

Proposals for discussion

ADTTA Annual General Meeting, 30 May 2024

1. CHANGE TO THE LEAGUE FORMAT (2-fold)

a) Time management, number of matches and the case of missing doubles

Time flies and many may be surprised to know that it's been over 4 years since competitive doubles matches (League/North Open/North Confined) happened in ADTTA area. Doubles are an important part of the table tennis world and we've neglected this for far too long.

Other factors in the equation are: duration of the match night, venue restrictions and play on more than one table. With 9 single matches on one table, match night can easily stretch to 3 hours. It happened on a few occasions this season that CTM Dauntless finished playing after 11pm, having started at 7pm.

In my opinion, all league matches should be played on one table whenever possible. This gives all players the best awareness of what's happening, helps cultivate team spirit and encourages observation and respect. But, perhaps, match night could be shorter. Here comes the proposal.

Scottish National League uses a format with 6 singles matches instead of 9. Teams of three, but each player plays only 2 singles:

- 1st player plays against: 1st and 2nd
- 2nd player plays against: 1st and 3rd
- 3rd player plays against: 2nd and 3rd

The outcome gives a good representation of which team is stronger that particular day, and ensures competitors are as closely matched as possible.

I'd like to propose for ADTTA to use SNL system, but in addition, include the doubles as well. The benefits of this arrangement are: doubles would be back, match night would be shorter (7 matches instead of 9) and it would be easier to complete a league fixture on one table. Two players from each team would play 3 matches (as they currently do), 1 player would play 2 matches and there is almost always one player who's isn't feeling great and is happy to play a bit less.

b) League table standing – team wins rather than adding up all individual wins

At present, and since I joined ADTTA back in 2008, the prime factor upon which the league standing is decided is the number of individual matches won. Number of actual fixtures won comes as a secondary factor. I'm sure there are solid reasons why this system was adopted in the first place. For one, teams could win a league match with only 2 players (e.g. 6:3). Also, some feel that teams ending up at the bottom of the league table would be further injured by having 0 wins highlighted. In the Scottish National League teams receive 2 points for each win (whether it is 6:0, 5:1 or 4:2) and 1 point for the draw and I haven't heard any complaints about it.

There are some considerable drawbacks to the system we currently use. Quite often, just past the middle of the season, it becomes apparent which team is going to win the division. That may have a detrimental effect. On one hand, interest in the season may die out prematurely for some teams. On the other hand, teams which had built enough advantage can relax and field substitutes instead of core players as can the teams that are no longer fighting for anything. Quite often, towards the end of the season, the use of substitutes or appearances of teams with only 2 players is on the rise. That can have negative consequences on other teams that are still in the fight. I'd risk an opinion that these undesired effects are natural consequences of the system we use.

I'd like to propose that for the 2024-25 season, the league standing should be decided by number of wins rather than accumulative number of single matches won. This change would make the competition more dynamic and would sustain the fight for the top places (and avoiding relegation) until the very last few weeks of the season. Should this prove successful and agreeable, then we can continue with that format in subsequent years. If not successful we could revert to the current system.

2. ENFORCING SERVICE RULES

The subject of service rules comes back every so often and, so far, we as an association, have found it difficult to identify steps that can be taken to adequately address the issue. Incorrect serves happen on a daily basis, in all divisions. The subject is sensitive, as in our league setting, umpires are part of one of the competing teams, and whilst everyone aims to apply the rules even-handedly, some circumstances can make it a challenging ideal to achieve. The following framework is proposed to help address the problem:

- a) a point should never be deducted for incorrect serves despite ITTF rules allowing this
- b) players should get comfortable with the umpire calling a let whenever he or she thinks the service was not up to the required standard
- c) before each game, the umpire on duty would read a short statement saying that the service rules will be observed and, if in doubt, the rally will be stopped
- d) OPTIONAL: ADTTA could organise a serving/umpiring seminar for all interested, before the beginning of 2024-25 season

This could be implemented either across all divisions right away or as a pilot initiative in Div1 & Div2.

3. MICRO FEES / DONATIONS

I think everyone will agree that up-to-date information regarding league progress, which includes matches completed and postponements, improves the experience of competitive play for all involved. We've made significant progress over the past number of years in this area but there is still lot to do. In this day and age, where communication is so easy, we should really expect all team secretaries to provide information in a timely manner. Otherwise this puts extra pressure on the Match Secretary by creating additional admin work and diminishes the league play experience for the others.

Other than information flow, the amount of postponed matches should be tackled as well. I'm sure a significant number of postponements could be avoided by careful planning. Perhaps introducing a system of small donations to ADTTA would help to streamline the information flow and reduce the number of postponements. The proposed amounts are as follows:

Postponing a match: £10.00

Not providing match info (scorecard or postponement note) by a set deadline, say Saturday 10am for matches completed that particular week: £5.00

Information about such micro-fees could be included in the registration form and consent would be required in order to register the team.