

MINUTES

ABTO Management Committee Meeting 3-24

Monday 20th May 17:30 to 20:00

Attendees:	By Zoom:	Chair: Malgorzata Grzyb (MG) Vice Chair Kath Lovell (KL) Honorary Treasurer: Darren Michaels (DM) Selena Coburn (SC) LTA Officiating Manager: Matthew Morrissey (MM) Myooran Nathan (MN) later Alex Wolfe (AW) with a short break Andy Wynne (AWy)
	Apologies:	Mike Crossley (MC) Steff Johnston (SJ) Veronica Mwondela (VM) Steven Wilkinson (SW)

N.B. The minutes were recorded in the order in which items were discussed.

All members must check the minutes for actions assigned to them.

Actions log will be updated accordingly.

In SJ's absence, KL was asked at short notice to assist with taking the minutes. It was agreed that the meeting would be recorded to help with accurate minute taking. The minutes will remain as the official record of the meeting and the recording will be deleted once the minutes are confirmed.

The recording started at this point.

1. Welcome, apologies and member news

MG welcomed everyone to the meeting,

DM asked if the meeting was quorate

MG confirmed that we were quorate and explained the objective of the meeting. She noted apologies and that AW would need to leave the meeting temporarily. Invitation had been extended to Andy Wynne (AWy) who will join the meeting and provide an update on the Championships at 6pm.

2. Declaration of interest

No declarations of interest were noted. MG noted that KLs conflict of interest document was outstanding and requested that this action is completed asap. **ACTION 2024-3-1 (KL)**

3. Matters not on the agenda

MG asked that the ABTO opt-out was discussed.

4. Chair's Update

MG asked if there were any questions on the report, when there were none, she asked if there was any feedback on the short ABTO module added to the recent Referee courses to be either run as a video or delivered as slides if an MC member was in attendance. The aim is to explain to Officials on these courses what ABTO is and what it does. MG asked DM and KL for feedback as they had both delivered this in person.

KL said it fitted in well with the Way Forward section of the course but that she was not sure that people listened very closed as this section was placed immediately after the exam.

DM commented that it went well on the course that he attended.

MG said that at the other courses the video was played, and the tutors thought it went well.

MM agreed that perhaps straight after the exam was not necessarily the best time for the Way Forward section and that perhaps when they are redesigning the course this section could be moved to the start of the second day.

MG asked about the ABTO Awards poster and whether it should be updated, which she was happy to do.

MM said that if he was sent the poster, he would get it sent out to the Chiefs of the major events and to the Referees at the larger LTA events.

KL commented on behalf of the Rewards and Recognition Group that the timeline had worked last year. It was agreed that the dates would remain the same.

MG requested that everybody thinks about content for the bulletin which would go out shortly.

5. Actions Log

Chiefs deleting data

MM said Officiating will confirm with Chiefs by email when the LTA has completed all their actions on any data and that the Chief should then delete the data.

TORS – drafts unable to be located. This action to be removed.

Appeals – MM confirmed that information relating to the 2024 appeals was sent along with the 2023 details (at the same time) to the Management Committee.

Voting System - AW spoke to his contact who said the cost depends on what is needed. MG clarified that the election will be for 6 positions and approximately 1000 voters.

ACTION 2023-2-18 (AW)

6. LTA Officiating Update

KL queried the dates of the Officiating Conference in the report.

MM confirmed this will take place on 29th & 30th November and that the weekend would be cleared of the majority of LTA staged events such as Winter Regional Tours. There would still be a Schools event and Grade 4 and Grade 5 events would be allowed to run but that organisers of those events would be informed that the Officiating Conference was taking place.

MG confirmed that the AGM would take place on Sunday 1st December. It was agreed that this would be mentioned as a 'save the date' item in the bulletin.

The ABTO opt-out on the Officials Hub was discussed. Both MG and DM mentioned that officials had been in contact to say that when renewing their licence, they were opted out and did not realise this until they received an email from the LTA.

MM said they were aware this had happened and were currently emailing people that had opted out to check whether this was what they intended. Officiating have raised a work ticket with the LTA IT team to look into this. **ACTION 2024-3-2 (MM)** to look at including

- A box to be ticked to opt out
- To allow a pop up checking that people are sure they want to opt out

AW said when dealing with his bank to close an account the bank still sent him a PDF to sign to say he wanted to close the account – could the system do something like this? MM thought this seemed too much and was unlikely.

At this point Andy Wynne (AWy) joined the meeting and discussion on the Officiating Update was paused.

7. Championships Update

MG welcomed AWy to the meeting and thanked him for submitting his written update. AWy elaborated on his paper and explained that testing of the new IT system went well. While this primarily affects the Upper Referees Office it does relate to other Officials.

AWy has been working through the feedback from the 2023 survey and is implementing changes where possible.

- Bigger monitors in the restaurant.
- Greater variety of food items available.
- All officials will have a blazer, attending a fitting is compulsory.
- It is hoped from 2025 to make changes to the handbook, maybe making the digital version interactive in some way.

AW asked about sunglasses, He said some officials were unsure what they should be doing. It was pointed out that this information was in the selection email and in the Factsheet. If Officials have not done anything yet, then unfortunately they have missed the deadline for prescription glasses. Standard sunglasses will be issued to those not requiring a prescription. In some exceptional cases people have been given permission to wear their own sunglasses, but the glasses must be approved in advance and may not be permitted on the show courts.

AW mentioned that some people have asked for Line Umpires to be given more information about alternative roles they could fulfil for example Review Official.

AWy said that there were 36 Overseas Review Officials working at the Championships in 2024 and this was being looked at with Iain Smith and Denise Parnell. They are all aware of the changes in the US and Australia.

MM said that things are slightly different in the UK where in the US and Australia the governing body owns the Grand Slam Tournament. In the UK, it is the LTA as the governing body that needs

to be aware of the needs to prepare for the roles of Match Assistants and Review Officials in the future.

Another item of feedback from the survey was about space for Officials in carparks and onsite. There will be no increase in parking spaces this year, but they are looking at the possibility of accreditation being used on the buses from Wimbledon station and Southfields.

AWy also said they are aware of the issues of Officials working late at night on Centre and Court 1 and they are looking to see what can be done to support those Officials.

Officials Restaurant - there will be no changes. AWy has tried to identify more space within the grounds, but no success yet.

AW left the meeting at this point

MG thanked AWy for his time and for the update. AWy left the meeting at this point.

8. LTA Officiating Update resumed

SC asked if there was a way of finding out why people chose to opt out. She said this could give useful information that would help ABTO but could also help LTA Officiating.

MM said that even if people opt out, he would still be able to send communications periodically to remind them that ABTO was still there and could ask why they opted out. MM said he would look into this.

MG asked what the first time licence process was – MM said the process was the same when choosing to opt out. MG asked how many opt-outs were new and how many were existing. This information was not available at this time but MM can look to provide this. **ACTION 2024-3-3 (MM)**

MG also asked about sending information to new people. How would the timings work if ABTO can't send information until they are licenced but that they could not get any information until then.

MM said that the plan was for LTA Officiating to have calls with new Officials and that ABTO and the Mentoring Scheme could be mentioned and information given, even if they had already opted out.

DM asked about information given on courses to help inform the new Officials. This could be done on Referee and Umpire courses, but not for Court Supervisors as the course is on-line.

MM said when people pass the CS course, they are given limited access to the Hub Home Page and Licence Access. He said they could be sent information about ABTO.

AW rejoined the meeting during this discussion.

MG asked about the Development Groups mentioned in MM's report and said the male/female split is very male heavy. MM said she was aware of this, but that pool of female Officials is not big and that some Officials made a personal choice not to be in the Groups.

9. ABTO/LTA Joint Officiating Strategy

MG/MM talked through an overview of the grid which is set out with 5 of the pillars of the LTA strategy but omits the 6th which is Diversify. In this context, Diversify means in terms of products and other ways of bringing in income from tennis.

MM said he was waiting for feedback on the strategy from Olly Scadgell.

Electronic Line Calling (ELC) is front and centre of the strategy because of the impact it will have on Officiating. This is highlighted in the tactics.

Work needs to be done in case:

WTA joins ATP in using ELC for all events

Wimbledon, WTA and ATP all use live ELC

This could have a knock on effect for Referee and Court Supervisor Evaluation Programme because of the influx of people moving into these areas.

MM commented that he wanted to keep the business-as-usual section because Fees and Expenses is important, ABTO mentoring is important to new and existing Officials and Safeguarding is also important but if they are not mentioned it looks like they are being shelved.

10. Forward Strategy

Ed Mills had joined the Forward Strategy group and helped to produce a summary document of the results of the ELC survey feedback. It highlights that in a way the ELC issue will need its own strategy. MM said he is keen to get this right both for Officials and for tournaments in the future. He talked through the areas that will be affected.

- Grading:
 - Line Umpiring needs a 'clean sheet'; Line Umpire assessments will only come from a few events, so the current structure would not be fit for purpose.
 - There will be a Match Assistant role but they will be trained Line Umpires
 - Chair umpire grading may or may not change a lot, this is still tbd.
 - Refereeing the plan is to look at the structures in one go and not just tweaks. Ideas include reducing number of grades, for example having just three referee grades: County Referee (Grade 4 &5), Regional Referee (Grade 3) and National Referee (Grade 1 &2). There could be a course at each stage so that the system was not so reliant on evaluations.
 - Court Supervising could become just a qualification with no grade.
- Recruitment: moving more to the French model of getting people in the Chair sooner hopefully this would make things more attractive, and it is likely that we will need people.
 - The LTA could run Chair Course at all venues that are used for Pro Series e.g. there could be a 3 day course covering becoming a Line Umpire, a Chair Umpire and a module on being a Match Assistant.
 - There could be large changes to the Referee course perhaps incorporating the Competition Organiser course.

- Fees & Expenses:
 - Line Umpire fees will need to be reviewed so that there is a way to incentivise people. They would be calling lines at Pro Series and The Trophy Series so what is a fair fee? It is still a valuable role.

MM continued that ABTO has an important role to play in all this. In addition to working with the Grading Panel (a call is scheduled for the following week) and the Fees & Expenses working group he would be working closely with the T&D Panel.

- Training:
 - Designing a conversion course for Line Umpires to become Match Assistant this could include:
 - An online module
 - In person training at events
 - Interactive webinars
 - A Referee course for Line Umpires: hopefully they would have a knowledge of the rules so this would allow more time to be spent on the TTP and CMS areas.
 - Refresh the Court Supervisor training making it more interactive, perhaps even run a line umpire specific version.
 - The Match Assistant role may need new courses for the new role and new CPD (for example communication skills)

The new courses for the new structures would all need to be written

- Selections:

There will be a need to look at criteria for selection at Pro and Trophy Series and this would have to link to the Match Assistant role because of the need to maintain Line Umpire skills. It is important to consider what work must be done to be eligible to be a Match Assistant, An Official can't just be a Match Assistant at Queens and do nothing more.

MM again emphasised that all this work needs to be done this year and that this is something that ABTO/LTA will need to work closely on.

MM invited questions.

MG welcomed MN who had arrived during this briefing

DM said that he thought that there would be more Review Official work brought by Live ELC not less as he had read in some of the reports. He said that we need to lobby more to the Tours to get Review Official training.

KL commented that currently the ITF minimum level for training is that the Review Official must be a White Badge Chair Umpire, Referee or Chief.

It is possible that the ITF may look to do some sort of training course for Review Officials.

DM said that in addition to the Pro and Trophy Series there could still be line assessments at Davis Cup and BJK Cup.

DM asked what Match Assistants were paid abroad as this could help set the fees.

DM suggested that perhaps Line Umpire to Court Supervisor would be a better course than Line Umpire to Referee in the first instance

SC talked about the Referee Pathway she said with the LTA CDP (Competition Development Partner) role going there is no one out and about seeing if Referees are doing their jobs correctly. She commented that Line Umpires may be better going into the Court Supervisor role in the first instance. Another suggestion would be that more Chair Umpires worked at Grade 3 events.

KL said she had 3 points to make on all that had been discussed:

- More support was needed for those that already had the Badge Qualification to get Review Official training
- There was a significant problem for Line Umpires becoming Referees in that it is very difficult for people who are not attached to a club and running their own events to get started. Where Referees used to start at LTA staged Grade 4 & 5 events these are now all run by people staging their own events so often the first opportunity to Referee comes with a Regional Tour which is not the right place to start. MM said that he was working on this aspect with Amanda Morrissey who oversees this area.
- Many years ago, about 30 Grade 3 tournaments used to be given a staging grant of £200 which most tournaments used to cover the use of Umpires on Finals Day but this stopped. MM said they could consider doing something similar but doing it in a more targeted way.

AW asked if the LTA could get compensation from the ELC companies to pay for the retraining of Officials.

MM said it is unlikely that this could happen as the companies would say that Wimbledon would be saving money by not having Line Umpires.

AW asked about the implications of TUPE.

MN Said he did not think TUPE applied as the role is redundant.

Next Steps

- MM has a call set up with the Grading Panel
- F&E can be done by email

MM said that he would put a timeline together and make arrangements with each area.

MM said he was looking for ABTO to be very involved across these areas and requested that people are pro active in looking at everything and bringing forward ideas and suggestions.

ACTION 2024-3-4 (ALL)

SC suggested that the Referee Working Group would be happy to help where they could and offered to reach out to the group asking for input if/when needed.

11. Panel & Working Group Updates

- Selections

MG asked if the planned training session had happened. KL said yes DM had been very helpful in showing how he managed the data when he was reviewing a set of selections and discussed the types of things he looks at. She believed SW found this very helpful and DM had even

showed her some ways of looking at things that she could try in the future. Unfortunately MC was unable to attend.

- Training & Development

MN said there had been 3 editions of ABTO the Conversation held

- A rules session with Georgia Lucey
- A session on LGBTQ+ officiating
- And a White Badge ITF Open Book Rules session lead by KL

DM commented that he had not seen much publicity about these events – in the past there had been posts about the Conversation in The ABTO Facebook group and perhaps we should do this again. MG noted that the webinars had been communicated in the ABTO bulletin. The Rules webinar was well attended.

DM asked what Telegram was. MN said it was a bit like WhatsApp but he felt it had more features T&D hoped to be able to set this up for Referees to use and help them build a feeling of more community.

- Welfare Training

MN said that funding had been approved for people to attend a Mental Health First Aid Training Course. Three non-MC people had expressed an interest. The course could take up to a year, but it was hoped that most people could complete it within about 6 weeks. It would probably be agreed with the individuals how long they would take to complete the course. The plan and costings would be for 10 people to be trained. The training would be valid for 3 years so it would be expected that once trained they would continue in the role for the period of the validity unless they stopped officiating.

MM said it could be attractive for people to undertake the training for their own work/life reasons so we would need to be careful how it was advertised. It would be important to keep within budget. It was good that mixture of MC and non MC people would be trained.

SC asked if training could come with a clause for repayment if people did not continue in the role. AW said it could be possible to have an agreement with a sliding scale of repayment if people did not continue. MM felt that this would not be worth pursuing.

12. Finance Update

The grant for 2023/24 had now been agreed with LTA Officiating it would mean ABTO had Funds of £9,500. MG thanked DM for putting together the budget, and thanked MM and the LTA for making the grant available to ABTO.

13. AOB as previously notified

The item raised by MG had been covered earlier.

14. Close

Date of the next meeting is TBA but will be after the Grass Court season and based on AGM timings.

MG thanked KL for taking the minutes and reminded everyone to follow up on actions.

With no further business, the meeting closed at 20:10.