



## National President's Report

I would normally structure my report around positive issues, results and achievements but this year has seen very few of those.

Instead of concentrating on preparations for the playing season, the start of our year was beset with a discipline issue concerning the conduct of several squad members that had represented our Association at an international event.

The MC appointed a Disciplinary Panel headed up by our National Umpire, John Thatcher to investigate. From the start they were hampered by our own rules, policy and procedures that were designed to deal with issues concerning one or two players and not several at once. The investigation tested our resources to the limit and the outcome was not satisfactory for anyone.

During this time the committee was being asked to commit to the European Espoirs series but because there are so few Espoirs there was the prospect of not being able to field competitive teams due to the possible disciplinary sanctions. We didn't have the luxury of waiting for the disciplinary issues to be concluded, the decision had to be made then and there, so we took the cautious route and opted out of the event.

The only positive thing to come out of this sorry affair has been the proposal from our Kent region that in part was tabled at the Congress and along with constitutional changes will be presented to this meeting.

In early March Pétanque Promotions Ltd our marketing company approached the Management committee seeking financial help by way of a loan so that they could purchase the necessary stock required for the year. Taking into consideration that since setting up PP Ltd our Association has benefited from payments amounting to over £20,000 the MC agreed to the loan to be paid back within 2 years but with two conditions.

1. PP Ltd carefully monitor all boules and accessories sales over the next 12 months and report back to the EPA MC at the end of the financial year with a full sales report.
2. PP Ltd presents a proposal to the EPA Management Committee to formalise the original outstanding "set up" loan.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, it is clear now that the Management Committee should have required a far more detailed analysis of the proposal to change our international qualifying competitions before letting it go ahead. However, the proposal was presented to the 2008 Congress of Regions who made a few modifications; it was then approved at the AGM and put in place for this and the following year.

The first round of the Open League at the West Midlands venue met with controversy when the organiser changed the playing format to suit the small number of entries. This gave our Director of Playing, Martin Eggleton his first problem which he quickly solved on his return from Canada, but it was not to be the last issue he was faced with as the lack of entries for the Open League forced us to at first restrict the event to a single venue and then ultimately to cancel the last round. Following the constant criticism he was receiving Martin decided that he had lost the confidence of the players and resigned, a huge blow to the MC as this is one of the most demanding and important posts on the Committee.

With no one volunteering to help, the administration of playing for the remainder of the year had to be covered by the Management Committee on top of the individual responsibilities we already have.

Clearly the Leagues have failed to attract interest or commitment, the idea that the top teams needed to play against each other more often had been around for some time and that needed to be put to the test. But we have learned that it is very difficult to mount a sustained and meaningful series with a small number of teams and today you will have the opportunity to adopt a proposal originating from our Chiltern Region and endorsed by the Congress of Regions which will see us return to the previous format of Grand Prix and Play offs.

We have all been affected by increasing costs throughout the year due to the world financial recession, the EPA is no different, the costs for International, European and National memberships have risen, added to this the strong Euro and weak Pound was cause for a major review of our budget for the current year. Early in the season but much later than we preferred it was announced that teams representing the EPA at the European and World Championships would have to contribute a much larger sum than in previous years. However, I'm pleased to report that we were able to reduce the players budgeted contribution of £500 each by half for the European Championship and we would have made every effort to do the same for the team going to the Women's World Championship had they participated.

In March the FIPJP announced a change to the World Championship by restricting the number of competing nations to 48 of which 25 places, including the World Champions, were allocated to Europe. At the same time the CEP introduced a new European Triples Championship for Men the outcome of which to decide which nations qualify for the world championship European allocation.

Our team for this now vital European Championship had a problem before they had even left for France; Ashley Jamieson broke his arm and was unable to play. Having already booked the flights hotel etc it was financially prudent to allow the team a replacement player rather than asking the next team in line to attend. The team asked for Rowland Jones, which the MC approved and although they did not always play to their full potential they managed to qualify the EPA for a place at the 2010 Triples World Championship.

Reluctantly we have now reverted back to international qualification for juniors instead of having the benefit of the junior squad, squad manager and selection structure. This meant we had to appoint a manager to the successful team for the World Championship in Tunisia, Chris Allen who had considerable experience was our first choice but unfortunately he was unavailable due to work commitments and despite several emails, text messages and telephone calls we were unable to get a response from our alternative selection Jerome Rousseau. Given that this was an all male team requiring gender specific support the MC acted expediently and asked Gareth Sullivan one of only two male volunteers that had indicated they were willing to go. Gareth was supported by Kevin Moss as Head of Delegation who had agreed to deputise for me, perhaps not the most ideal situation as neither of these had been to this sort of event before but the MC felt they had no other option.

We had similar issues with the Women's team who should have gone to the World Championship in Thailand. They had asked the MC for either Chris Allen or Lee Jamieson to be their manager and could they also have a 4<sup>th</sup> player in case one of them fell ill.

We readily agreed to appoint Chris but it is a long standing policy of our Association not to allow a 4<sup>th</sup> player after a 3 player team qualified. They like all teams had the opportunity to include another player during the qualifying process, on this occasion this team, unlike the majority of others in the series chose not to do so.

The team made it clear that they would not go to Thailand without a 4<sup>th</sup> player so in an attempt to accommodate them we suggested that they choose a female manager who could play should one of them fall ill but this option was rejected by them. The MC was caught between a rock and a hard place, whatever we decided would be considered wrong by someone so we stuck to the policy and it was with great disappointment that I had to inform the FIPJP that we were not sending a team.

With a very rigorous Premier League planned and that the ultimate winner would be our champion triple the MC decided that there was no real need for a National Triples and not staging the event would also have the benefit of freeing up a day in an already congested playing calendar.

However, when the calendar was published there were a few very vocal objections from those that wanted to see a traditional triples championship and in response Martin reluctantly agreed to insert it into the calendar. It didn't really have any meaning, which is perhaps why there were so few entries. However, we are not the only Association to have a lower than usual number of teams entering National events as it would appear to be the same across Europe, perhaps another knock-on effect of the recession!

It was shortly after the Triples Championship that we suffered yet another casualty due to unfair and unjustified criticism. Both Richard Baker and Corinne Cooter who had volunteered to run the Triples Championship were subjected to adverse comments on an Internet forum about how the event was run. Shortly afterwards Corinne decided that enough was enough and tendered her resignation effective from today, another major blow for the MC to endure. Corinne has served this Association since its inauguration with selfless dedication; she has been a valuable member of the committee on whom I would often depend for unbiased counsel and support.

The Committee asked for volunteers to cover for the remaining year of Corinne's appointment and were pleased to accept an offer from Angie Gaughan (Northern Region). Corinne has spent the last few months working with Angie to ensure a smooth transition; Angie's co-option to the MC becomes official after this meeting.

This year, and for a further two, the National Singles, Doubles and Mixed Doubles Championships were held at the home of the Harriers PC the Sandown and Shanklin RFC on the Isle of Wight. This long weekend event attracted similar numbers to previous years, which for a new venue was excellent. The feedback from those attending has been very positive and I think this will be reflected in even more teams going to the Island next year.

Whilst David Lavelle has made every attempt to carry out the responsibilities of the National Coach his family and work commitments have understandably taken first place. David has found it increasingly difficult to balance all his commitments and is now reluctantly standing down. At this point I would like to add my personal thanks to David for his many years service to both the BPA and EPA, David was very instrumental in the instigation of Youth Development and it was mainly due to his commitment and drive that our junior squad and selection process was so successful.

It is questionable that anyone on the MC, now or in the future, would have the knowledge to select a candidate to appoint to the office of National Coach or Umpire for that matter. Recognising these issues and to regenerate and strengthen both disciplines the MC is proposing to re-establish the commission structure who will be responsible for appointing the National Umpire and National Coach respectively, this will also ensure that our 15 Regions have a more direct input into Coaching and Umpiring matters.

When the BPA was disbanded the EPA assumed all of its rights and responsibilities including Schools Affiliation and the Schools Cup competition. Schools Affiliation has had limited success and little to no direct support from the EPA however, a few regions, notably Southern Counties through the efforts of Kath and Mike Knight have been very successful.

Taking this example of positive local activity into consideration the MC are proposing to move the responsibility of "Schools Affiliation" to our regions much the same way as club affiliation is currently dealt with. This should ensure that Schools Affiliation is given the credibility it deserves and with such local attention and effort development of this important area of membership should be achieved. In addition our proposal regarding the Schools Cup is designed to ensure that this event is firmly established on the National Calendar.

Despite reports to the contrary and the loss of 20 members when the Jersey Pétanque Association independently joined the FIPJP our membership this year has increased by 25 to 2746. This breaks down across our 15 Regions as 171 Junior/Cadets, 85 Espoirs and 2490 Adults; we also have 202 registered clubs and 2 affiliated leagues.

No report to the AGM would be complete without acknowledging the achievements of our members, I am sure you will join me in congratulating all those who have been added to our "Roll of Honour" this year, these are:


- Honorary Life Membership  
Mark & Corinne Cooter
- Singles Champion  
Rachid Hannache
- Doubles Champions  
Dean Seville and Scott Ashby
- Mixed Doubles Champions  
Dean Seville and Debbie Elcome
- Triples Champions  
Martin Baker, Bruno Bove, Robert Silvy and Rachid Hannache
- Women's Triples Champions  
Vanessa Webb, Angela Jamieson and Debbie Elcome

- Junior Triples Champions  
Max O'Rourke, Sam Blakey, Reece Gould and Ross Jones
- Over 50's Doubles Champions  
Lee and Angela Jamieson
- Champion of Champions  
Doubles: Simon Bird and Sofiane Lachani  
Triples: Bruce Rowland, Yousef Boussba and Mehdi Birra  
Shooting: Eastern Region – Sofiane Lachani
- European Cup for Clubs  
The Engine Pétanque Club
- Inter-Regional Championship and Challenge Tournament -  
Division 1 – Kent : Division 1, Juniors – Kent  
Division 2 – Isle of Wight : Division 2, Juniors – Combined  
Challenge – Kent
- Home Nations  
Richard King, Matt Shrimpton, Neil Phillips and Matt Whatley  
Mike Tull, Mathew Slater, Harrison Ash and Ashley Odell  
Teresa Bingham, Pete Bingham, Gary Durrant and Garth Fletcher  
Richard Patterson, John Inglis and Mark Robertshaw  
Geoff Booth, Chris Watkins and Simon Doble  
Emma Jones, Jonathan Sewell, Toni Gates and Steve Zimmerman  
Philippe Bonnet, David Mason and Brian Stote  
Steve Golder, Fay Golder, Graham Elcome and Kim Elcome  
Gary Atkinson, Josh Littley, Alex Bruce and Ben Littley  
Amy Huntley, Daniel Baker, Georgie Wright and Emma Stockbridge

Of course there are many members of our Association that do not aspire to such great heights but who enjoy taking part. Their participation, friendship and good-natured competitiveness ensure our competitions are a success, my thanks and that of the Management Committee for their support and commitment goes equally to them.

Finally, it has recently been stated that I “pull the strings” or “have control” or even “manipulate and dominate” the Management Committee, what silly and absurd claims. The Management Committee is a team; we work as a team and make decisions as a team. We may not always agree with each other or like a decision that's been made, but we always stand by the majority decision.

It has been a privilege to work with all of the members of this years Management Committee; Martin Eggleton, Adrian Thomas, Richard Baker, Kevin Moss, Corinne Cooter, David Baxter, David Lavelle, John Thatcher, Graham Elcome, Debbie Elcome and more recently Angie Gaughan. I am very grateful for their dedication, their support and their continued friendship.



National President