



NGS exemptions

We had replies to our recent consultation about NGS exemptions for hosts, from clubs and counties across the country. A majority of those indicated they would be in favour of removing exemptions to prevent possible abuse of the system but a significant minority were against it (a few didn't address the question at all and some seemed to argue both ways!).

In reading those replies the impression comes across that the NGS is a valued benefit to members. However there were a few suggestions for change, not all of which would be practical to put into place, particularly if they would require significant software changes.

- Disregard the first two or three results a pair gets playing together [*This would remove a lot of data from the system and be as likely to seem unfair to those who have a good game with a new partner.*]
- Lower the initial NGS allocation for new players in clubs as 42 is too high for them [*Checking the data actually suggests a starting point of 42 is a little **low** on average. It may be too high for true beginners rather than for others who are joining an affiliated club for the first time, but there isn't a reliable way to separate the two groups.*]
- Require exempting players to notify us at the start of the game [*As will be seen below, we are going to do exactly that.*]
- Reduce the volatility of the system, or make it slower for grades to reduce than to go up
- Remove the added weighting of results in EBU events
- Check up on results for abuse and deal with the miscreants rather than removing the opt-out from everyone [*Again, this is what is planned.*]
- Software should be written to prevent abuse
- Extreme results should be discounted

Three of our largest clubs and one county, all of whom regularly put a great deal of effort into encouraging beginners and improvers, took the trouble to have meetings about this subject and to write detailed and well-argued responses telling us that their success as clubs is due to their ability to bring in new players, helping them to bridge the gap from beginner's games to the main club.

They say that the NGS exemption option is something that helps them get the mentors who facilitate this. Although they have been told that the system will balance out if they play with less experienced players, they still doubt this when we are talking about them playing with real beginners rather than experienced players with low NGS grades.

Consequently we have listened to them and decided to leave the scheme as it is, but to introduce a system whereby those who choose to exempt themselves have to tell us at the start of the game, using the form they will find on their MyEBU member's page. We hope this will not prove inconvenient, but it must be remembered that the alternative would have been to remove the option altogether, so hosts must be prepared to do this if they want to take advantage of it.

Summary

- We recognise that a small number of clubs that are especially involved with teaching and progressing players feel very strongly that the NGS exemption should not be removed and so it will remain, but it will not be extended.
- These exemptions are a privilege that can be removed at any time, either from an individual player or from a club, and abuse of the system could lead to disciplinary cases.
- The terms of exemptions are:
 - Only one host player per game (and optionally their partner) may be exempted
 - Only unfamiliar partnerships are eligible: once a pair have played together three times, they should not consider themselves to be an unfamiliar partnership
 - Exemption must be chosen at the start of the game. **There is now a form on each member's My EBU area which, in addition to selecting the appropriate option in the scoring program, must be filled on each occasion that a host wishes to be exempt. This has to be done as soon as the host knows they will be playing and in any case no more than 30 minutes after the start of the game** (this 30-minute leeway is only offered for the benefit of hosts who are not confirmed to be playing until the end of the first round of the game). The use of this form becomes mandatory at the start of August but is available for use now
- The possibility remains that any member may elect to have their NGS kept private and this is the proper action for anyone who is concerned that their NGS does not properly reflect their ability, for whatever reason.
- Some players have in the past routinely exempted themselves for all sessions, even though it does not benefit them in any way. They are **not allowed** to do this and it too is considered abuse of the system.