



Estonian Tournament Bridge League

ETBL, Piret Aava

Bridge in Estonia

- Estonia is a small country with ca 1.3 mln people.
- Estonia has a small bridge community with ca 500 active players.
- However:
 - Our annual Tallinn Festival is among the largest and best organised festivals in our part of Europe;
 - Our national team has upset a number of big bridge countries in recent championships.

History

- 1920s–1930s:
 - First columns in newspapers and magazines.
 - Several translations of bridge books.
 - First international event: Tallinn–Helsinki–Riga match.
 - 1937 participation in European Team Championship in Budapest.

History

- Soviet times:
 - Regular bridge column appeared in papers.
 - 1969: 171 teams playing in three Estonian leagues.
 - However, Moscow declared bridge as... not suitable for communism builders.
 - However, the Baltics gained from that; bridge life flourished here.
 - In 1979 the regular Soviet Championships for teams and pairs started and they were held mainly in Estonia; Estonian players won most of the medals.
 - 1989 – Estonian, officially Soviet Union team, in European Teams Championship in Turku.

Full Participation since 1991

- After regaining independence Estonia has become a full member of the international bridge community. Estonian teams and pairs have participated in European and World Championships, in Bridge Olympics.
- No medals won **yet...**

Structure of ETBL

- Estonian Tournament Bridge League founded in 1988; member of WBF and EBL since 1992.
 - EBL was renamed to ETBL to avoid confusion with EBL.
- ETBL is also a Member of the Estonian Olympic Committee.
- 12 **regional** bridge clubs as members of ETBL.

ETBL Classification

- Ranking — grandmaster, international master, master, candidate-master are lifelong ranks, norms for lower ones as a rule must be repeated.
- Three-colour Master Point system:
 - gold — title and strong field international events;
 - green — medium field or large events;
 - black — local or small events.

Financial Resources of ETBL

- Fees from members, registered players, organisers of tournaments;
- Sponsorship;
- Support from government and state sport societies.

Championships

- Open Teams (A&B-leagues, both 8 teams)
- Open Pairs (2 elimination rounds, final for 26 pairs)
- Mixed, Senior, Junior and U-20 Pairs (one-day events)
- Individual (3 rounds)
- All held annually, no limitations to participate in pair's events.

Grand Prix Tournaments

- 23 sessions in 2011;
- 11 different locations within small Estonia;
- 26 best pairs qualifying for 2-day finals;
- Important presence of guest players from Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, etc.

National Team Trials

- 2-year cycle, basis for selection is pair.
- Ranking point system for individual players including rank, golden MPs, the results of the Estonian Cup.
- 14 pairs with the higher ranking points enter the final trials tournament and its result will be added to their ranking points.
- 2 best ranked pairs form the main body of the national team, and they choose the 3rd pair.

Other Tournaments

- Estonian Pair's Cup (annual from 1985)
- Local weekly events in over dozen of regional clubs.
- Tournaments in neighbouring countries.

Tallinn Festival

- Among several international events held in Estonia the most notable is the Tallinn International Bridge Festival taking its origin from 1967.
- The list of winners of Festival is presentable: Helgemo, Balicki, Beretta, Gromov and so on.
- This 2012 year Tallinn Festival will be accompanied with Small Federations Games.
- 45th Tallinn Bridge Festival and 5th Small Federations Games will be held in September. In Tallinn.

Summary

- Estonian bridge is at the good development phase today. Cornerstones of our success:
 - Strong local field – arranging good local tournaments attracting players from neighbouring countries.
 - Available financial resources to participate in international field tournaments.
 - Focus on wide regional coverage.
- This would not be possible without strong sponsorship support.
 - But still budget constraints to participate in all categories.



THANK YOU !

