**The Northern League – A Discussion Paper from the Selection Committee**

The Northern League (NL) was, and remains, the most problematic area for the Selection Committee (SC). There are a variety of issues relating to the NL, and these include, inter alia:

* The difficulty of picking sufficient pairs due to availability
* The difficulty of finding substitute pairs when selected pairs drop out
* The policy of selection for the A2 team and (in future years) the C2 team.

In the 2017-18 season the SC was mindful of the wishes of the AGM to ensure that the A1, B, and particularly the C team, were suitably competitive in the division. The exact minute from the 2017 AGM is:

After a lively discussion it was agreed that the Selection Committee would have a remit to choose a more competitive C team for each of the four rounds of the Northern League even if this meant that fewer players would be chosen.

The current SC took the view that this was sacrosanct (and the previous year’s decision that B should be competitive) and that therefore, if through lack of availability, a team had to be compromised in terms of quality, then that team would be the A2 team. Match 4 of the Northern League showed that if we have full availability Manchester can put out a competitive A2 team, but that was the only match with such availability.

However, discussion at Council suggested that this view, which the SC believes is simply reflecting the wishes of the AGM, was far from universal. Council suggested two other options for picking the A2 team:

1. The teams are selected in strict rank order. That is, the SC effectively ranks the pairs available, then pairs 1-4 are A1, pairs 5-8 A2, pairs 9-12 B, etc.
2. A2 is regarded as a “training team” whereby pairs who may be good enough in the future to play in the A1 team, but who currently are too inexperienced and/or weak to play in A1 play in A2.

The SC would like to point out that there are some concerns with either of these proposals, specifically:

1. The SC has canvassed players and pairs about their preferences and a number have expressed very clearly that they wish to play in A2 rather than B, or vice versa. Either of the above would mean ignoring the wishes of these players, which could well mean that they would not play, exacerbating the difficulties of getting enough players to the table still further.
2. Depending on your viewpoint, perhaps more importantly, either policy would mean that it is highly unlikely that Manchester will ever win the B division of the NL again. It should be noted that no less than four counties (Cumbria, Westmorland, North Wales and the North East) have teams in the B division but NOT in the A division of the NL. This would mean that effectively the Manchester third team would be competing against the first team from these counties. It is unlikely that the B team would therefore win the division and move on to the all counties Super Final.

This issue has now been discussed at both of the last two AGMs and Council meetings inbetween. The SC is heartily sick of complying with what it believes is the AGM’s wishes and then being criticised for this, or, worse still, being asked to do contradictory things. The SC is happy to conform to whatever the wishes of the membership are, but would like this issue finally put to bed.

Does the membership want the B and C teams to be competitive[[1]](#footnote-1), in which case neither (i) nor (ii) above is tenable, or does the membership want either (i) or (ii) above, in which cases Manchester is highly unlikely to win the B division again, and the wishes of some players will have to be ignored.

Moving onto the C division, for the first time in 2018, Manchester will have two teams in the C division. The proposal from the SC is that the C1 team is selected so as to be competitive in the C division, whereas the C2 team consists of players who have expressed interest in playing for the county, regardless of playing strength, and that he SC will, more or less, select any pair who wishes to play. The SC would like confirmation from the AGM that this is what it wishes.

Paper from the MCBA Selection Committee

May 2018

1. This is the SC’s preferred option [↑](#footnote-ref-1)