

# Running a Club Tournament

Club tournaments are very popular with members and come in a wide variety of successful formats. Here are some of the key elements to consider when designing and managing your event.

## Players

The key component is of course player interest. If the club has chosen a timing and format which members find attractive it will lead to a large number of entrants which reduces the time taken to fill all the places. It also importantly helps build a waiting list of players who can be contacted as there are frequently players who withdraw before the day due to injury or other commitments.

How you choose to market the tournament will have a key impact on the who enters, and it is best to be clear who you really want to play. For example, you can explicitly limit the field to players above, below or between certain handicaps. Most players prefer to play against people of similar handicaps and so find these attractive. Alternatively, you may explicitly want to mix up people who rarely meet on court or otherwise and have a tournament with a wide handicap range. This can be highly successful socially and popular if all the players understand and accept the large handicap differences which will occur.

Once you have started to receive entries you have the choice to specifically target certain members to play. For example, you may see that you have a good group but ideally would like a 50 handicapper to complete it and so can specifically contact members you think would fit the space well. In a doubles tournament many players will enter as an individual which gives you the role of deciding on pairings. These decisions are obviously important and can make a huge difference to their enjoyment of the event and the play on court.

## Preparation

### **Entry form and deadline**

- Make sure all the necessary information is included on the entry form (sponsors, costs, dates, timings, format, who can enter, prizes, etc.) and send out the entry form in good time
- Complete the draw/schedule and inform all players. Most people enter doubles tournaments without a partner, so make sure everyone is happy in their pair
- Timings – unless you are using a time limiting format, correct estimates for match lengths are important. A set lasts c.30 mins, and 3-3 in the third set can be used to help keep matches under 75 mins. Time for a warm up needs to be included as well

### **Sponsorship and prizes**

- Approach sponsors early to discuss with them how they want to be involved and whether they have any special requests. Sponsor's will invariably want their (company's) name added to the entry form, so they must be contacted before that stage
- Prizes and gifts – sometimes provided by sponsors, but sometimes have to be arranged separately. Either way, prepare these in good time as orders can take a while to come

### **Easily forgotten tasks**

- Balls – a few weeks out check that the rotation of balls will work to ensure they will be suitable. If outsourced balls are planned, double check they will be available well before the start of the event
- Court reservation – don't forget to clear the booking schedule for the tournament duration. It's usually worth booking out a couple of hours after the expected finish time for each day, just in case!

### **Tournament Format**

There are a wide range of tournament factors to be decided well in advance of advertising the event. These include

- Singles vs doubles (or team tournament)
- Level vs handicap
- Handicap/age/gender restrictions
- Single day vs multi-day/weekend
- Knock out (with or without plate) vs round robin (with or without final(s))
- Match format e.g. best of three sets

Regardless of format you should consider grouping players by handicap as it helps to generate close matches which players enjoy. The handicap system is excellent, but games with a handicap difference of less than ten usually work better than handicaps with a difference of more than 30.

- Knockout format considerations
  - Knock-out is a difficult format for a single event as half the players only have one match. It is most commonly used for tournaments which are played over the course of a longer period.
  - Consider a plate tournament. This guarantees at least two matches per players, but is time consuming if part of a tournament weekend
- Round robin format considerations
  - Possible single day format would be group one from 9am-12pm, group two from 12pm-3pm, with two semi-finals and a final to follow. A group of four would have six half hour matches to fit in
  - If a handicap tournament, consider dividing the field in two by handicap, putting one group in the top half of the draw and the other group in the

bottom half. This will reduce the number of large handicap differences until the final

- Work out in advance how the winner (and runners up) of a group will be determined. Precedence might be: 1 – matches, 2 – net games won, 3 – head to head; alternatively: 1 – matches, 2 – net games, 3 – fewest games against. There are differences as to who would go through and so be prepared to explain and justify your choice.
- Match format considerations
  - There are many match formats which have to balance the enjoyment of a full match with the constraint of needing matches to last a predictable length of time for match scheduling. Your choices are of course wider if the event is held over multiple days, if your club has two courts, or even if the tournament is jointly held by two clubs, and then longer matches are possible.
    - ◆ **3 sets:** Are you prepared for matches which will take very different amounts of time. a 6-5, 5-6, 6-5 match may take many multiples of the time a 6-0 6-0 match. Even starting the final set at 3-3 is no guarantee the match will finish within 75 minutes and it might be finished in just 30
    - ◆ **Time limited:** Make sure you consider all these options before the day: what happens if the buzzer goes mid rally? Finish point or hard cut off? What happens if games are tied when time is up? Record match as a draw? Play one more point to determine winner? Give the match to the person on serve? This must be documented and clear to all players in advance
    - ◆ **One set to 6/8/10:** An easy format for players to understand
    - ◆ **Play a specified number of games:** This should give the most even time on court for each match
    - ◆ **Be creative:** You can be innovative and have any format you can think up. For example, Tuxedo and elsewhere hold a doubles tournament where each player switches partner for every match

### Match Play and Marking

- The marker should make sure players know before a match starts:
  - What the handicap is
  - What (if any) local rules there are
  - What the marker is unable to call. For example:
    - Hazard chases – if the marker is in the dedans the player(s) at the receiving end will need to mark hazard chases. Make sure players are clear that they need to call hazard chases, and that the ball is a stroke if it hits the service line
    - Faults – similarly, players need to be clear who calls a service fault. If the marker is in the dedans, s/he will probably call faults in all situations except when the ball is short on the floor. The receiver needs to be clear that they need to call faults which are short of the service line

- Out of court – the marker will not always be able to see when the ball goes out of court (e.g. the marker in the dedans cannot see the ball go out of court above the dedans penthouse). Players should be made aware that they will have to inform the marker when the ball goes out of court in such blind spots
- Slow play can frustrate tournament schedules. Calling out the score quickly between points can help speed up the tempo of play
- The marker should encourage the next match to start as soon as possible. The marker should ask whether players are ready to speed them up, and should not expect the match to start as soon as s/he asks this!

### On the day

- Ensure that all involved, including entrants, are aware of the rules that are being followed – include any local variations too
- Record the score and update the physical and electronic tournament draw/table. Make sure the players involved know if and when they will have a further match
- Ensure all results are recorded on RTO promptly after the tournament concludes
- Make sure everyone knows when they are due on court for their first match and will arrive on time. Make sure that they know their schedule for any subsequent matches too.
- Complaints – be prepared for potential complaints:
  - Marking issues – explain that the marker has to make judgement calls, but will do so to the best of their ability and will be sure to be consistent in rulings. Players of all handicaps and experience can still be confused by **parallax**
  - “Bandits” – you should decide in advance if you have the right to change any player’s handicap during the tournament. It is of course far better if you are confident in the players handicaps before the start of the tournament