

MANCHESTER COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION HIGSON TROPHY CUP AND PLATE 2025-26

CONDITIONS OF CONTEST

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Appendix B: Procedure in the Case of Difficulty Arranging Matches

These Conditions of Contest are the definitive conditions under which the Manchester Contract Bridge Association (MCBA) Higson Cup and Plate competition will run. MCBA has also produced a much shorter and simpler set of guidelines to assist teams and captains in organising and playing matches, particularly if they are relatively new to playing matches in competitions. The guidelines will suffice in almost all cases, unless difficulties arise in arranging a match or during the match itself, when this fuller set of Conditions of Contest will have to be consulted.

In all cases, if there is any discrepancy between the Guidelines and these Conditions of Contest, then the Conditions of Contest will take precedence.

1. Definitions

1. The Conditions of Contest for the Manchester Contract Bridge Association (MCBA) Higson Cup and Plate comprise these Conditions of Contest and the general regulations of the EBU concerning matches played privately. In the event of any conflict between the EBU regulations on matches played privately and these regulations, these regulations shall prevail.
2. For any issues relating to the Higson Cup or Plate, these regulations, arranging matches, or any other matter relating to the MCBA competition, please contact the Higson Cup and Plate Secretary, Paul Beckwith, at cup@manchesterbridge.org.uk

2. Scope of the Higson Cup and Plate

1. The MCBA Higson Cup and Plate is a handicapped local competition played by teams made up of players who are EBU members and who have Manchester as their primary or secondary county of affiliation.
2. Knockout matches will be played face to face unless both captains agree to play online.
3. The Higson Cup will consist of two or three rounds of matches leading to an all play all final at a suitable venue (usually a MCBA affiliated club) within the MCBA area
4. The teams will play round robin matches in groups of 3 (or 4) with the team heading each group progressing to the Cup final and the second placed team to the Plate final (in the group of 4 both 2nd and 3rd to the Plate final)
5. The matches will be organised by the Higson Cup Secretary so as to ensure a suitable number of teams are in Higson Cup and Higson Plate finals
6. A random draw for the groups will be undertaken by the Higson Cup Secretary, with seeding for an appropriate number of teams (and in the case of groups with 3 teams, each will have one home and one away match eg A v B, B v C, C v A) Captains should consult the EBU league page to see who is the home/away team for each match
7. A group of 4 teams will play each other team (so 3 matches A v B, C v D, B v C, D v A, A v C, B v D.
8. Teams will be informed of their opponents after the draw is made, and also of the end date for completing the matches. Every effort should be made to play the matches by the due date. Matches which are played late disrupt the event both for the Higson Secretary and for the next opponents. In the case of difficulty, the provisions of Appendix C and Section 9 will apply.

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8. The Higson Cup and Higson Plate are handicap events.

The group round matches will be handicapped according to the difference in the rating quotient each team has been assigned with the difference being the imps conceded to the team with the lower quotient for 24 board matches . The group rounds of the Higson Cup and Plate will be scored by IMPs, after taking

into account the handicap. In the event of a tie, the team with the lower quotient will be deemed to have won the match (so effectively the team with the higher rating has to win the match by the handicap +1 IMP to go through). If the teams are of equal rating and there is therefore no handicap, additional sets of 4 boards will be played until a result is achieved.

9. The final positions of the teams in each group will be based on matches won, but where this does not produce a result, then total net IMPs will be the deciding factor. It is important therefore that scores for each match should be accurately recorded with any handicap added to the imp total of the lower ranked team.
10. The Higson Secretary will make a decision as to what rating the team is to have in order to determine the handicap. In making the decision, the Higson Secretary may consult publicly available information about the players such as NGS grades and may also consult other MCBA officials. The Higson Secretary will inform all teams at the time of the draw for the round-robin matches what their handicap rating is.
11. The finals of the Higson Cup and Plate will also be handicapped but on this occasion by using the NGS gradings of the players and the EBU handicapping formula modified by the MCBA adjustment. The details of the system can be found on pages 39-40 of the full guide to the National Grading Scheme which is available at <https://www.ebu.co.uk/ngs> and the MCBA adjustment will be published prior to the final
12. Any player(s) in a team who keep their NGS rating hidden, or do not yet have one, will be awarded an NGS grade at the discretion of the Higson Secretary:
13. The final of the Higson Cup and Plate will be scored by IMPs, converted to VPs on an appropriate scale, after the handicap adjustments of the NGS.
14. Ties in the finals will be split first by reference to the direct match between the two teams, then by total IMPs, and if there is a still a tie, the team with the lower NGS rating will win the split.
15. The Higson Cup and Plate winners will hold the trophy for 1 year.

3. Entry Fee

1. The entry is free for teams entering the League, otherwise £20 for teams with members from more than one league team or non-participants in the league.
2. Entry fees are due by 10th October 2024 at the latest. Any team paying after this date will be subject to a £10 per team per month or part of month late fee which may be waived at the discretion of the Cup Secretary
3. Payment is preferred by BACS. [Bank details : Account name : MCBA. Sort Code : 01-07-20 A/c Number : 41526708. Please use](#) HIG23 followed the team name as a reference. [If paying by cheque it should be made out to MCBA, have the team name on the back and sent to The Treasurer, MCBA, 10 Priest Avenue, Gatley, Cheadle, SK8 4JW.](#)
4. There is no additional entry fee to play in the Higson Plate.

4. Team Members and Eligibility

1. **A team may have up to six players.**
2. All players in a team must be current members of the EBU and must have Manchester as their county of primary or secondary allegiance before the start of the first match. School students who are not EBU members should contact the Cup Secretary who will arrange membership of the EBU for them at no cost.
3. Any team fielding a player in a match who does not have Manchester as county of primary or secondary allegiance will forfeit the match.
4. No player may play for more than one team in the Higson Cup or Plate in any one season. Any team which plays a player who has already played for another team in the Higson Cup or Plate will forfeit the match.

5. Arranging Matches

1. **Whilst being a competitive event, the Higson Cup and Plate is meant to be friendly. It is thus assumed that all matches can be arranged amicably between the team captains.**
2. All the group matches must be completed by 22nd March 2026
3. It is good practice to start arranging the match as soon as the draw comes out. History has repeatedly shown that teams who leave the arrangements until near the closing date for play have great difficulty arranging the match, and often end up defaulting.
4. All matches should be arranged by mutual agreement between the captains.
5. Either captain may initiate the arrangement of matches, though the onus is on the away captain to initiate the contact.
6. Matches played face to face can be at any reasonable venue, but are normally played in the home captain's house, or at a bridge club. Teams wishing to play at a bridge club should contact the relevant club for details of facilities, including food.
7. When arranging a face to face match, the venue, start time, any dietary requirements, any access requirements, and any other relevant matters, should all be clearly specified. It is also useful for captains to exchange phone numbers, particularly mobile numbers, in case they need to contact each other on the night.
8. For face to face matches the home team is responsible for all costs (unless the match is at a half way venue when the costs are shared) and should provide light refreshments (usually a hot drink, sandwich and cake or something of that sort).

On occasion, through no fault, a match has to be cancelled, and it will need to be re-arranged. If a match is cancelled with less than 24 hours notice, the Higson Cup Secretary must be informed. If a match is cancelled near to the play by date, re-arrangement may not be possible, and a default may have to be awarded.

It is hoped that all matches can be arranged. If, for whatever reason, there are problems arranging the match, then the Higson Secretary should be contacted immediately. The provisions of Appendix C will be followed in the case of difficulties in arranging matches and team captains are advised to study these.

6. Playing Conditions and Playing the Match

- 1. In the group rounds, all matches will be 24 boards.**
- 24 board matches are played in two 12 board stanzas, with compulsory change of opponents after the first stanza. The away team captain chooses which pair of the home team to play against in the first stanza. Should a team play more than four players in a match (which is not recommended) then the extra player(s) may only play in the second stanza, and in that case the opposing captain has choice of which pair to play against in the second stanza. If both teams play more than four players, then the home captain has choice of opponents in the second stanza.

7. In the event of matches Captains agree to play online

1. For matches on BBO captains should set them up with +private+ and +slow+ in the description field. This will prevent other players trying to enter your match and will stop a match timing out if it is played very slowly. The addition of +noinvite+ in the description field will enable the captain to omit a player from either team and start the match with seven or fewer players. The missing player can then be introduced by the following method. Click on the match in your Director tab and choose Show Tables from the options. Where there is a missing player the word Invite will appear in their seat. Click on Invite and type in the missing player's name. They will get an invitation to SUBSTITUTE in the match. As soon as they accept you can start playing. All the instructions must use lower case and have a + both before and after. e.g. +NOINVITE+ will NOT work.
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 4. All players must abide by the EBU Best Behaviour at Bridge guidelines. Anyone who thinks they have been affected by bad behaviour should report back to the League Secretary as soon as possible.
 5. For face to face matches no animals other than guide dogs may be brought into the playing area.
 6. Smoking (including electronic cigarettes) is prohibited in all face to face playing rooms throughout the match. However, the match host may designate an area where smoking is permitted during scoring breaks.
 7. Players are requested to turn off mobile phones, ipads, ipods etc during face to face matches.
 8. Each pair must have two identically completed system cards for the opponents to refer to. It is expected that EBU 20B convention cards will be used. WBF convention cards are acceptable ONLY if prior permission has been obtained from the opposition captain.
 9. EBU regulations, and in particular the EBU alert and announcing procedures should be followed at all times. The EBU summary of alerting and announcing regulations is available at <https://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/publications>.

10. Level 4 conventions as defined in the EBU Blue Book are allowed. However, pairs playing methods or conventions that may be unfamiliar to opponents should note that the onus is on them to fully explain their methods to opponents. For methods that may be unknown to opponents, it is considered good practice for a pair to make available a convention card to the opposing team captain prior to any match. For example, a pair playing Polish Club might wish to do this as their opponents may never have come across this system before. However, there is no requirement to do this.
11. For all face to face matches bidding boxes must be used (except in the case of disability).
12. For face to face matches boards are dealt at the table in the presence of at least one player from each team. Pre-duplicated (duplimated) boards may be used as long as both captains agree and are satisfied with the security arrangements.

7. Rulings

1. A Tournament Director (TD) or a suitably qualified player present but not playing in the match may give a ruling. Do not continue to play the board without a ruling. Please inform the Cup Secretary about any rulings.
2. If no TD ruling is attainable or you wish to appeal the TD ruling, send the full details about the hand to the Cup Secretary using an Appeal Form which can be downloaded from the EBU site (<https://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/forms>). The form should make clear what details are agreed upon by both teams. The Cup Secretary will consult with suitable players and make a ruling with reference to EBU regulations.
3. Teams unhappy with the Cup Secretary's ruling may appeal to the EBU about the ruling, but unless it is a matter of bridge regulation, they may decline to hear it.

8. Incorrect Direction of Seating

1. It is considered good practice to nominate a home table, where the home team sit North-South and an away table, where the away team sit North-South. However, both pairs at the table are equally responsible for sitting in the correct direction. If a pair sits in the wrong direction in one stanza, that set cannot be scored. Any completed stanza will be scored by IMPs. The remaining stanza(s) will have to be replayed, either immediately or at a later date arranged by both captains, and before the closing date of the round. If, for whatever reason, the stanza looks like it cannot be replayed then the League Secretary should be contacted immediately. The provisions of Appendix C will apply in such circumstances, and a team may find that it defaults the match if it does not make sufficient attempt to get the stanza replayed.

9. Abandonment of Match

1. If a match is abandoned due to unforeseen circumstances with neither team at fault, then any remaining boards should be replayed at another date. The provisions of 6.16 above apply in the case of abandonment of a match.

10. Fouled or Cancelled Boards

1. If a board is fouled or cancelled in the first stanza, a substitute board is added to the next stanza with the same dealer and vulnerability. If a board is fouled or cancelled in the last stanza a substitute board may not be played if the final score without that board is known.

11. Late Arrival

1. The home team should allow leniency in the matter of late arrival, particularly if matches have a start time which means the opposition are travelling during rush hour. However, the home team may choose to impose the following penalties for late arrival:
 - A team is deemed to have arrived when it has four players present at the venue.
 - A team cannot start to count any late period until four of its players are present at the venue.
 - If a team arrives less than 30 minutes late, there is no penalty
 - If a team arrives more than 30 minutes late, the match is shortened by removing two boards (so now the match is 22 boards long).
 - For each further complete 15-minute period by which the offending team is late, two further boards are removed.
 - The maximum number of boards which can be removed is 8.
 - For each board removed, the non-offending side scores 3 IMPs.
 - **The boards removed are those consecutively numbered from 1.**
 - When the length of the match is known, the number of boards is divided into two equal stanzas (or as near two equal stanzas as possible).
 - If a team arrives more than 90 minutes late, the match is defaulted.

The late arriving team has the right of appeal to the League Secretary for mitigation but would need to provide clear evidence of unusual circumstances ("heavy traffic" for example would not be considered unusual circumstances).

12. Scoring and Reporting Results

1. **Scoring will be by IMPs, with the result determined after the handicaps have been applied.**
2. Full details of the match including the name of the winning team and the net IMP difference should be noted and uploaded to the EBU website <https://www.ebu.co.uk/members/v2/> within 24 hours of a match being played by either captain. To submit a Higson Cup or Plate Result:
 - Click My EBU and enter your EBU No and Password
 - Click Utilities and EBU League
 - Find your team and division corresponding to your Team registered entry
 - Click on the specific match and enter the results and tick players accordingly

13. Substitutes

1. No substitutes will be allowed in any knockout match, additional players may be registered with the Cup secretary's agreement provided they have not played for another team in the Contest.
2. If fewer than four players are available for a pre-arranged match, or for the final, then the following options are available:
 - Try and re-arrange the match
 - Register another player(s) on the team who is available for the match. Such a player(s) must not have played for any other team in the Higson Cup or Plate in that season.
3. New players in a team must be fulfil the criteria in section 4 above. The Higson Cup Secretary must be informed about any new players before the new player plays in a match. Failure to do this will result in the match being forfeited.
4. If a team cannot raise 4 players to play and the match cannot be re-arranged then the match is forfeited to the opponents. However, if the Higson Secretary receives evidence that the opposition have been unreasonable in not trying to re-arrange the match then the Higson Cup Secretary has the right the award the match to the other team. The provisions of Appendix C will apply in determining this.

14. Defaults

1. All matches should be played by the due date. Late matches disrupt the competition and cause problems for the Higson Secretary and the next opponents.
2. If there is difficulty in arranging a match the Higson Cup Secretary should be contacted as soon as possible.
3. If the match cannot be played, then one team will be awarded a default. The provisions of Appendix B will apply, and team captains are advised to read these carefully.

15. Withdrawals

1. On occasion a team withdraws from the Higson Cup or Plate. In such a case the team it is due to play is awarded a walkover except that if a team withdraws before the first round of the Higson Cup then their place will be offered to a reserve team
2. Teams should do all they reasonably can to avoid withdrawing, including registering new players. The Higson Cup Secretary reserves the right to refuse entry in the following season to some or all the members of a team who consistently withdraw from the event. For this purpose, consistent will be withdrawing in two years.

16. Masterpoints

1. **EBU regulations do not allow the award of masterpoints to handicap events, so no masterpoints will be awarded for the Higson Cup or Higson Plate.**

Appendix B: Procedure in the Case of Difficulty Arranging Matches

It is hoped that all matches can be arranged amicably. If, for whatever reason, there are problems arranging the match, then the following regulations will apply:

1. Teams should contact each other as soon as the draw comes out, preferably without 48 hours. Either captain may initiate contact, but the onus is on the away captain to make first contact.
2. If, for whatever reason, there is difficulty in arranging a match, then the away team should formally offer 4 dates to the home team, these all to be before the end date of the round (or within any extension if granted).
3. Of these dates, at least 3 must be week evening dates, and no more than 2 should fall in any continuous 7 day period. None of the dates should be on a day where the opposing team have said they cannot play.
4. All dates offered must be a minimum of 5 weekdays from the date they are offered (that is, if dates are offered on a Monday, the earliest date that be offered is the following Monday etc).
5. It is advised that these dates are communicated by email or other written communication in order to ensure an audit trail.
6. If the conditions above are met, the home team is unable to agree to any of these dates, and no other date can be arranged, then the match will be awarded to the away team as a default.
7. If the away team cannot or will not offer the relevant number of dates within 1 week of being requested by the home captain, then the home team is entitled to offer dates, in line with the provisions of paragraphs 2) – 5) above.
8. If the away team is unable to agree to any of these dates, and no other date can be arranged, then the match will be awarded to the home team as a default.
9. If neither team are able to offer dates which comply with 2) – 5) above and/or were unable to prove that (see 5) above) then the match will be awarded by the Higson Secretary. In exceptional circumstances, the Higson Secretary may decide that both teams default the match. In making the decision, the Higson Secretary will consult other MCBA officers.
10. *In all cases, the team(s) awarded against can appeal against this decision. This appeal will be dealt with by the Chair of Council, who may form a committee of up to 3 people to assist. In the first instance the team Captain should advise the MCBA Secretary that they wish to appeal. The Secretary can be contacted by emailing secretary@manchesterbridge.org.uk The Higson Secretary may not be involved in the appeal, though the Higson Secretary will be asked for a written statement as to how and why the decision was made. Any MCBA officer who the Higson Secretary consulted about the decision also is also barred from being involved in the appeal.*

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