



2025 Norwich Bar Billiards AGM

Wednesday 12th March 2025, 20:00.

Venue: The Cottage

Singles Tournament

- Nathan, on behalf of the organising group, provided an update on the 2025 singles tournament. At the time of the meeting the tournament had reached the semi-final stage and should be concluded over the coming weeks. Overall the tournament has been a great success with 56 entrants and the vast majority of matches being played on time and in the assigned venues. There has been positive feedback around the tournament format. There is optimism that this tournament will return on an annual basis.
- The tournament itself has (so far) raised £185 after expenses. This money will be donated to the Big C who are a Norfolk-based charity who provide vital support, information and resources to sufferers of cancer and their loved ones. This charity is close to the heart of many within the Norwich Bar Billiards community, and as a league we aim to continue to raise funds for them throughout the season. More information on the Big C can be found at <https://www.big-c.co.uk/> and the link to the Norwich Bar Billiards JustGiving page can be found at <https://justgiving.com/page/norwich-bar-billiards-2025>. Aviva have agreed to match donations up to the total value of £1,000.

Team Registration

- Representatives from all existing teams were present on the evening and there was confirmation that all details for these teams from the previous season remain valid.
- Two new teams requested to join the league:
 - **Norwich VR** – based at the venue of the same name. They have acquired a table and had it reclothed recently. Stefan from the venue was asked around the public accessibility, opening hours and drinks offering, and whether this sort of venue was a natural fit with others in the league. Following this, the acceptance vote was passed with **13 votes for, 1 vote against. Norwich VR were admitted to the league.**
 - **Artichoke Hearts** – based at the Artichoke. They have also acquired a table in the previous couple of months, and have hosted some matches in the aforementioned singles tournament. There has been a well-publicised legal issue with the previous owner and so Julian (the pub manager) read a statement and answered questions regarding the current situation. After some lively discussion, the acceptance vote was passed with **11 votes for, 3 votes against. Artichoke Hearts were admitted to the league.**

- This means that there are 16 teams participating in the 2025 season. In alphabetical order, for completeness, these are as follows:
Artichoke Hearts, Black Stars, Coach & Horses, Cottagecore, Dad's Army, Disasterfarians, Flamers, Golden Stars, International Brigade, King's Head, Lionhearts, Norwich VR, Rose, Serengeti, Vikings, White Lions.

League Format

- Confirmation that per the 2024 final standings, the following team movements apply:
 - **Serengeti** and **Black Stars** are relegated to Division 2
 - **Rose** and **Vikings** are promoted to Division 1
- As the league now stands at 16 teams, we shall have 8 teams in Division 1 and 8 teams in Division 2. Both **Artichoke Hearts** and **Norwich VR** will join Division 2 as standard. As such, the 3rd place team in Division 2 from the 2024 season shall also be promoted to Division 1 to even up the numbers. This means that **White Lions** are promoted to Division 1.
- Thus, the teams in each division are laid out in the pictures below:

| Division 1 | Division 2 |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Coach & Horses | Artichoke Hearts |
| Dad's Army | Black Stars |
| Golden Stars | Cottagecore |
| International Brigade | Disasterfarians |
| King's Head | Lionhearts |
| The Rose | Norwich VR |
| The Vikings | Serengeti |
| White Lions | The Flamers |

- Dave (Black Stars) noted that if the league reaches the point of having 18 teams, then we will need to seriously consider a move to 3 divisions.
- Dave also brought up the concept of introducing a play-off system in Division 2. The logic is that in Division 1, teams are playing for the title, or to avoid relegation, whereas they only play for

promotion in Division 2. The introduction of a play-off system would open up the possibility of promotion for more teams, and for a greater length of time of the season.

- The first system (A) proposed mimics that of the NBA Play-In tournament. In this case, the team which finishes 1st in Division 2 would be automatically promoted. The teams which finish 3rd and 4th would play each other in one match held at the venue of the 3rd place team. Then, the winner of that match would play the team which finished 2nd at the venue of the 2nd place team. The winner of that match would be promoted to Division 1.
- The second system (B) was proposed by Adam (Dad's Army). This would work similarly to the English Football League play-offs, where 2nd would play 5th, 3rd would play 4th, and the winners of those two matches would play each other for promotion. There was also discussion of whether a similar system could be implemented for relegation from Division 1.
- Paul (International Brigade) additionally proposed a promotion/relegation play-off (C) similar to the Bundesliga, where the team which finishes 3rd from bottom in Division 1 plays a one-off match against the 3rd team in Division 2, where the winner goes to Division 1 and the loser goes to Division 2.

A vote was held. **There were 0 votes to maintain the current system, 10 votes for system A and 4 votes for a play-off system. System A will be used for the 2025 season.**

Cup Format

- Dave (Black Stars) noted that for the first time in many years, we have a number of teams that lends itself well to a straight knock-out format. There was general agreement that one-match knock-outs should be implemented, and the plate competition for first-round losers will remain.
 - Nathan (Lionhearts) suggested that a seeding system could be used for the first round. In this case, first-round matches will consist of a Division 1 team being randomly drawn against a Division 2 team, with matches to be held at the venue of the Division 2 team.

A vote was held. **There were 4 votes to maintain the current system of a random draw, and 9 votes to implement seeding. Seeding will be used in the 2025 Cup/Plate.**

Rules

- Dave (Black Stars) proposed a change to the current arrangement of deciding who gets to break off in each frame. This is done by coin toss at the start of the match and then breaks alternate by team. Dave's suggestion was to say that either the home team, or the away team should have 5 breaks in a pre-determined manner.
 - One suggestion was to copy a snooker determination, and to have to play a shot up and down the table, and the player with their ball closest to the baulk line will receive the break-off.

A vote was held. **There were 10 votes in favour of keeping the current coin flip system, and 3 votes for changing to a pre-determined arrangement. The current coin flips system will remain in place.**

- As part of the above discussion, Dave described the break-off play as it is in the Sudbury league, which he had experience of when playing in the 4 Pin World Championships last year. There, after

the first player has completed their first break, the second player may choose to either play the balls as they lay, or reset the table to have their own break-off attempt. This only occurs following the first completed break of the frame.

- There was some opposition to this proposal. Jared (International Brigade) felt that this overcomplicated the game. Others noted that the Norwich variant of the game is its own independent entity and that this should be preserved.

A vote was called. **There were 10 votes in favour of maintaining the current break-off system, and 3 votes in favour of changing to the Sudbury rules. The current system will remain in place.**

- Nathan (Lionhearts) followed on with another Sudbury rule. In this case, when presented with one final ball on the table, the proposal is that the table should remain unaltered and the remaining ball reset to the centre of the D. Then, the ball may be played into any pocket, and will be deemed as legal providing it makes contact with a cushion first.
 - This was immediately unpopular. As I'm the one typing this up, I won't go into details, but needless to say **the proposal was unanimously voted against. The Sudbury rule would not be implemented for the 2025 season.**
- Adam (Dad's Army) proposed the regular suggestion of altering the final shot in some other way. This is due to his concern around players who are in the lead playing an intentional foul on the 100 peg whilst also potting the ball in the 100 hole.
 - Dave (Black Stars) said that this topic comes up every year. It was firmly rejected last year and he asked the question if anybody had changed their minds since then.
 - Emma (Serengeti) noted that at least one player did this against her (though it was almost certainly not intentional). But, she felt that this was not a major issue overall based on the infrequency of this situation.
 - Chip (Disasterfarians) said that the issue seemed like a non-problem, despite Adam's assertions of it happening multiple times.
 - John (Disasterfarians) proposed a different solution – removing the 100 peg entirely for the final shot. This would still make the 100 shot a difficult one, but remove the possibility of an intentional foul.
 - Emma (Serengeti) expressed that the system for calling a deliberate foul is a difficult one, and something that a referee is very unlikely to ever do in practice.

A vote was held. **There were 8 votes to keep the current rules, 4 votes for playing the 200 hole only, and 2 votes for removing the 100 peg from play. The current final shot rules will remain in place.**
- Following on from the 2024 AGM, Dave presented analysis of the '5-player rule' which says that teams should try to arrange matches with at least 6 players on their team, but they can play with 5 players without incurring a penalty. The graph with this is below:

| | LEAGUE | | | CUP | | | TOTAL | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| | League Matches Played Using 5-Player Rule | Total League Matches Played | % League Matches Played | Cup Matches Played Using 5-Player Rule | Total Cup Matches Played | % Cup Matches Played | Matches Played Using 5-Player Rule | Total Matches Played | % Matches Played |
| Flamers | 6 | 12 | 50% | 1 | 2 | 50% | 7 | 14 | 50% |
| Serengeti | 4 | 12 | 33% | 3 | 3 | 100% | 7 | 15 | 47% |
| Golden Stars | 4 | 12 | 33% | 2 | 4 | 50% | 6 | 16 | 38% |
| Disasterfarians | 4 | 12 | 33% | 1 | 2 | 50% | 5 | 14 | 36% |
| Coach & Horses | 4 | 12 | 33% | 1 | 4 | 25% | 5 | 16 | 31% |
| White Lions | 2 | 12 | 17% | 3 | 4 | 75% | 5 | 16 | 31% |
| Black Stars | 3 | 12 | 25% | 1 | 4 | 25% | 4 | 16 | 25% |
| Kings Head | 2 | 12 | 17% | 0 | 4 | 0% | 2 | 16 | 13% |
| Lionhearts | 2 | 12 | 17% | 0 | 3 | 0% | 2 | 15 | 13% |
| Vikings | 1 | 12 | 8% | 1 | 4 | 25% | 2 | 16 | 13% |
| Cottagecore | 1 | 12 | 8% | 0 | 3 | 0% | 1 | 15 | 7% |
| The rose | 0 | 12 | 0% | 1 | 3 | 33% | 1 | 15 | 7% |
| Dad's Army | 1 | 12 | 8% | 0 | 4 | 0% | 1 | 16 | 6% |
| International Brigade | 0 | 12 | 0% | 1 | 4 | 25% | 1 | 16 | 6% |

All teams used the rule at least once in the 2024 season. The reason for the analysis was to check whether teams were abusing the rule and potentially sitting out perceived weaker players in order to gain an advantage. Dave issued a particularly sick burn in noting that the Flamers and Serengeti (who used the rule the most times) finished bottom of their respective divisions.

- Chip (Disasterfarians) said that she felt the penalty system for teams who have less than 5 players at a match is unfair and places untoward pressure on those who are unable to get to match.
- Adam (Dad's Army) noted that the statistics are factual and show that teams are not habitually abusing the system, and so it is currently working well.
- Sharpie (White Lions) discussed the existing deadline for rearrangement of matches and how this has helped matters as well as making it fair for all teams.

A vote was held and it was **unanimously agreed that the existing 5-player rule should stay.**

AOB

- Vandal (Disasterfarians) asked for clarification on an in-play situation. Namely a break has finished and a ball is on the table very close to a hole. After 5 seconds have passed, it is player 2's break. They go to play a shot towards this ball, but it drops in the hole prior to the cue ball making contact, and the cue ball makes no subsequent contact with any other ball.
 - Dave (Black Stars) confirmed that this is unfortunate, but it is a foul through no contact and links to rule **2f(a)**. The shot scores no points and it is the end of break. The rules will be looked at and clarity updates made if needed.
- Oli (International Brigade) brought up the issue of provision of food at official matches. Currently the venues provide a food offering for players, but this does take a slice out of the venue's taking for the evening, so should it be offered at all? The original aim of the league is to support pubs and venues.

- Oscar (Lionhearts) said that as the landlord of the White Lion, he's happy to provide food but a monetary contribution would go a long way. He suggested £2 per match per player.
- Dave (Black Stars) noted that in the pool league he plays in, players do make a contribution towards food and that the Norwich Bar Billiards league is an outlier in not doing so.
- Gareth (White Lions) felt that there was no expectation of food at a match.
- Ceinwen (International Brigade) noted that food often causes delays in proceedings and sometimes matches may overrun due to it.
- Cal (Artichoke Hearts) said that a one size fits all solution wouldn't be applicable as different venues have the capability to provide different offerings due to kitchen and staffing differences.
- Adam (Dad's Army) asked if captains should speak to the landlords of venues to come up with individual arrangements.

There was informal discussion which resulted in acknowledging that **a food provision of some sort was integral to the evening, and that players should contribute £2 each towards this going forward.**

- Adam (Dad's Army) would like the introduction of a supplementary 'Scotch Doubles' competition. This would be non-compulsory and could be played outside of the usual Wednesday evenings.
 - Dave (Black Stars) said that as organisers there is little capacity for more tournaments under our remit, but that we would be happy to support anybody who wishes to organise tournaments through resources, contacts and promotion. He noted that there were no extra tournaments in the 2024 season which was a shame as previous tournaments held at the Rose and the King's Head were as success.

Adam said that he would look to start organising the Scotch Doubles competition.

- Pete (Lionhearts) only started playing the game last year and he found there were scant resources online around the nature of the game. As such he has created his own YouTube channel called About60 Bar Billiards at <https://www.youtube.com/@NorwichBarBilliards>. The channel has filmed Lionhearts practices as well as some of the matches from the singles tournament, and he would like to film more players and venues.
 - Paul (International Brigade) asked if the league can promote the channel. Dave noted that we would publicise this through the usual channels.

Trophies

The Division 1 trophy has been changed to accommodate all of the winners' plaques historically. Trophies were presented to the winners of the 2024 competitions as follows:

- Plate – International Brigade
- Cup – Golden Star
- Division 2 – Vikings
- Division 1 – Golden Star