individual and Pairs sessions are scored as points-a-board (2 for a Win, 1 for a Draw & 0 for a Loss). The Teams is played in three 8- or 10-board games with a max 8-0 VP scale so that results from all three formats are comparable. The movements, scoring and logging of results is all done very quickly. It would be interesting to trial this format over three nights with groups of 12 players. I'm sure we could rustle up a number of teams keen to give it a go and all the better if they have an identity – Pensioned Teachers, Weathered Widows, Medics, Angry Young Men, Greater Green Island, whatever. It sounds like a lot of fun which is what we are missing, I believe, at present.

What we all want is a 'comprehensive' Club, i.e. one that encourages and promotes the common interest, offers opportunity for interaction among members and provides a common desire to improve and explore other angles on the game with people who share the same interest. At the same time we recognise that there are many levels of skill in the game of bridge, and that mixed ability groups often render limited satisfaction to anyone. However, I do think we all like, as Club members, a blend of the serious and the social at times. Also, there is just nothing like a new challenge.

Regards
David Green