



## Presidents Report EPA Congress 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009

At this time last year the Management Committee lead by the Director of Playing, Martin Eggleton presented a proposal to make some major changes to our playing structure for international qualification.

We didn't put this proposal together on a whim; it was following many discussions with members and listening to, or to be more accurate, reading and responding to forum postings on the internet. I recall one leading player stating that "the EPA needs to make some radical changes if they are to reverse the decline in attendance and interest by the top level of our sport".

Well this proposal was radical for our Association as was presenting it to this Congress for approval. In the past changes to the playing format has been decided at committee level and would not have been discussed so openly with our membership. After a lengthy debate, which lead to some modifications, this Congress agreed to present the proposal to the AGM for ratification. The AGM, attended by a little over a dozen members again debated the modified proposal and by a vote of 15 for, 9 against and 2 abstentions the proposal was approved.

Now just over 4 months into the playing season we have seen a lack of entries for the open league, a team's withdrawal from the Premier League and basically what appears to be a general lack of interest or perhaps commitment to this system.

In some ways it is reflective of the way a few players reacted to the introduction of the Swiss System or the Barrage system before that and if we go back a little further in the records we can see there were complaints about the Snake system, the league and knockout in fact each system or format that our sport has used has had its critics, they all have their pros and con's, none are perfect but we must use what is best suited to meet our needs which is not just finding the top team, it also includes giving teams a good tournament as well as raising funds that go towards the costs involved with international representation.

The Management Committee promised to carry out a full review at the end of the series and we have begun a constructive dialogue with a number of players from both the open and premier leagues. Having discussed with these members their issues and suggested potential changes we have identified that we should seed the teams in Open league after the first round, that holding Open leagues at more than one venue on the same day does not attract more players it just dilutes what we have, the need for experienced or trained organisers, and perhaps the more difficult to address, a reduction in the entry fee. Our review is on going.



It is disappointing that after such a short period in the playing season and before the Management Committee has had the opportunity to conduct a full review that we have received proposals from the East Midlands and Chiltern Regions to make some changes. However, we take their proposals seriously and trust with a positive and democratic debate today that we can improve the qualification system to attract more of our members to take part.

The MC was very pleased to accept an invitation to send a squad of 5 teams comprising 1 Female team, 2 Open teams an Espoirs and Junior team to a high profile international tournament in Rastatt, Germany early this year.

To give our Espoirs the opportunity to gain experience of playing at an international level we sent 8 players from those that had qualified from Espoirs events held in 2008 and made up the rest of the squad with some adults and of course a junior team.

When sending teams to international events I would usually expect to receive some feedback from the hosts, unfortunately on this occasion they advised me of some issues which allied with a number of other concerns raised by the Head of Delegation and Team Managers left the MC with no alternative other than to convene a Disciplinary Committee to investigate.

From the reports and statements that were compiled for the Disciplinary Committee it was clear that the conduct of a few members of the squad was inappropriate and totally unacceptable. The Disciplinary Committee presented their findings to the MC which included a number of censures ranging from verbal warnings to a one year International ban.

These penalties were considered to be appropriate to the behaviour attributed to some individuals however, the MC considered these individual censures could not be upheld, and instead decided to issue a 'General' warning to all squad members that this sort of behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the future.

A few weeks after the conclusion of this matter I reluctantly accepted the resignation, with immediate effect, of Martin Eggleton from the office of Director of Playing.

Conversations and comments posted on an internet forum had led Martin to believe he no longer had the confidence of the players and without that he felt it inappropriate to continue in this vital position.

Martin was a valued member of the committee holding one of, if not the most important office of the Association.

Since his resignation the Management Committee has found it increasingly difficult to cover all aspects of this post. Today the MC is proposing to recruit one individual from each region to be trained as an Organiser working under the guidance of the Director of Playing. It is hoped that these volunteers will help to lessen the burden on the Director of Playing perhaps making the office a little more attractive.

I was saddened this week to be informed that Corinne Cooter intends to stand down as the Associations National Membership Secretary at our AGM in November.



I have spoken to Corinne and fully understand her reasons which include having enough of the moans and groans, particularly when the Management Committee give up so much of their time for the benefit of the members.

She feels that after 5 years on the management committee it is the right time for others to step forward to give their support for the running of the sport.

Corinne will be a hard act for anyone to follow; she is a dependable hardworking member of the MC and I know she will be greatly missed by the MC and Regional Membership Secretaries alike as we have all come to depend on her counsel and support.

Corinne's resignation may give the Association some practical difficulties as her appointment was a 2 year term and constitutionally we can only co-opt someone to the role for 1 year. I hope that a volunteer will come forward soon so that they can work with Corinne to effect a smooth transition.

We continue to advertise for the vacant post of National Youth Development Officer but without candidates coming forward this role has to all purposes been looked after by Kevin Moss who with the support of our National Coach, David Lavelle has organised and run the Academy for Cadets.

Following the success of the first Academy day it was disappointing for us all when the planned day in the West Midlands was cancelled due to a lack of entries, perhaps caused by a similar event being held in the neighbouring East Midlands on the same day. However, Kevin has not been deterred by this early setback and is making plans to run another Academy day later in the year.

For a number of years Schools affiliating to the EPA has had very mixed results and with the exception of 2 or 3 of our 15 regions there has been little to no activity in this area. It is plainly obvious that this scheme is in need of some urgent attention as the success of recruiting juniors and younger members must be far greater with the involvement of the local school. The MC is grateful for those few members that have soldiered on with such little support and have continued to keep Schools Affiliation active in their areas. This limited regional success has guided us to make the proposal we present today which we trust the delegates will approve.

Following the decision made at the 2007 AGM we advertised for a candidate to be appointed to the new role of National Squad manager. By June 2008 we had one candidate who expressed an interest and he agreed to prepare a "role description" to present to the MC for consideration but nothing came of this. The post remains vacant for the time being, but we will be re-advertising for a National Squad Manager following the committee's review of our procedures for team manager's appointment.

The National Club Knockout competition has continued the success of the National Club League it replaced. This year the club to represent the EPA in the CEP European Cup for Clubs will be the Engine PC from the Chiltern region.

They have been drawn to play at home and will host club teams from Slovenia and the Netherlands in August, I'm sure you all join me in wishing them every success.



Other teams deserving our best wishes are, Chris Allen, Greg Davenport, and Rowland Jones who along with Vanessa Webb will be competing in the EuroPetanque competition taking place this weekend and the Men's European Championship next weekend when Ness will be putting away her boules to take on the role of team coach.

Our Junior World Championship hopes are in the youthful hands of Samuel Blakey, Reece Gould, Ross Jones and Max O'Rourke. They are to represent our members at the Championships to be held in October at Monastir, Tunisia.

We also wish success to Vanessa Webb, Angie Jamieson and Debbie Elcome who will be competing in the Women's World Championship in Thailand and lastly but as equally important our Home Nations squad who will take on the teams from the SPA and WPA in Swansea.

Internationally this year has seen two major changes to the playing calendar. The CEP introduced a new championship for men and soon afterwards the FIPJP Congress agreed to set a limit of 48 nations to take part in the World Triples Championship. At the spring meeting of the FIPJP and CEP Executives the FIPJP announced that 24 nations would qualify from Europe, this does not include France who are the current World Champions.

How the 24 nations were to be decided was left to the CEP and it was elected to use the Men's European Championship. Had the CEP not come up with a way for competitive qualification the FIPJP would simply have selected the top ranked 24 European nations from the previous years World Championship.

The FIPJP Executive dropped one more little bombshell at the meeting, they are proposing to drop the rule that allows one non-national to play in a nation's team at the World Championships, we have yet to see how the World Congress will vote on this matter.

Most of you will know that I am a member of the CEP Board but perhaps what few will be aware of is that in 2008 my four year term in office was complete. At the 2008 CEP Congress I was elected to serve for a further term and then in March this year at the spring meeting I was appointed Vice-President of the CEP. My continued involvement with our European colleagues has proved beneficial to the EPA and I trust it will continue to do so.

At our AGM in November the members will be asked to ratify the proposals that this Congress agree, it will also be time to elect a National President, National Secretary and Director of Playing each for a two year term of office. These are important posts which, like the rest of the Management Committee, require the office holders to give up a great deal of their time. Their tasks include attending meetings, writing reports, assisting at events, dealing almost daily with copious e-mails and much more, all without much in the way of thanks. So I take this opportunity on behalf of our members to formally thank all the officers of the EPA, past and present, for their unstinting work and efforts. Without their willing support this Association could not provide members with the service they have come to expect, I also thank their partners for putting up with the constant intrusion in their private and family life.

  
Mike Pegg

National President



*English Pétanque Association*  
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&  
*Confédération Européenne de Pétanque*

