



**MANCHESTER CONTRACT  
BRIDGE ASSOCIATION  
HIGSON TROPHY CUP AND  
PLATE 2019-20**

**CONDITIONS OF CONTEST**

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**These Conditions of Contest are the definitive conditions under which the Manchester Contract Bridge Association (MCBA) Higson Cup and Plate competition will run. MCBA has also produced a much shorter and simpler set of guidelines to assist teams and captains in organising and playing matches, particularly if they are relatively new to playing matches in competitions. The guidelines will suffice in almost all cases, unless difficulties arise in arranging a match or during the match itself, when this fuller set of Conditions of Contest will have to be consulted.**

**In all cases, if there is any discrepancy between the Guidelines and these Conditions of Contest, then the Conditions of Contest will take precedence.**

## **1. Definitions**

- 1.1. The Conditions of Contest for the Manchester Contract Bridge Association (MCBA) Higson Cup and Plate comprise these Conditions of Contest and the general regulations of the EBU concerning matches played privately. In the event of any conflict between the EBU regulations on matches played privately and these regulations, these regulations shall prevail.
- 1.2. For any issues relating to the Higson Cup or Plate, these regulations, arranging matches, or any other matter relating to the MCBA competition, please contact the Higson Cup and Plate Secretary, Adam Wiseberg, at [league@manchesterbridge.org.uk](mailto:league@manchesterbridge.org.uk)

## **2. Scope of the Higson Cup and Plate**

- 2.1. The MCBA Higson Cup and Plate is a handicapped local competition played by teams within the boundaries of the MCBA area. Whilst this is not strictly defined, it is expected that matches will be played within 14 miles of Manchester City Centre, defined for this purpose as Piccadilly Gardens. However, by mutual agreement, captains may play matches anywhere.
- 2.2. A team cannot insist on playing a match further than 14 miles from Piccadilly Gardens, and the away team can, in such circumstances, insist upon a half way venue. The costs of such a venue will be shared between the teams.
- 2.3. The Higson Cup and Plate will usually consist of three rounds of straight knockout matches leading to an all play all final at a suitable venue (usually a MCBA affiliated club) within the MCBA area.
- 2.4. The matches will be organised by the Higson Cup Secretary so as to:
  - Ensure a suitable number of teams are in Higson Cup and Higson Plate finals
  - Minimise the number of byes

To these ends, there may be some byes in either Round 1 or Round 2, but never in Round 3.

- 2.5. A random draw for each round will be undertaken by the Higson Cup Secretary, with no seeding and no exemptions from any round.
- 2.6. Teams will be informed of their opponents as soon as the draw is made, and also of the end date for playing the round. Every effort should be made to play the matches by the due date. Matches which are played late disrupt the event both for the Higson Secretary and for the next opponents. In the case of difficulty, the provisions of Appendix C and Section 9 will apply.

- 2.7. Teams losing in either Round 1 or Round 2 of the Higson Cup will enter the Higson Plate, except that no team whose members play in a team in division 1 or 2 of the MCBA League is allowed to enter the Higson Plate. If a team consists entirely or primarily of players who do not play in the MCBA League the Higson Secretary will make a decision as to whether or not such a team would be allowed to enter the Higson Plate. In making the decision, the Higson Secretary may consult publicly available information about the players such as NGS grades and may also consult other MCBA officials. The Higson Cup Secretary will inform such a team at the time of the draw for round 1 whether or not they will be allowed to play in the Higson Plate should they lose in Round 1 or round 2 of the Higson Cup.
- 2.8. The Higson Cup and Higson Plate are handicap events.
- 2.9. The knock out rounds of the Cup and Plate will be handicapped according to the schedule given in Appendix A for 24 board matches and in Appendix B for 32 boards. Thus, for example, if a Division 2 team is drawn against a Division 6 team in Round 1, then the Division 6 team starts the match with +25 IMPs. So, the Division 2 team will have to win the actual match by 26 IMPs or more to proceed to the next round.
- 2.10. If a team consists of players who play in different divisions of the MCBA League or contains players who do not play in the MCBA League, the Higson Secretary will make a decision as to what division the team is deemed to be placed in in order to determine the handicap. In making the decision, the Higson Secretary may consult publicly available information about the players such as NGS grades and may also consult other MCBA officials. The Higson Secretary will inform such a team at the time of the draw for round 1 what their handicap rating is.
- 2.11. The finals of the Higson Cup and Plate will also be handicapped but on this occasion by using the NGS gradings of the players and the EBU handicapping formula. The details of the system can be found on pages 39-40 of the full guide to the National Grading Scheme which is available at <https://www.ebu.co.uk/ngs>
- 2.12. Any player(s) in a team who keep their NGS rating hidden, or do not yet have one, will be awarded a NGS grade on the following scale:
  - Players who play in division 1 of the MCBA League will be awarded a NGS grade of 66% or such higher grade as assessed by the League secretary
  - Players who play in division 2 of the MCBA League will be awarded a NGS grade of 62% or such higher grade as assessed by the League secretary
  - Players who play in division 3 of the MCBA League will be awarded a NGS grade of 59% or such higher grade as assessed by the League secretary
  - Players who play in division 4 of the MCBA League will be awarded a NGS grade of 56% or such higher grade as assessed by the League secretary
  - Players who play in division 5 of the MCBA League will be awarded a NGS grade of 53% or such higher grade as assessed by the League secretary
  - Players who play in division 6 of the MCBA League will be awarded a NGS grade of 50% or such higher grade as assessed by the League secretary
  - Players who play in division 7 of the MCBA League will be awarded a NGS grade of 48% or such higher grade as assessed by the League secretary
  - Players who do not play in the MCBA League will be awarded by the Higson Cup Secretary a NGS grade. In determining an appropriate grade, the Higson Cup Secretary may consult publicly available information and may also consult other MCBA officials.

- 2.13. The knockout rounds of the Higson Cup and Plate will be scored by IMPs, after taking into account the handicap. In the event of a tie, the team from the lower division will be deemed to have won the match (so effectively the team from the higher division has to win the match by the handicap +1 IMP to go through). If the teams are from the same division and there is therefore no handicap, additional sets of 4 boards will be played until a result is achieved.
- 2.14. The final of the Higson Cup and Plate will be scored by IMPs, converted to VPs on an appropriate scale, after the handicap adjustments of the NGS.
- 2.15. Ties in the finals will be split first by reference to the direct match between the two teams, then by total IMPs, and if there is a still a tie, the team with the lower NGS rating will win the split.
- 2.16. The Higson Cup and Plate winners will hold the trophy for 1 year. Prize money will be awarded to the first 3 teams in the Higson Cup final and the first 2 teams in the Higson Plate final.

### **3. Entry Fee**

- 3.1. The entry fee is £20 for a team of four players, with a further £5 for each additional player. Any player(s) who has primary allegiance to another county (see section 4 below) will be required to pay £6 in addition to the entry fee unless that fee has already been paid to MCBA in respect of a League entry.
- 3.2. Entry fees are due by 31<sup>st</sup> August at the latest. Any team paying after 31<sup>st</sup> August will be subject to a £10 per team per month or part of month late fee.
- 3.3. Payment is preferred by BACS. Bank details : Account name : MCBA. Sort Code : 01-07-20 A/c Number : 41526708. Please use the team name as a reference. If paying by cheque it should be made out to MCBA, have the team name on the back and sent to The Treasurer, MCBA, 10 Priest Avenue, Gatley, Cheadle, SK8 4JW.
- 3.4. Entry is free to any team whose players are only from divisions 6 or 7 of the MCBA League.
- 3.5. There is no additional entry fee to play in the Higson Plate.

### **4. Team Members and Eligibility**

- 4.1. A team may have as many players as it wishes. However, teams with more than eight players are encouraged to split into two teams.
- 4.2. All players in a team must be current members of the EBU and must have Manchester as their county of primary or secondary allegiance before the start of the first match. School students are exempt from this requirement.
- 4.3. Any team fielding a player in a match who does not have Manchester as county of primary or secondary allegiance (except for school students) will forfeit the match.
- 4.4. No player may play for more than one team in the Higson Cup or Plate in any one season. Any team which plays a player who has already played for another team in the Higson Cup or Plate will forfeit the match.

### **5. Arranging Matches**

- 5.1. Whilst being a competitive event, the Higson Cup and Plate is meant to be friendly. It is thus assumed that all matches can be arranged amicably between the team captains.

- 5.2. It is good practice to start arranging the match as soon as the draw comes out. History has repeatedly shown that teams who leave the arrangements until near the closing date for play have great difficulty arranging the match, and often end up defaulting.
- 5.3. Team captains should check the information provided which indicates the preferred days of the team you are playing.
- 5.4. All matches should be arranged by mutual agreement between the captains.
- 5.5. Either captain may initiate the arrangement of matches, though the onus is on the away captain to initiate the contact.
- 5.6. Matches can be at any reasonable venue, but are normally played in the home captain's house, or at a bridge club. Teams wishing to play at a bridge club should contact the relevant club for details of facilities, including food.
- 5.7. When arranging a match, the venue, start time, any dietary requirements, any access requirements, and any other relevant matters, should all be clearly specified. It is also useful for captains to exchange phone numbers, particularly mobile numbers, in case they need to contact each other on the night.
- 5.8. The home team is responsible for all costs (unless the match is at a half way venue when the costs are shared) and should provide light refreshments (usually a hot drink, sandwich and cake or something of that sort).
- 5.9. On occasion, through no fault, a match has to be cancelled, and it will need to be re-arranged. If a match is cancelled with less than 24 hours notice, the Higson Secretary must be informed. If a match is cancelled near to the play by date, re-arrangement may not be possible, and a default may have to be awarded.
- 5.10. It is hoped that all matches can be arranged. If, for whatever reason, there are problems arranging the match, then the Higson Secretary should be contacted immediately. The provisions of Appendix C will be followed in the case of difficulties in arranging matches and team captains are advised to study these.

## **6. Playing Conditions and Playing the Match**

- 6.1. In the Higson Cup, matches in rounds 1 and 2 will be 24 boards unless both captains agree to play 32 boards, and matches in Round 3 will be 32 boards, unless both captains agree to play 24 boards. In the Higson Plate, all matches will be 24 boards.
- 6.2. 24 board matches are played in two 12 board stanzas, with compulsory change of opponents after the first stanza. The away team captain chooses which pair of the home team to play against in the first stanza. Should a team play more than four players in a match (which is not recommended) then the extra player(s) may only play in the second stanza, and in that case the opposing captain has choice of which pair to play against in the second stanza. If both teams play more than four players, then the home captain has choice of opponents in the second stanza.
- 6.3. 32 board matches are played in 4 eight board stanzas. Before the start of play, the captains toss a coin. The captain who wins the toss may take the first choice or may pass that choice to his opponent. Whoever has first choice (either the winner of the toss or the opposing captain if the winner has passed) selects one stanza in which he will have seating rights (ie how to place his own pairs after opponents have nominated their line-up). The other captain next selects two of the remaining three stanzas in which he will have seating rights, and the remaining stanza is then taken by the captain who had first choice.  
  
So, for example, you may win the toss and choose to pass. Your opponent may then pick set 4 (say). You can now pick any 2 of the remaining 3 stanzas, and your opponent then has the remaining stanza.

- 6.4. All players must abide by the EBU Best Behaviour at Bridge guidelines. Anyone who thinks they have been affected by bad behaviour should report back to the League Secretary as soon as possible.
- 6.5. No animals other than guide dogs may be brought into the playing area.
- 6.6. Smoking (including electronic cigarettes) is prohibited in all playing rooms throughout the match. However, the match host may designate an area where smoking is permitted during scoring breaks.
- 6.7. Players are requested to turn off mobile phones, ipads, ipods etc during matches.
- 6.8. Each pair must have two identically completed system cards for the opponents to refer to. It is expected that EBU 20B convention cards will be used. WBF convention cards are acceptable ONLY if prior permission has been obtained from the opposition captain.
- 6.9. EBU regulations, and in particular the EBU alert and announcing procedures should be followed at all times. The EBU summary of alerting and announcing regulations is available at <https://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/publications>.
- 6.10. Level 4 conventions as defined in the EBU Blue Book are allowed. However, pairs playing methods or conventions that may be unfamiliar to opponents should note that the onus is on them to fully explain their methods to opponents. For methods that may be unknown to opponents, it is considered good practice for a pair to make available a convention card to the opposing team captain prior to any match. For example, a pair playing Polish Club might wish to do this as their opponents may never have come across this system before. However, there is no requirement to do this.
- 6.11. Bidding boxes must be used in all matches (except in the case of disability).
- 6.12. Boards are dealt at the table in the presence of at least one player from each team. Pre-duplicated (duplimated) boards may be used as long as both captains agree and are satisfied with the security arrangements.

### **Rulings**

- 6.13. A Tournament Director (TD) or a suitably qualified player present but not playing in the match may give a ruling. Do not continue to play the board without a ruling. Please inform the League Secretary about any rulings.
- 6.14. If no TD ruling is attainable or you wish to appeal the TD ruling, send the full details about the hand to the League Secretary using an Appeal Form which can be downloaded from the EBU site (<https://www.ebu.co.uk/laws-and-ethics/forms>). The form should make clear what details are agreed upon by both teams. The League Secretary will consult with suitable players and make a ruling with reference to EBU regulations.
- 6.15. Teams unhappy with the League Secretary's ruling may appeal to the EBU about the ruling, but unless it is a matter of bridge regulation, they may decline to hear it.

### **Incorrect Direction of Seating**

- 6.16. It is considered good practice to nominate a home table, where the home team sit North-South and an away table, where the away team sit North-South. However, both pairs at the table are equally responsible for sitting in the correct direction. If a pair sits in the wrong direction in one stanza, that set cannot be scored. Any completed stanza will be scored by IMPs. The remaining stanza(s) will have to be replayed, either immediately or at a later date arranged by both captains, and before the closing date of the round. If, for whatever reason, the stanza looks like it cannot be replayed then the League Secretary should be contacted immediately. The provisions of Appendix C will apply in such circumstances, and a team may find that it defaults the match if it does not make sufficient attempt to get the stanza replayed.

### **Abandonment of Match**

- 6.17. If a match is abandoned due to unforeseen circumstances with neither team at fault, then any remaining boards should be replayed at another date. The provisions of 6.16 above apply in the case of abandonment of a match.

### **Fouled or Cancelled Boards**

- 6.18. If a board is fouled or cancelled in the first stanza, a substitute board is added to the next stanza with the same dealer and vulnerability. If a board is fouled or cancelled in the last stanza a substitute board may not be played if the final score without that board is known.

### **Late Arrival**

- 6.19. The home team should allow leniency in the matter of late arrival, particularly if matches have a start time which means the opposition are travelling during rush hour. However, the home team may choose to impose the following penalties for late arrival:

- A team is deemed to have arrived when it has four players present at the venue.
- A team cannot start to count any late period until four of its players are present at the venue.
- If a team arrives less than 30 minutes late, there is no penalty
- If a team arrives more than 30 minutes late, the match is shortened by removing two boards (so now the match is 22 boards long).
- For each further complete 15-minute period by which the offending team is late, two further boards are removed.
- The maximum number of boards which can be removed is 8.
- For each board removed, the non-offending side scores 3 IMPs.
- The boards removed are those consecutively numbered from 1.
- When the length of the match is known, the number of boards is divided into two equal stanzas (or as near two equal stanzas as possible).
- If a team arrives more than 90 minutes late, the match is defaulted.

The late arriving team has the right of appeal to the League Secretary for mitigation but would need to provide clear evidence of unusual circumstances ("heavy traffic" for example would not be considered unusual circumstances).

## **7. Scoring and Reporting Results**

- 7.1. Scoring will be by IMPs, with the result determined after the handicaps have been applied.
- 7.2. Full details of the match including the name of the winning team and the net IMP difference should be noted and uploaded to the EBU website <https://www.ebu.co.uk/members/v2/> within 24 hours of a match being played by either captain. To submit a Higson Cup or Plate Result:
- Click My EBU and enter your EBU No and Password
  - Click Utilities and EBU League
  - Find your team and division corresponding to your Team registered entry
  - Click on the specific match and enter the results and tick players accordingly

## **8. Substitutes**

- 8.1. No substitutes will be allowed in any match or in the final under any circumstances.
- 8.2. If fewer than four players are available for a pre-arranged match, or for the final, then the following options are available:
  - Try and re-arrange the match
  - Register another player(s) on the team who is available for the match. Such a player(s) must not have played for any other team in the Higson Cup or Plate in that season.
- 8.3. New players in a team must fulfil the criteria in section 4 above. The Higson Secretary must be informed about any new players and the appropriate fee paid, before the new player plays in a match. Failure to do this will result in the match being forfeited.
- 8.4. If a team cannot raise 4 players to play and the match cannot be re-arranged then the match is forfeited to the opponents. However, if the Higson Secretary receives evidence that the opposition have been unreasonable in not trying to re-arrange the match then the Higson Secretary has the right to award the match to the other team. The provisions of Appendix C will apply in determining this.
- 8.5. If a team cannot raise 4 players to play in the final, then the team it has beaten in the previous round will be invited to play in the final. If that team cannot play, then a random draw from all defeated teams in the last round before the final (Cup or Plate as appropriate) will be made and that team invited to play in the final. This process will be repeated until a team is found that can play in the final.

## **9. Defaults**

- 9.1. All matches should be played by the due date. Late matches disrupt the competition and cause problems for the Higson Secretary and the next opponents.
- 9.2. If there is difficulty in arranging a match the Higson Secretary should be contacted as soon as possible.
- 9.3. If necessary, the Higson Secretary will usually grant a week's extension to the due date in order to get the match played. However, the Higson Secretary is under no obligation to do this and teams should not rely on this provision.
- 9.4. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as the death or serious incapacity of a team member, will an extension of longer than 1 week be granted.
- 9.5. If the match cannot be played, then one team will be awarded a default. The provisions of Appendix C will apply, and team captains are advised to read these carefully.

## **10. Withdrawals**

- 10.1. On occasion a team withdraws from the Higson Cup or Trophy. In such a case the team it is due to play is awarded a walkover.
- 10.2. Teams should do all they reasonably can to avoid withdrawing, including registering new players. The Higson Secretary reserves the right to refuse entry in the following season to some or all the members of a team who consistently withdraw from the event. For this purpose, consistent will be withdrawing in two years.

## **11. Masterpoints**

- 11.1. EBU regulations do not allow the award of masterpoints to handicap events, so no masterpoints will be awarded for the Higson Cup or Higson Plate.

**Appendix A: Handicap Schedule for 24 board Matches**

Lower Ranking Team Division	Higher Ranking Team Division					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	-10	-	-	-	-	-
3	-15	-5	-	-	-	-
4	-20	-10	-5	-	-	-
5	-25	-15	-10	-5	-	-
6	-35	-25	-20	-15	-10	-
7	-45	-35	-30	-25	-20	-10

This means, for example, that if a division 1 teams plays, they will start level if the opponent is another division 1 team, 10 imps down if the opponent is a division 2 team, 15 down for division 3, 20 for 4, 25 for 5, 35 for 6 and 45 for division 7.

**Appendix B: Handicap Schedule for 32 Board Matches (Round 3 Higson Cup only)**

Lower Ranking Team Division	Higher Ranking Team Division					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	-14	-	-	-	-	-
3	-20	-7	-	-	-	-
4	-27	-14	-7	-	-	-
5	-34	-20	-14	-7	-	-
6	-47	-34	-27	-20	-14	-
7	-60	-47	-40	-34	-27	-14

This means, for example, that if a division 1 teams plays, they will start level if the opponent is another division 1 team, 14 imps down if the opponent is a division 2 team, 20 down for division 3, 27 for 4, 34 for 5, 47 for 6 and 60 for division 7.

## Appendix C: Procedure in the Case of Difficulty Arranging Matches

It is hoped that all matches can be arranged amicably. If, for whatever reason, there are problems arranging the match, then the following regulations will apply:

- 1) Teams should contact each other as soon as the draw comes out, preferably within 48 hours. Either captain may initiate contact, but the onus is on the away captain to make first contact.
- 2) If, for whatever reason, there is difficulty in arranging a match, then the away team should formally offer 4 dates to the home team, these all to be before the end date of the round (or within any extension if granted).
- 3) Of these dates, at least 3 must be week evening dates, and no more than 2 should fall in any continuous 7 day period. None of the dates should be on a day where the opposing team have said they cannot play.
- 4) All dates offered must be a minimum of 5 weekdays from the date they are offered (that is, if dates are offered on a Monday, the earliest date that be offered is the following Monday etc).
- 5) It is advised that these dates are communicated by email or other written communication in order to ensure an audit trail.
- 6) If the conditions above are met, the home team is unable to agree to any of these dates, and no other date can be arranged, then the match will be awarded to the away team as a default.
- 7) If the away team cannot or will not offer the relevant number of dates within 1 week of being requested by the home captain, then the home team is entitled to offer dates, in line with the provisions of paragraphs 2) – 5) above.
- 8) If the away team is unable to agree to any of these dates, and no other date can be arranged, then the match will be awarded to the home team as a default.
- 9) If neither team are able to offer dates which comply with 2) – 5) above and/or were unable to prove that (see 5) above) then the match will be awarded by the Higson Secretary. In exceptional circumstances, the Higson Secretary may decide that both teams default the match. In making the decision, the Higson Secretary will consult other MCBA officers.
- 10) In all cases, the team(s) awarded against can appeal against this decision. This appeal will be dealt with by the Chair of Council, who may form a committee of up to 3 people to assist. The Higson Secretary may not be involved in the appeal, though the Higson Secretary will be asked for a written statement as to how and why the decision was made. Any MCBA officer who the Higson Secretary consulted about the decision also cannot be involved in the appeal.