



2022 PLAYERS SURVEY

Introduction

A small group of players in the over 75 and over 80 age groups have raised a concern that matches at ESM events are over too quickly and have asked the Committee to undertake a general consultation with players about the scoring system used for regional tournaments and also, for older age groups, the choice of ball used. The Committee has agreed to conduct a survey of all players on these topics and is sending the attached questionnaire to you. If you would like to respond, please do so no later than 12th June 2022.

Before you respond, the Committee would like you to consider the following points:

Scoring

- With only finals being played on the Sunday, the event organiser typically has to schedule 175-200 matches between the start time on the Friday afternoon and the end of play on Saturday. **With this quantity of matches, court utilisation during tournaments runs at over 95% even with the current 30-minute allocation per match.**
- ESM regional tournaments are very popular and have grown substantially in the last few seasons pre-Covid. Despite the pandemic, the three regional tournaments held this season saw near record entries. The large entries allowed ESM to, for the first time, pay for external referees to mark the majority of matches. This has been universally welcomed by players and has contributed significantly to the ability of the organisers to maintain the playing schedule during events.
- ESM have agreed with England Squash to work to further increase participation in masters' events, building on its position regarded as the largest and most successful masters circuit in the world. As a result, ESM are planning to work with clubs to offer a level of event below regional. These club or area level competitions will have some flexibility in how they are organised.
- There are three choices of scoring system available within the rules of squash; PAR-11, PAR-15 and HIHO. All of the peer group masters events to ESM such as World, European, Australian, South African, North American, etc uniformly play Par-11.
- Although ESM events are open to players of all standards, performance in the regional tournaments is a component part of selection for national teams. ESM is constantly ensuring a balance between its commitment to accessibility with recognition that the best players who enter regional tournaments will be playing to the same standard as seen in European or World Masters Championships.
- Both HIHO and PAR-15 scoring have been used in the past by ESM and these led to significant time overruns and delays to the court schedule which disproportionately affected the younger age groups playing later in each day.
- The Committee have produced a detailed statistical analysis of the matches played this season which can be viewed here ([hyperlink](#)). Based on this data, the Committee

believe a change from PAR-11 to PAR-15 scoring would extend the average time of a match by about 35% and a change to HIHO by even more. **It would not be possible with the currently available facilities and time to schedule the same number of matches per event as is done now.**

- An earlier start time on Friday does not mitigate any change to the length of matches as all age groups with an 8-draw or larger will have quarter and semi-final rounds to be scheduled on the Saturday. **With longer average match times, a significant lengthening of play on Saturday would be inevitable if draw sizes were maintained.**
- Introducing a cap on entries is not desirable for several reasons. In the event scoring changed from PAR-11 to PAR-15, the Committee believe a cap would need to be set at around 150 players. This is significantly lower than the current demand of around 200 players. Limiting entries at such a low level would damage the reputation of ESM and would be inconsistent with the agreed aim to increase participation. It would also have implications for the cost of events. For example, retaining referees to mark matches would require a substantial rise in entry fees.
- There is clearly a balance to be struck between the wishes of an individual playing in an event and what needs to be in place to ensure that as many players as possible have a positive experience. Factors such as certainty in the match schedule for all age groups, referee marking, and availability of a plate tournament to allow all players more than one match enhance the overall reputation of ESM and attract new players.
- Based on the above, the Committee believe that a general change in scoring from PAR-11 to any longer format would have a significant adverse effect on the organisation of regional tournaments and recommends that PAR-11 is RETAINED for all age groups.

Choice of Ball (O65 and above)

- The default ball for all age groups is the Dunlop Pro (double yellow)
- Under the current regulations, if both players agree to use the Dunlop Competition (single yellow) ball then this may be substituted. The tournament desk always carry a supply of Competition balls to facilitate this.
- The Committee is asking whether you would prefer to retain this regulation as currently set out or whether you would prefer to make the Competition ball the default for matches in your age group.