

Big changes coming at World Championships

President Gianarrigo Rona reports at Bali

Significant changes are in store for players who compete in world championships. World Bridge Federation President Gianarrigo Rona reported on Monday that the organization's Executive Council has approved changes in the way tournaments are conducted, starting next year with the World Bridge Series in Sanya, China. . . The first week will feature Mixed Teams and Mixed Pairs. All players who fail to advance in the teams will be allowed to drop into the pairs final, including the top four teams (first, second and the two teams involved in the play-off for third), provided the partnerships remain mixed.

The same set of conditions will apply the second week, when the events will be the Rosenblum Open, McConnell Women's and Rand Cup Senior Teams, plus the Generali Open and Women's Pairs plus Hiron Senior Pairs. Members of teams failing to advance may drop into their respective events - Open Teams members into the Open Pairs, etc. Players may not cross events when they drop in.

The teams will be played with Swiss qualifying rounds to form semi-final A and semi-final B groups. The top 27 teams from semi-final A and the top five teams from semi-Final B will begin knockout play.

Pairs will also play to semi-final A and semifinal B groups to qualify a certain number of pairs for the final. Exact conditions are to be determined. With these conditions in effect, said Rona, it will be theoretically possible - albeit extremely difficult - for a pair to win four world championships in two weeks.

Rona said consolation games will be a thing of the past. All games will be important. "It's a real world championship," he said.

World Bridge Games

The tournament once known as the World Team Olympiad has also made changes. Starting in 2016, for the first time, the tournament will feature National Pairs (players must be from the same country) in addition to National Teams.

Players from teams that do not advance can drop into the pairs. Rona said the change is meant to assure that every country can be represented in the championship. "Some federations," he said, "cannot send a team to the Olympiad, but they can send one pair." He noted that there is a quota of one team per country, but nations are not limited to one pair.

Even more important, he said, is that starting in 2016, nations that send at least one pair to the World Bridge Games will be eligible to play in the next two World Bridge Teams Championships (Bermuda Bowl, etc.), provided they qualify in their respective zones. "We are relaxing the rules to give people more opportunities for participation in world championships," the president said.

No more appeals Starting next year in Sanya, Rona said, there will be no more appeals committees at world championships.

The system in use will be the same as the one introduced at the 6th Open European Championships in Ostend, Belgium, in June. In that system, a player not satisfied with a tournament director's ruling will be allowed to ask for a review of the process by which the TD reached the decision. If the review of the process determines that it was not adequate, an adjustment could be made. There was only one such request during the two weeks of the tournament in Ostend, although Grattan Endicott, one of the reviewers, said there were a few cases that might have been reviewed had requests been made