

UKBGF Rated Match Policy

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Revision History

Version	Date	By	Comments
1.0	2017-03-15	Tony Lezard	Initial version
1.1	2020-09-24	Tony Lezard	Misc. clarifications including re. online play
1.2	2021-04-02	John McNeill	Exclusion of live matches from online ratings

Introduction

The UK Backgammon Federation (UKBGF) maintains a history of qualifying backgammon matches, which is used to calculate a national rating using an Elo formula.

Ratings are intended to be a realistic comparative assessment of a player's current skill at backgammon relative to other players in the UK.

The purpose of this policy is to establish ground rules that maximise the quality of the match records database, in order to derive confidence in the UKBGF rating as a fair and respected measure of backgammon prowess.

This document sets out the criteria for results of backgammon matches to be entered into the UKBGF match log for ratings calculation purposes.

Key Principles

Ratings are determined solely by the history of reported eligible results and the Elo formula¹.

A rated match must take place under the auspices of a backgammon society, club, organisation, or event (for brevity, hereinafter referred to as a “Club”) that is affiliated with the UKBGF.

Affiliated Clubs must publish and abide by a local policy for inclusion into the national rating. The policy must guarantee that inclusion of a match into the ratings is determined in a transparent manner that is fair to all players.

The match must only be submitted for inclusion in the ratings if it meets the criteria established in the local policy.

If a situation arises where a match could be considered to have been associated with more than one Club, it will not be counted twice. Responsibility for avoiding double-reporting falls primarily to the individual players.

Affiliation

A Club is an entity that hosts face-to-face backgammon matches on a regular basis. (At least annually would be expected.) It could for example be a traditional backgammon society, or a regular tournament, or other backgammon competition with its own prizes that additionally feeds results into the ratings system.

Affiliation is a status granted to a Club by the UKBGF. The policy and procedure for granting or withdrawing affiliation is outside the scope of this document; it may involve agreeing to abide by a set of principles, payment of a subscription, or some other set of requirements. In the absence of any overriding policy, it will, for the purposes of this policy, simply be taken to mean that the Club has been recognised by the UKBGF Board as a valid source of rateable results.

Club Eligibility

A Club may submit results to the national rating if all of the following apply:

- It is affiliated with the UKBGF
- It has published a local policy for eligibility of its results (see below)
- There is a named manager or administrator (“Manager”) with a working email address who acts as the point of contact for the Club, and who is accountable for the accurate entry of results. The Manager must also handle any queries about the results including inaccurate or incomplete result entry, or potential duplicate names.

Inclusion of a Club’s matches into the ratings system should be with the support of the general membership of the Club. This policy does not define how that support should be established.

A Club may cease to be a provider of match results for various reasons including that:

- It becomes defunct
- Its leadership withdraws affiliation from the UKBGF
- The UKBGF removes affiliated status from the Club in accordance with its affiliation policy (not defined here)

¹ <http://results.ukbgf.com/explain-ratings>

In such circumstances, previously entered results will remain on the system, unless they (or a subset thereof) are deemed unreliable in the sole opinion of the UKBGF.

Local Policy

The local Club policy is of fundamental importance in ensuring that results are fair and representative. It must exist in a written form, and be known to, and supported by, the membership of the Club. New clubs will not be set up on the ratings site without an initial written policy being submitted.

Details of the local policy will be dependent on the specifics of the Club to which it pertains, but it cannot overrule any of the following principles, which will apply even in the absence of a published local policy:

- The Manager must record results fairly and completely. Any form of selective reporting of results, including at a player's request, must be forbidden
- The policy must establish clear rules for eligibility of a match. Members must know, or be able to deduce from the policy, whether their match will form part of the national record before the first roll of the dice
- The policy will not allow exceptions due to a player being ignorant of it
- Only matches played as part of an organised club event (e.g. a tournament) may count towards the ratings
- Players must not be able to select their opponents, in order to prevent gaming of the ratings system
- Rated events must not be so small that players can effectively choose their opponents. A fully completed four-person knockout tournament is the bare minimum that can qualify for rating.
- Use of artificial aids beyond those required for scorekeeping are prohibited in rated matches
- Online matches cannot be rated (but see below)
- The UKBGF Rules should generally apply to matches

Online Play

Matches played online can misrepresent a player's ability due to the intrinsic inability to prevent cheating or even verify the player's identity. Most online clients also feature automatic display of pipcounts, the mental calculation of which forms an important part of the skillset of expert backgammon players.

For these reasons, online matches must not be entered into the UKBGF national ratings. The Board may, however, grant exceptions in special circumstances. Applications for such exceptions must clearly explain the circumstances and scope of the exception, and if granted, will normally be strictly time-limited.

The Board established a companion ratings site for online matches. No attempt will be made to guarantee that these online results are untainted by the above issues with online play, and players should be aware of its secondary status. Face-to-face matches are not permitted to appear in the online site. Aside from these considerations, results in the online results site should be recorded according to the principles of this policy.

Historic Results

When a Club becomes eligible to submit results to the national ratings, its recent results, if recorded reliably (including match date) and in accordance with the agreed policy, may also be eligible for entry. It should be noted that mass uploads that this clause can permit have the potential to cause a sudden change to national ratings. The UKBGF Board will decide on the eligibility of historic results, and in any case, no result earlier than one year prior to the club's acceptance in the rating system is eligible.

Player Identity

It is of fundamental importance that all of an individual player's matches be recorded under the same name in the ratings database. Lack of care over naming of players has the potential to be a significant source of error in the ratings table. Managers and players need to be on the lookout for players who have already been registered with a slightly different name (Robert/Bob/Rob etc.) and, more rarely, the converse problem of distinct individuals with the same name.

Site supervisors can merge separate records that have been ascertained as belonging to the same person, but unmerging the results of two players is fundamentally much harder and may be impossible. It is therefore important that managers establish the correctness of a merge with confidence before submitting a request for the players to be merged. They should ascertain the facts of the case with the individual(s) involved and determine which version of their name they wish to use.

Managers or their delegates should not submit results where the player cannot be clearly identified, e.g. where only a first name has been provided. It is permissible to do this only if they intend to correct the entry in very short order. The UKBGF Board is entitled to discard the match results of vaguely-named players.

If a player does not want their name to appear in the ratings table, they are not entitled to request that their matches not be recorded, as this would count as selective reporting, unfair to their opponents. Instead they should use an alias in a consistent manner. Aliases and real names should be made known to the UKBGF, which will maintain a confidential register of these for the purpose of eliminating duplicate player records. This should be an exceptional occurrence however.

Responsibilities

Players

- Report the outcome of all matches played according to the local policy to the Manager
- Ensure each match they play is reported for ratings purposes to only one Manager
- Highlight errors and omissions to the Manager (including possible duplicate names)

Managers

- Keep adequate records of matches played and enter results accurately and completely in the match database within a reasonable timeframe (commensurate with the frequency and size of events) and in accordance with local and UKBGF policy. A variety of mechanisms are provided on the results site to facilitate this. Care should be taken to ensure that the date of the match is correctly recorded, and the sequence of the results is in chronological order. Accurate timestamps within the date are not required
- Keep their email address up to date on the system (notify changes using the contact form on the ratings site)

- Respond to members' queries, or refer them to the UKBGF, in a timely fashion
- Report possible duplicate name issues to the site supervisors and assist site supervisors in determining the appropriate resolution
- Be alert to the possibility of double-reporting
- Delegate capabilities on the site to other Club members as required to assist fulfilment of the above roles (To preserve accountability, Managers must not share their password with anyone else – assistants should be set up with a password under their own name.)

Site Supervisors

Supervisors are appointed by the UKBGF Board and have special access on the site which transcends Club-specific access. They are responsible for:

- Managing the Club list on the site, including assigning passwords and appropriate privileges to new Managers
- Investigating cases of duplicate names on the system and merging results under the player's preferred name
- Providing reasonable assistance and guidance to Managers
- Proactively scanning the player list from time to time for potential duplicate or vague names and bringing this to the attention of Managers for resolution
- General site maintenance

UKBGF Board

- Respond within a reasonable timeframe to reports of irregular result postings
- Act as final arbiter in disputes and apply corrective action if necessary

Corrections and Appeals

If a player believes a result has been entered incorrectly, out of sequence, or not at all, they should refer the matter to the Manager, who will consider the appeal and if necessary amend the national record and cause the ratings calculation to be recomputed from the point of change.

A player may also have grounds to challenge the validity of the local policy, for example if they do not feel it adheres to the principles above, or is vague on the validity of a result in a particular circumstance. In the first instance, they should attempt to resolve the issue with the local Club directly. If they are still dissatisfied, they may bring an appeal to the UKBGF, which may determine that the policy needs to be amended or clarified. The updated policy should settle the matter of whether the disputed result should be included in the national ratings. Such updated policy may potentially also change the validity or eligibility of other matches.

If an individual believes the Manager is not following the Club's own policy, or is aware of any other irregularity in the results reporting process, they should bring this to the attention of the UKBGF Board, which will investigate the matter and work with the individual(s) and Manager(s) concerned in order to resolve the issue. In extreme cases, the UKBGF reserves the right to withdraw eligibility of the Club from the ratings system and/or remove any or all results submitted by that Club. Notice of corrective action need not be given and the Board's decision is final.

Un-played or Incomplete Matches

There may be situations where a match that is eligible for inclusion in the ratings is not played in full or at all. Examples include:

- Matches abandoned for some reason before completion
- Matches where a player has incurred penalty points or forfeited due to lateness
- Tournament finals resolved by cash settlement
- No-show by one or both players, for any reason

This policy will not attempt to specify a ruling on every possible scenario, except to highlight the fundamental principle that the rating is intended to measure ability at backgammon and not any other quality in a player, such as sportsmanship, which should be addressed by local Club rules. Hence, for example, a match in which some play has occurred but in which a few penalty points have also been awarded would normally be considered rateable, while a match which is forfeited, whether or not by the gradual accumulation of penalty points, without the dice ever having been rolled would not be rated.

Managers must not “punish” a player with a ratings hit, but equally, players must not attempt to manipulate their rating by walking away from unfavourable situations.

Managers and players may refer difficult cases to the UKBGF for a ruling, which will be final.

Sample Local Policies

A Club’s local policy need not be long-winded. Two examples are presented below. First, that of Ealing Backgammon Club, which organises weekly tournaments usually in a knockout format and supports other forms of play including chouettes and ‘friendly’ matches outside of the tournament draw:

“All completed tournament matches played according to the official random draw at Ealing Backgammon Club meetings will contribute to individual players’ UKBGF ratings. Finalists are permitted to agree a reduction in match length but this must be accurately reported. A match in which penalty points have been awarded will be rated unless it becomes a walkover. Settled matches, unfinished matches, walkovers and friendlies will not be rated. The term ‘friendlies’ includes any match which is not part of the scheduled tournament programme, even if it is played during a club meeting. Postponed or unfinished matches should be completed as soon as possible by arrangement between the players concerned and the result reported by both players.”

Second, the ratings policy for the London Clubs League (the “League”). The format of League events is two teams of six drawn from the membership of clubs in the League playing 18 matches in total in each of a round-robin schedule of fixtures from September to May. There are in total several dozen fixtures per year. Note that ‘friendlies’ in this context are part of the scheduled programme of events, hence are perfectly acceptable for inclusion in the ratings:

“All matches played as part of formal London Clubs League fixtures will contribute to individual players’ UKBGF ratings, including those played at fixtures designated as ‘friendly’. Non-results, such as walk-overs, are excluded, as are side-matches on the evening that are not part of the scheduled set of matches.”

Review

This policy is due for review in September 2022.