

Proposed change to the MTTTL playing format (Trevor Towers – March 2018)

I have been thinking about how as a league we can halt the rapid decline in people playing Table Tennis in the MTTTL but also to increase it back to the numbers of previous years. Then this week our match (Sturdee 2 v Ark Royal) did not finish until 11pm even though it was continuous prompted me to suggest we consider and talk about changing the present three a side 10 game format (which can take up to 3-4 hours) to a reduced two a side 5 game contest (4 singles and a doubles) which reduces the time by half.

I am aware of people who are discouraged from playing in the league because of the length of time these matches take. It is one of the only sports where games still take place this late into the evening which affects most children playing and those living/working a distance away from the venues. We must be adaptable to meet current lifestyles if this results in more people playing our sport.

It is a suggestion which I personally believe would benefit the MTTTL and is something that many leagues are considering or have already done successfully (i.e. Tunbridge).

I know that this will be **very divisive** and there are good reasons either way, so I have tried to give both sides of the argument to help people decide as there is no perfect solution.

Points for

1. To finish at a reasonable time (only 5 games instead of 10).
2. Allows a better social interaction afterwards and not rushing away.
3. Enables Juniors to play because they have school the next day.
4. Fuller 14 team format with little or no bye weeks.
5. Matches could be more flexible with start times (with captain's agreement) for those coming a greater distance.

Points against

1. There are less games in the evening for each player (2 instead of 3).
2. It is a change to the 50-year MTTTL format.
3. Less chance to play regularly if a member of a large squad.
4. Cost per player is greater to hire halls because there are less in a match.
5. May break up settled squads of players.

If this is accepted at the AGM I would also like to start a similar styled Junior Division alongside it. Then as youngsters become of a reasonable standard to play in the main league they could be transferred to teams requiring personnel. This will then bring new players into the League which it desperately needs. There would be no promotion or relegation in the Junior Division and would be played at a single venue on the same night. Many youngsters do not play in the present format because of the finish time.