
THIS EMAIL IS BEING SENT TO ALL FDTTA CLUB SECRETARIES AND TEAM CAPTAINS

This is to let you know that the FDTTA Committee met last night (virtually) to discuss how best to proceed with the league programme for the 2020/21 season in the light of the ongoing restrictions caused by the effects of COVID-19.

The relevant points we needed to focus on were:

- When will we be able to run a league programme with competitive matches?
- Which venues will be available for clubs?
- What will be the views of the players?

Unfortunately we do not have definitive answers to any of these questions but I'll try do deal with each in turn!

When will we be able to run a league programme with competitive matches?

We are required to follow the government guidelines and the advice of Table tennis England. The restrictions are too onerous to permit league matches. These include Risk Assessments, regularly sanitising all areas, including the tables, balls, toilets and any other surfaces. There is no changing of ends during games, no doubles matches and social distancing being observed. We believe this makes it unrealistic to operate a league programme at present.

Which venues will be available for clubs?

Some of the venues we use for matches remain closed and there is no clarity when they will reopen. Others are open and practice sessions have resumed but none would be in a position to offer match conditions.

What will be the views of the players?

They will be different. Some will not return until a COVID-19 vaccine is available. Others may not return at all and some will be willing to start immediately. With such uncertainty, the committee feels it would be inappropriate to launch the league in the short term.

The way forward

What we propose to do is start a league programme from January 2021. At this stage we have no idea how many teams there will be and therefore the divisional structure. We would aim to complete a programme of each team playing the others in its division twice (home and away) and, depending on the size of divisions - which cannot be determined yet, the season should be able to be completed by the middle of April. We do not envisage any 'spare' weeks or TKO competitions.

As the season will be shorter, we are minded to reduce the team fees from £65 to around £40 but this will be confirmed later. The tournament dates are scheduled as Saturday 9th January 2021 (Veterans) and Saturday 6th March 2021 for the Folkestone Closed. Both events are provisional at this stage.

The timetable going forward is to distribute team application papers to all clubs around 20th November 2020 and request they are returned by 11th December 2020.

As the league programme will be so fragmented, there will be no promotions or relegations but the divisional structure for the 2021/22 season will take into account the promotions and relegations from the 2019/20 season. The Presentation evening, provisionally scheduled for early May 2021 will see the awards presented for both 2019/20 and 2020/21.

I hope the above answers some of the questions you have but if you require further clarification, please refer to Bob Baker or me. Finally, we will continue to keep the situation under review enabling us to act quickly if there are any meaningful changes that require us to amend our provisional plans.

Best wishes and stay safe.

Steve

Steve Bispham
(Hon Secretary
Folkestone and District Table Tennis Association)