

I wish to thank whoever is reading this letter, for giving us the opportunity to speak to you in some-way directly before you make this critical decision for the future of TT365 and our sport.

TT365 are a small company, it was therefore unrealistic for us to be able to attend every league meeting, so I do hope you will not take our non-attendance as an insult and I hope that this personal letter will provide some important clarity and information on which you can base your decision.

The first thing I wanted to address is why this is all happening, because it has been said by TTE and some of their supporters that TT365 are only doing this in order to increase our prices by 5 times and this is somehow orchestrated and motivated by profit. This is not true! and I can provide proof. Anyone with a calculator will instantly see that this statement was just spin, pushed out with one goal... to anger you and feed into the false picture TTE are painting about TT365.

The truth about why all of this is happening is actually declared in the "Open Letter" that TTE sent to you all. They said, and I quote.... that they "had identified a while ago, that they desired to develop and fully own their own League Manager product". It is therefore completely reasonable to conclude that this situation was inevitable and created by TTE. Just ask yourself if TTE ever asked if you wanted or even needed a new League Manager system? Yet they have gone ahead and done it anyway. This is without doubt the most divisive issue I have known in English Table Tennis and it has been started without even asking if you (the members) even wanted it.

All that said, you are now faced with 2 questions.

Whether to continue to use TT365 next season?

&

How you will fund it?

We released our proposal over a month ago and asked all leagues to consider paying directly for TT365, as opposed to in-directly via your TTE fee, which is how it is currently done.

Since releasing our proposal, we have received feedback around the point of the 3-year agreement and have spoken to many leagues about this. We would still want leagues to declare their support for us over the long-term but accept that requiring a 3-year agreement was the wrong way to go about this. We have revised this element of our proposal, as follows.

The required 3-year agreement is withdrawn; any league wishing to use TT365 need only sign an agreement for that season. Everything else about the proposal remains the same, with the exception that, any league that wishes to give us that 3-year agreement, will receive a refund each season, to the tune of 10% of the money paid by their members. Full terms around this kick-back will be in the agreement but, we wish to incentivise leagues to continue to sign-up for a 3-year deal, but for those that do not wish to do so, there is no penalty.

If you wish to continue using TT365 next season and review where TTE are at with their development programme, that is fine. We will be continuing to invest in the development of our platform and aim to maintain a large functionality gap between the 2 systems. TTE will always be playing catch-up. Your reasons for continuing to subscribe to TT365 will be because it is a better system for your league, a free choice.

We hope this is seen as further proof that TT365 listen to league feedback. We have tried to be fair to those leagues that expressed concern over a long-term agreement and make a change without penalty, but still incentivise those prepared to offer long-term support to TT365.

In terms of the question of whether to support TT365 next season it is actually a pretty simple question. If you are happy with what TT365 provides today, what is the benefit of moving to an untested, multi-sport, one-size fits all solution?

The second question and possibly the more important one, is what you will do about the proposed fee reduction at the TTE AGM.

It is important to say, that the fee reduction proposal has not come from TT365, it has come from leagues just like yours. Our proposal just asks you to pay to continue to use TT365, some leagues have already said they are happy to do that regardless of the TTE fee, but there are leagues out there that feel this is wrong. They are supportive of TT365, but have told us that TTE have used TT365 as the reason for 3 of the last 5 membership fee increases and as such, think it is unreasonable to now be asked to pay for TT365 on top of a membership that is now more than 3 times what it was less than 10 years ago, when most average league players see little to no benefit as it is.

The rationale behind the fee reduction is sound, it is the safest option for all leagues regardless of their position on TT365, for several reasons.

1. It's non-permanent, TTE fees can always be increased, once TT365 is gone, it's gone.
2. It creates a fair and level playing field where you choose the platform to use, based on factors such as functionality and ease-of-use, NOT an NGB desperate to find reasons to justify their own membership fee.
3. It greatly reduces the chance of mass de-affiliation of leagues which is a real possibility if the proposal fails.
4. It preserves TT365 and that's important because if TTE fail to deliver on their promise, which is very possible, then TT365 is your proven backup. Think about the wider consequences for those leagues that will potentially fold, along with TT365. This is a very real potential consequence that needs to be taken seriously, volunteers are difficult enough to recruit and TT365 makes running a league easier. Take that away and offer a sub-par alternative, that requires more work, what do you think is going to happen?

I have heard of TTE sending their staff and board members to league meetings and scaring them with tales of how our sport will suffer greatly if the fee reduction is passed. One league admin said, and I quote: "The spin doctor dispatched by TTE was given the floor of the meeting and bamboozled everyone by his facts and figures, whether these could be substantiated or not."

TTE know that without this vote passing TT365 will not survive, so their strategy seems to be focus on convincing you that if you support the fee reduction you will put our sport at risk, which is absolute non-sense.

To help counter balance TTE's claim, I sought a statement from the most credible person I know when it comes to Table Tennis England's finance and that is Martin Clark, the former ETTA treasurer for over 10 years. Martin is still a very active member of National Council and sees the financial reports provided. He has no personal stake in this decision and as such is more impartial than either TTE or TT365.

I emailed Martin, these are his words and I quote:

Table Tennis England income comes from numerous sources, membership fees make up a fairly small portion in fact. Using fairly broad ball-park figures and based on the published accounts from past annual returns, a reduction of £7 for seniors and half that for juniors would equate to a drop in overall income of approximately 2-3%. Anyone who claims that such a reduction in their annual income will cause significant problems is either scaremongering, or not doing a very good job of planning for contingencies.

The Association has significant cash reserves, in the region of almost half a million pounds, much of which was accumulated throughout my term of office from careful planning, providing surpluses generated from within and not from Government resources. Most of the grants provided by Sport England are restricted to programmes that are aimed predominantly at participation. If other TTE programmes have been committed to and they really cannot adjust their budgets for the coming year, which I question, it would merely illustrate the lack of expertise to adapt to change. The current treasurer, in my opinion, without doubt has that expertise, so the rhetoric made by others inferring potential financial crisis is unrealistic.

It is my considered view that the TTE fee reduction is a solution to this current situation should the members believe, as most grass roots players I talk to do, that TT365 League Manager is the most meaningful benefit their affiliation fee provides. As an accountant I fully understand that such benefits do not come without cost and if you wish to retain TT365 League Manager this is the only way forward. If ultimately TTE come up with a legitimate alternative, leagues will then have the option of which one to choose for their particular needs. You should not be forced to use

any specific software, leagues are autonomous bodies who should affiliate because they deem it beneficial to their members, not because it is required. Even today many leagues I speak with talk about disillusion and dis-affiliation.

As Treasurer, I along with the rest of the management committee at the time introduced TT365 to our sport and did a deal which would allow them to provide their excellent system to you all as part of the affiliation fee. TT365 is a fantastic tool, it was and currently still is a genuine benefit of TTE membership, but now that the present Board have changed that, you should ask for a reduction in membership fee equivalent to the cost of replacing it. Anything TTE will provide you with as an alternative in the future, is not free. You are paying for a league manager in TT365 today and will still be paying for TTE's league manager next season should it be ready and available. The only question is if you wish to pay for TTE's new system by means of current affiliation fees or vote to reduce the TTE fee so that you pay for the one you want.

That is the end of Martin's statement and I hope this has given some clarity into the actual reality of supporting the fee reduction proposal.

TTE have told you that their decision to build and manage their own league manager platform was done in the best interest of our sport; I disagree, in my opinion it was taken to ensure you remain affiliated to TTE. Do you think TTE membership fees will remain at £16, no... they have already declared their goal is to get to £20 and this was before they committed to being responsible for running and maintaining a software solution that will cost over a hundred thousand pounds a year to run. This additional running cost will have to come from somewhere. TTE membership fees will continue to go up year on year as Sport England funding is cut further, I think we all know that, but by then you will have no option other than to continue paying the subscription, in order to keep the TTE league manager.

Call me crazy but TTE need something to keep leagues affiliating as many are now starting to question the value and TT365 seems to be the one thing the leagues truly value. If TTE control that, they control your league.

Let me tell you what I feel is in the best interest of our sport.

A fair and level playing field where your league gets to choose the software platform they want to use. Until now there has only ever been 2 choices... use TT365 or create your own. Moving forward you will have a 3rd option. In my view, the reduction in membership fees is democratic as it gives your league the power to choose the package that most suits you.

There is no downside to this, TTE get to own their own system, TT365 can continue to provide its services to any league that wants to use it. The competition between the 2 systems, will drive innovation which we believe will be good for our sport. We are very happy to compete with Rocca on a fair and level playing field, because on that field where its software vs software, on its merits, we believe we will win and if Rocca or any other provider wish to challenge us, bring it!

I need to quickly address 2 key points around data-extraction and TTE's promise of a viable alternative.

On April 17th TTE made a statement about historical data, presumably to try and calm your fears. They said, and I quote... "There's no reason for you to lose historic data. We will work with TT365 to retain this data for you and help transfer it to the new system. But if you are concerned, there is a simple way for you to save your data which we can then transfer to the new platform. This involves creating a CSV file that we will send instructions on how to do nearer the time."

TTE have not approached us about retaining your data. Furthermore, there is no such CSV export function within TT365 and finally given TTE have zero knowledge of the manner in which our data is stored, to state that it can be imported into their new system, without first asking for a specification of the output is beyond naïve, borders on clueless and stinks of desperation.

TTE have said and I quote: "the new system will have a minimum specification of the current system"

With enough time and more importantly enough money!!! I think it is fair to say that anyone could build a copy-cat platform equal to TT365. TTE have released a functionality document and a timeline for the development, testing and implementation of their system. The question you have to ask is can they do this in the time frame available.

As a computer programmer with over 20 years commercial experience, their timeline is insane.

Everything about their functionality specification is very top-level, there is no detail, they have just gone into TT365 and copied the top-level functionality they can see, even the terminology used is stolen from TT365. So, before you ask yourself if it is possible to deliver all of this in the time-frame specified, first ask if it is morally right for TTE to plagiarise 10 years of innovation and put it forward as their own?

Now ask if it is even possible to deliver what has been promised, because remember, if you choose to trust in TTE to deliver and they fail, what are you going to do, because you can't come back to TT365, not if it has folded.

We run a forum on our admin system, where the league admins all chat about various topics. Within this group of admins are a smaller group of people who hold professional roles and qualifications in the fields of computer programming, software support, IT management, risk management and general business management. Over a dozen independent admins, who have no axe to grind in this argument have ALL stated that they have no faith in what TTE is promising, because in their experience the timeline and proposed functionality are not realistic. The views expressed were varied but they all had the same fundamental thing in common, which is TTE is not being realistic in its promise.

TTE's claim of delivering a system which has, as a minimum, everything that TT365 has, from day one is nothing short of an outrageous lie and when they fail to deliver that in June, they should be held accountable regardless of what actually happens to TT365. It seems to be common place now for politicians to just tell you what you want to hear, to get your vote and then spend the next few years failing to deliver. Do we really want that in our sport?

Finally, based on TTE's own timeline how do they expect to on-board over 200 leagues onto this new platform in the space of a few weeks? When we sign up a new league, we deal with multiple queries during the initial setup phase. Oftentimes these queries require code updates or database changes. One query can sometimes take hours to fully resolve. Now multiply that by 200 leagues, all trying to do it simultaneously. It's a recipe for chaos.

To end this communication, I thought I would try and talk about what the future of TT365 might look like, assuming you do give us your support and we do in fact survive. So far, this communication has been defensive, it's a shame that I have had to write in this way, but if you are not given the facts, how can you really make an informed decision.

In our proposal document there is an FAQ which deals with this question in specific detail, provides examples of the types of functions we intend to build in the coming months and years. It is certainly worth a read, but I wanted to end by talking more generally. I setup TT365 to be a force for good within our sport and as long as it continues to provide a service that members get value from, I will do my best to ensure we keep doing, what we are doing.

My goal is to complete the final few key pieces of functionality within League Manager, we are far from being done, there is still a lot more functionality that we can provide that will further reduce administration for league administrators.

We also want to look to dramatically improve the experience for players and the recent launch of our ranking system demonstrates what we can achieve with your continued support. You now have a player ranking profile, plus an individual ranking and stats profile for each league you play in. In time we intend to bring all of this together, throw in some social media functions similar to Facebook, like having a friends network, posting, liking and commenting, enhanced stats like you have never imagined, all served up in a nice single page, which each individual player can directly login and manage their profile, upload pictures, videos and loads more. It would be like your own personal webpage, where you control what is shown and who sees it.

We have big plans for clubs, a whole raft of new and innovative competition formats, which will drive participation. Plus, lots of tools to help make running a club easier, we've done it for leagues, we will do it for clubs next, so our future offering for clubs will be significantly more than it is today.

I thank you all for listening and if you give us your support, we promise to continue to innovate and support you with new features and functionality.

Chris Dangerfield
Table Tennis 365 Founder