

Playoff Charter

SOLE OBJECTIVE

Determine the best possible team to represent Australia.

APPROACH

Evidence supports the idea that a teams-based playoff has more integrity than a pairs-based format (i.e. it is more likely that the players who are playing well will win).

When a teams-based playoff is used,¹ a maximum of eight teams will contest the playoff. The format will be a 128-board knockout event over six days (96-board matches for seniors). Each match will last two days. PQPs will be used for ranking, choice and tie-break. More details [here](#).

Every fourth year a pairs based playoff will be used.

RATIONALE FOR TEAMS FORMAT

KnockOut vs RoundRobin

Head-to-head matches are widely considered the best determiners of skill. Most world championship and elite tournaments are decided by knockout matches. Player feedback has strongly supported this format.

Round-robins have issues like the importance of scores against weak teams and the impact of non-contenders on the outcome. Knock-out matches also eliminate the possibility of dumping. While target events usually start with a round-robin, they feature a stronger and deeper field than the Playoff. They also have more time to determine the winner and usually end up with a knock-out phase.

Duration of matches

The longer the match, the higher the likelihood² of the stronger team winning. 128 boards help minimize the impact of luck and enhance the demonstration of skill.

In order to help with organizational issues like time for appeals and to allow the option for players to return home that day, 112 board matches were considered. However, player feedback came out in support of the longer match duration.

Number of teams

The basis for limiting the number of entries to eight is

- Likelihood³ of the best team being in top 8 PQP winners is almost certain
- Permits a simple and elegant format
- Permits long matches given the time constraint.

¹ Years where the target events include the World Bridge Games or World Team Championships. A pairs format will be used when no WBF target event is nominated.

² For example: if the difference between two teams is 0.25imps/board, assuming a standard deviation of 5.43imps per board, the likelihood of the better team winning rises from 59% (over 32 boards) to 64% (over 64 boards) to 69% (over 128 boards). An informative link on the subject is [here](#).

³ Historical evidence validates this view. Recent best performances by a team ranked lower than 8 on PQPs have been : EBERY (lost final, 2009), REW (lost semi-final, 2016) and LAZER (lost repechage, 2012)

- Encourages attendance of Australian team contenders at national events
- Open entries would require more time to trim the field.

The six-day schedule limitation is a key driver of the restriction in the number of teams to eight.

OTHER ISSUES

Time per board

8 minutes per board helps ensure a workable schedule for both the players and the organizers. World championships schedules provide for 8.75 minutes per board. This permits only 48 boards a day. The decision at the playoffs to accept a lower time-limit was a trade-off against the alternative option of reducing the number of boards played per day.

Slow Play

Directors will actively monitor slow play.

Security Concerns

A distinction is important between receiving inadvertent extraneous information and active cheating.

The former includes

- over-hearing explanations and post-mortems at a different table;
- viewing the auction/result at another table;
- taking inferences from behavior e.g. outburst/yelling; or
- any other means of receiving inadvertent extraneous information

An ideal solution to address these would involve:

- separate areas for Open and Closed Rooms; and
- different boards for different knockout matches

If cost constraints do not permit separate Open/Closed rooms, then a partition is strongly recommended.

Different boards were trialled in the Women's and Seniors' playoffs in 2016. Significant negative player feedback was received. Arguments in favour of using the same boards included: learning from other matches, ability to discuss hands across matches at dinner, enjoyment of BBO kibitzers and material for journalists.

In deference to this feedback, KO matches will, for the present, continue to use the same boards. The following measures will aim to mitigate the concerns.

- Strict enforcement of writing down of explanations.
- No audible post-mortems.
- No smoking breaks during a set.
- No behavioral outbursts.

Directors will actively monitor these aspects and will be empowered to apply procedural penalties where appropriate.

Ranking and Choice

The teams will be ranked on the basis of Playoff Qualifying Points (PQPs). Higher-ranked teams will have some options regarding choice of opponents. Details can be viewed on the [format page](#).

The purpose of awarding choice options to seeded teams is to incentivise contenders to attend Australian national events to accumulate PQPs during the playing cycle.

PQPs earned during the qualifying cycle are deemed the best measure of ranking different teams. Details of PQP allotment can be viewed on the [PQP policy page](#).

System Restrictions

System restrictions (especially around yellow systems and brown sticker conventions) will mirror restrictions at nominated target events.

Timing of Playoffs

In response to complaints from players about the crowded calendar and the need for successful players to arrange travel, leave etc, the ABF has moved the timing and sequencing of the playoffs.

Starting with the playoffs to select Australia's teams for 2017, the open playoffs will be commence on the second Saturday in November, with the women's and seniors' playoffs to be held concurrently commencing on the first Saturday in December.

The ABF intends to trial this timing for the four-year cycle (to select teams for 2017-2020) and will review its effectiveness. This review will take into account the upsides and downsides of the increased time between the playoffs and the target events (including increased opportunities for successful teams to practice and the risk that players will no longer be in form when the target events are held).

FORMAT

The same format will apply to Open, Women's and Seniors' divisions.

- The format will use knockout matches.
- Only teams of four or six 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 128 boards, played as 4 x 16-board stanzas on the first day and 4 x 16-board stanzas on the second. Exception: the matches in the Seniors' Playoff will be 96 boards, consisting of 3 x 16-board stanzas on each day.

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 final. Teams 2 and 3 will play off in a KO match. 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. 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. 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 matches. 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. Teams 1 and 2 need not attend the venue on days 1 and 2.

Length of event – 6 days

7 entries – Team 1 qualifies directly to the second KO round. Teams 2-7 will play off in three KO matches. 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 team remaining (Team 3 unless chosen by Team 2) 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. Team 1 chooses its round 1 KO match opponent from amongst Teams 2-8 with the proviso that Teams 2 and 3 may elect not to be chosen. Then the highest-ranked team remaining (Team 2 unless chosen by Team 1) selects its opponent from the remaining teams with the proviso that the original Team 3, if not selected by Team 1, may elect not to be chosen. Then the highest-ranked team remaining (Team 3 unless previously chosen) 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

PQPs

Playoff Qualifying Points (PQPs) are awarded each year for meritorious accomplishments in national competition. PQPs are also awarded for high placings in representative events.

PQPs are used to:

- determine eligibility for the playoffs; and
- rank the teams in the playoffs

(a) PQPs for National events

All PQP-eligible national events are categorized A through D. Each category is designated a fixed award for top three placings. PQPs might also be awarded for 4th and lower placings, depending on the strength and depth of the field.

PQP allocations are reviewed annually prior to the commencement of the next representative cycle. Details can be viewed on the [PQP Review Methodology page](#).

(b) PQP for Representative events

PQPs are awarded for strong performances at target events by Australian representative teams. The teams eligible for these awards are: Open, Women's, Seniors, Junior and Girls.

The awards aim to reward outstanding performance. They also aim to compensate for potentially limited opportunities to play at Australian national events (due to leave or scheduling conflicts) for players on representative duty.

These allocations are reviewed annually. Currently they are:

EVENT

APBF 1st = 24, top quarter finish = 12

WBF 1st = 60, 2nd = 48, 3rd = 36, 4th = 24, top half in Bermuda Bowl/Venice Cup/D'Orsi Bowl or top third in World Bridge Games = 12

Junior Representative = 6; 1st = 30, 2nd = 24, 3rd = 18, 4th = 12, making the KO stage = 6 (all open points)

Girls Representative = 6; 1st = 30, 2nd = 24, 3rd = 18, 4th = 12, making the KO stage = 6 (all women's points)

Participants in the WBF mixed teams can earn Open PQPs in the same ratio as WBF Open events.

The eligibility for top quarter finish will be based on rounding down the number of teams. For example, with 15 teams in the APBF, awards will be available for top three placings ($15/4=3.75 \rightarrow 3$).

Transfer of PQPs

All PQPs won in open events may be used towards qualification for the women's or seniors' playoffs by players who are eligible and are members of the Women's or Seniors' Panels.

Players with Open PQPs who meet the age requirement may request addition to the Seniors' Panel and transfer of their Open Points.

Women with Open PQPs may request addition to the Women's Panel and transfer of their Open Points.

When Seniors' and Women's events are held concurrently (e.g. Spring Nationals), points won in either event are transferable to the other panel.

PQP REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The Tournament Committee uses the data driven model (detailed below) as the starting point for judging the strength of the event for PQP purposes.

Some adjustments are made for

- length of the tournament;
- integrity of the format;
- geographically fairness in access to PQP; and
- tradition of the event.

The TC deliberations lead to a proposal that is forwarded to the MC for review and publication.

Data Model

Use the PQP list for the last ten years to determine the *PQP panel*.

For each panelist, take the average of their five best scores. If a panelist has less than five appearances on the PQP lists, take the average of available scores. Each panelist is now awarded a *PQP Average*.

For every national event, sum up the *PQP Average* for all *PQP panelists* who compete. Perform this activity for the last three years. Calculate the average *PQP Attendance* for each event.

Create a table with the following information

Name of event (e.g. National Open Teams)

Average *PQP Attendance* (e.g. 4023)

Average number of *PQP panel* attendees (e.g. 62)