

POL/FIELD/BRODIE RULE CHANGES 2017 - 2018

1. Promotion and Relegation between Pol and Field

- 1.1 The Stewards were asked by the Tennis Committee to consider a proposal to amend the rules for the Pol Roger/Field for 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons so that the two clubs which have lost both their matches (and would under the current rules be relegated) should play a sudden death tie at a neutral venue the consequence of which would be that:
 - the loser of this sudden death tie would then automatically be relegated and replaced (in the Pol Roger) by the winner of the Field Trophy; and
 - the winner of this sudden death tie would then faces a further play-off with the losing finalist of the Field Trophy; the winner of this further play-off either remaining in, or being promoted to, the Pol Roger. This match would also be played at a neutral venue.
- 1.2 This would create an automatic one up/one down, but would create the possibility of two up/two down. This would produce two additional matches on the calendar. The Stewards were asked to consider whether to retain the status quo, make the change outlined above on a trial basis or make modifications to the change outlined above, again on a trial basis.
- 1.3 Pol Roger/Field teams were given until Sunday 23rd July to comment to the Stewards. Only three pieces of feedback were received, two of which were diametrically opposed.
- 1.4 One club strongly supported change, considering that only the strongest clubs should play in the Pol but accepted that there were some complexities about how this change would be implemented.
- 1.5 Another club was strongly opposed to changing the rules saying that the change outlined above appeared to be incredibly convoluted and its only purpose appeared to be to make it harder for teams in the Field Trophy to have a go at the Pol. That club took the view that to create 2 extra matches, with the only clear aim of preventing one team from the Field making it into the Pol, seemed like a lot of extra effort for very little gain. This seemed to the club concerned to be "simply a case of the bigger/better clubs protecting their status and giving the relative minnows a reduced chance of breaking through."
- 1.6 A third club indicated that they would accept the change outlined above but provided no commentary on the merits or demerits of such a change.
- 1.7 The Stewards are very grateful to the clubs which responded and have taken all the feedback received into account.
- 1.8 In evaluating whether to retain the status quo or trial something different the Stewards:
 - 1.8.1 considered that they were obliged to consider the best interest of British tennis and not to favour one club or group of clubs over others;
 - 1.8.2 noted that 10 clubs in total have been relegated from the Pol to the Field since the current format was introduced (with 2 clubs being relegated twice) and only 3 clubs have always been in the Pol Roger since its inception. The concept of a group of "bigger/better clubs" who should naturally be in the Pol and should not be relegated to the Field or of a group of clubs which should not be promoted to play in the Pol appeared hard to identify considering past results and also considering that fluctuations can occur from season to season as leading amateurs move from club to club, go up to and come down from university, turn professional, go to work abroad, retire prematurely through injury, get older or get injured playing another sport, former professionals regain amateur status and new players emerge; and

1.8.3 noted that either a strict 1 up/1 down or a modified 1 up/1 down plus the possibility for the Field Trophy runner up to be promoted will not avoid the possibility of "bigger, better clubs" being relegated. Assuming a Pol Roger draw which consists in a particular season of the 8 "biggest, best" clubs (if such an elite group can really be delineated) even strict 1 up/1 down will inevitably result in one of those 8 "biggest, best" clubs being relegated.

1.9 Taking all of these matters into consideration the Stewards have decided to retain the existing 2 up/2 down structure.

2. **Other changes**

2.1 It was noted that in last season's Pol one club gave a walkover at first string singles and the rules are being amended to prevent this.

2.2 The rule imposing handicap restrictions on teams in the Field has been deleted.

2.3 The change made last season under which in the Brodie Cup the home player or pairing owes half 15 (irrespective of the actual handicaps of the players) has been retained with the clarification that full deuce and advantage is to be played in each game.