Australia
International and National Tournaments
Opportunities and Challenges

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1

The Australian Post Covid Experience

- Australia has about 36,000 members and 330 clubs
- All clubs closed in March 2020
- Online ABF Clubs and ABF National Online Games commenced in April 2020
  - Online platforms - BBO, Stepbridge and later RealBridge and Real Deal
  - About 30%-40% of members played online (UK 50%)
  - 60 of 330 clubs provided online clubs
- Face to face bridge recommenced
  - July 2020 in South Australia(7% of ABF members), Western Australia(12%), ACT (3%) and Tasmania(2%)
  - September in NSW(39%) and Queensland(21%)
  - December in Victoria(16%)
- About 90% of members have returned to playing F2F in clubs so far
- Online games have now dropped by 70% - 80% from the peak in May 2021

2

National Tournaments

- All congresses were cancelled from March 2020 just after the two major congresses were played in Canberra and the Gold Coast in Jan/Feb 2020
- State congresses were again played F2F in Covid free Perth Sept/Dec 2020
- F2F were also held in low or nil Covid cases in Tasmania, Adelaide and Perth in April/May 2021
- The Victorian championships were postponed from June to August 21 because of a Covid lockdown
- The Australian National Championship Teams events are hoped to be held in early July 2021 in Perth, Western Australia
- NSW is in lockdown and will play its matches online from Sydney against the other states in Perth
- However, it is possible that this event may have to be postponed because of Covid restrictions

3

International Zone 7 Playoffs

- The Asian Pacific Bridge Federation event to be held in Perth in April 2020 was postponed indefinitely
- To retain the Australia and New Zealand Bowl spots in the WBF Zone 7 the playoffs were held Online in May 2021
- The events were Open, Women's, Seniors', Mixed and Youth
- Zoom meetings were held with NZ to share policies which brought the two National Bridge Organisations closer together which has continued
- The Australian representatives were located in seven sites around the country each with supervisors to ensure the integrity of the competition
- The Playoffs were played on Real Bridge providing video and audio security
- Each player took their own computer and headphones and were well separated
- New Zealand had two sites which were also supervised

4

Online Tournaments

- Online with video and audio combined with on-site supervision can provide a secure competition
- A hybrid of online and face to face can be used effectively and with integrity
- Also local competitions can be run online for convenience to rebuild night time bridge or to attract more players from a wider market

5

2) Testing Times for Tournament Bridge

✓ START recording and transcription

Tournament bridge suffered during the early months of the pandemic with all major competitions, trials and events cancelled. More recently, tournaments are being organised online.

Questions to discuss:

1. Is the future of tournament bridge digital? What are some of the challenges of that if so?
2. Are tablets going to replace cards at tournaments?
3. If there is some kind of digital hybrid, how will that be managed, supervised and played?
4. Any other ideas for new flexible formats for competitions?

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6