

MEMBERS ADVISORY GROUP

Coaches and Coaching – Key Issues & Questions

1. Rationale

Coaches are key people in the development of table tennis. They are often the first contact young players have as they switch from playing table tennis as a social/fun activity into playing it as a serious, competitive sport. They are frequently the key drivers of activities within clubs.

Coaching is an essential part of ensuring that all players can reach their potential and fully enjoy the sport. A well-functioning coaching system is essential for providing the players who can compete at national and international level.

We believe that it is essential that there is an effective coaching system in table tennis in England. No doubt the Board share that view. We hope that the issues and questions we have identified will be a first step in achieving that goal.

2. Aims

Quite simply, we want more coaches, better coaches, more young coaches, more female coaches, more coaches from diverse backgrounds that reflect communities in which table tennis is played, and more coaches who have the skills to coach elite players.

We want a system that effectively co-ordinates the activities of all those who participate in the coaching system.

3. Objectives

In preparing this initial paper our objectives have been to:

- Identify key issues related to improving the coaching system in table tennis in England
- Seek feedback from the Board on how best to address these issues

4. PROJECT AREAS & TOPICS

As part of the discussions within MAG, we have addressed a number of topics that relate to improving the coaching system. All these topics are inter-related, but as an aid to further discussion they are grouped together into some broad themes as follows.

Licensing & Courses

- Qualifications
- License Expiry
- Coaches Database

Welfare

- Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS)
- Safeguarding
- Player Welfare

Coaches Development

- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Tutors
- Equipment
- New Coaches
- Signposting for Funding

Coaching Structure

- Regional Coaches
- Regional Structure

Performance & Competition

- Performance
- Competition
- Professional/Full-Time Coaches

Diversity

- Younger Coaches
- More Coaches from Diverse/Minority Backgrounds

These issues are explored in more detail in Appendix A along with key questions that highlight what needs to be considered.

5. Next Steps

We are submitting this paper to the Board in order to get feedback on next steps. No doubt there will be some issues that the Board would like MAG to address in detail and make recommendations for improvement. Whilst there will be others that the Board feel it would be more appropriate for other groups in the table tennis community to address. And finally, there will be some that the Board feel it is not appropriate to address at this time.

Once we have the feedback from the Board, we will come forward with specific proposals for next steps, if appropriate.

APPENDIX A – Areas and Issues: Description and Key Questions

Area/Issue	Description	Key Questions
Licenses & Course		
Qualifications	The Level 1 course has very recently been redesigned. It is quite a flexible course, so as it evolves it will be fairly straight forward to make the necessary amendments. The Level 2 is now in the process of being redesigned. TTE are reviewing their tutors and assessors to make sure the quality and the consistency of the courses are where they should be, as well as looking at different ways of employing better quality tutors and assessors. It will be necessary to give these new courses time to develop to see how effective they are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we believe that the current UK coaching scheme serves our needs and is applied by TTE in the best interest of players and coaches? • Is there a case for playing ability be taken into account at any level? • Do we require an intermediate level as a coaching facilitator which could give recognition to the countless number of volunteers who do very little coaching but are essential organisers within our clubs?
License Expiry	Many coaches become unlicensed due to random expiry of the license requirements and lack of courses to keep licenses valid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we avoid unnecessary expiry of coaches' licenses?
Coaches Database	The Coaches Database is a potentially a very valuable resource. All Licensed coaches should be listed. But the database is incomplete, and it seems that due to GDPR, coaches can ask not to be listed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we make the Coaches Database more complete? • Should it be a pre-requisite of the coaching licensing process that coaches are listed in the Coaches' Database?
Welfare		
Disclosure & Barring Service	We are under the control of a Government-run scheme, so our ability to effect change is virtually non-existent. Nonetheless, the implementation of the scheme undoubtedly causes problems for table tennis coaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there some way of providing/advising on TRANSPORTABLE certificates to eliminate the need for coaches having to undergo the whole check and certification process when they attend 2 or more schools or other institutions?
Safeguarding	An online update is now possible. This doesn't take too long and is a decent refresher of some of the issues that coaches, officials, club owners etc, need to be aware of.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should there be a limit on how many times you need to attend such courses which in general are covering the same issues over-and-over again - or at least have longer periods between

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	However, awareness of this on-line update is not widespread.	attendances?
Player Welfare	This aligns very neatly with safeguarding and in particular alludes to the “mothering” of young players when they are away from home on any representative TT activities whether it be internationals, training camps, regional or county events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills to coaches require in order to ensure the welfare of young players?
Coaches Development		
Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	<p>This is an essential part of an effective coaching system. However, our understanding is that following a recent announcement, TTE will be removing the requirement to attend CPD to maintain their coaching license.</p> <p>CPD is one of the crossover areas to Performance. If we employ the best coaches in country (or other countries), they need to be involved in teaching the coaching population their skills, ideas, techniques. But this does not seem to be happening.</p> <p>Coaches report that informal discussions with assessors are very useful. The opportunities for such exchanges should be formalised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the importance of CPD to an effective coaching system, how can we make CPP more effective? • What is the feedback from coaches on the decision to remove the CPD requirement? • Is there a way we can connect coaches together to share ideas, perhaps via a national forum?
Tutors	We are in desperate need of tutors and indeed enough courses across the regional landscape to encourage people to train as tutors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we increase the number of tutors and provide more courses throughout the country? • Is the initial financial outlay for course attendances a barrier to the recruitment of tutors?
Equipment	This is an area in which coaches have a massive role to play. Many coaches are constantly experiencing disagreements with players and parents over the bats and rubbers that youngsters use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of coaches in advising young players on suitable equipment? • What independent, objective information can be provided to

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	Indeed, most coaches emphasise the benefit in early stage development of basic control with standard control rubbers and blades. Yet many players are persuaded of the benefits of using equipment that is unsuitable for their stage of development.	coaches to help them with this role?
New Coaches	Support for new coaches is mixed and largely up to the new coach how much support they request. There is very follow up from TTE after qualification. Some new coaches may be happy with this, as they have only needed to attend the course to get the appropriate qualification. But other coaches would not doubt like further support from an experienced trainer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can newly qualified coaches be supported? • Is the Level 1 qualification too easy to obtain with only 3 session observations as the required minimum?
Signposting for Funding	Coaches course are not priced to make money – simply to cover costs. A Level 1 course requires 10 people to subscribe in order to cover all costs of that course (tutor/assessors fee, expenses, venue hire etc). So reducing the costs of a course to make it more accessible to young people would be difficult. Accordingly, we should be sign posting young people to CSP funding as well as other initiatives (which TTE should be well aware of).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we make more information available on sources of funding for young people to attend coaches' courses and gain appropriate qualifications?
Coaching Structure		
Regional Coaches	<p>There are many coaches who think the Regional Coaching structure worked well and it was at the heart of what was broadly a successful system. There was good contact with players and clubs and we produced high-quality players from all Regions. Whilst it may not have been a perfect system, it was a progressive system, which we do not have now.</p> <p>We are dependent on Sport England funding of coaching and they will dictate how the funding is spent. But</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the standing of our youngsters on the international stage does the whole cradle to podium process need over hauling? • Do we spend too much at the pinnacle of the pyramid on international/national coaches and admin staff at the expense of grassroots regional coaches/ coordinators? • How beneficial would it be to reinstate the regional coaches, and is this a realistic goal?

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	perhaps there are opportunities to revisit with Sport England the funding for Regional Coaching.	
Regional Structures	<p>A constant complaint from grassroots (particularly parents) is the lack of activity and structure in the Regions. We still hold inter-regional championships, but teams are cobbled together in an ad hoc manner and there are some coaches who refuse to attend due to lack of transparency on costs and refusal by individuals to pay expenses.</p> <p>In the reign of regional coaches, regions teamed up regularly to run week-long training camps, taking youngsters to places such as Lilleshall, Jersey and numerous other venues. The withdrawal of Sport England funding for Regional activities makes it difficult to reinvigorate the Regions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can be done to make Regions more vibrant? • Is there value in promoting a return to Regional Training Camps?
Performance		
Performance	Coaching is inevitably closely intertwined with performance and competition. However, these are two huge topics in their own right, and it will be essential to decide whether they should be addressed as part of this project or be the subject of a separate project in their own right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the appropriate skill set for TTE's Performance Director?
Competitions	There are an enormous number of competitions in which players can participate – particularly young players. The coach plays a key role in advising players about which competitions to compete in.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At what age are youngsters mature enough to handle the pressures of competition? • Is the production of national ranking lists a contributor to the angst that many youngsters feel at a time when they should be developing their skills and enjoying the game of table tennis?
Professional, Full-Time	We have very few professional or full-time coaches in England and this compares poorly with the situation in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can we do to enable more people to make a living as a full-

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Coaches	Europe where many clubs have full-time, professional coaches.	time, professional coach?
Diversity		
Younger Coaches	<p>Being a coach needs to be more accessible to younger people.</p> <p>We have some young people (under 16) that want to get involved, especially when it comes to helping the really young ones (under 8), however there isn't a formal way of recognising this.</p> <p>We should bring the cost of the coaching certificate down to encourage more people to do it. This will also attract more younger people (we have some 16/17 year olds that want to take their level 1 however the cost is putting them off).</p> <p>There was talk of an 'Activator' type level at one point, but not clear if this remains parts of TTE's plans or not.</p> <p>We should be doing a lot more online. Kids love to watch video, so we could develop more coaching material that we can use online/away from the table. But it is very difficult to do properly and if done badly it will often put off young people rather than attract them. Or if done well but by random individuals then it is often just seen by a very small number of people. So in order for it to be really effective it needs to be coordinated with a clear direction for content and clear possibility to actually be seen. There is no doubt that content consumption is a massive area for young people and is something that I think table tennis is so hugely behind on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people can take accreditations at guides, scouts, etc so why not with table tennis? This will help them be 'stickier' with the sport, especially as they hit mid-teens. • How do we make Coaches Course less expensive for younger people? • How do we get more material on-line and make it more attractive?

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<p>More Coaches from Diverse/Minority Backgrounds</p>	<p>We need to find a way of breaking the coach stereotype (40+ white). At the recent National Conference, there was a story about young Asian women coaching. We need more of these types of examples and case studies.</p> <p>There are examples of good practice. For example, Brighton TTC is probably one of the best examples. They run pretty much full time. They have sessions and coaches from every corner of the community. They have 2 Down Syndrome coaches, many young coaches, a good split of male / female coaches, coaches that focus on community, coaches that focus on Performance, sessions for the homeless, sessions for LGBT. They're incredibly inclusive. No doubt there are local factors that have assisted this process. But showcasing the approach and experience of this club to gain further insight would be useful. This is where there is a clear link between coaching and club development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we open coaching up to new groups of people, particularly ethnic and other minorities?