



ADVISORY LETTER No 3/2020

Subject: **COVID-19 – Resumption of Sports Activities**

1 – Introduction.

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). The illness presents mainly with fever and respiratory symptoms, such as a cough and shortness of breath. Other symptoms may include a sore throat, loss of sense of smell, general muscle pain, and occasionally nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

In some cases, the infection can prove fatal. Those most vulnerable to the severe form of the disease are the elderly and people with other chronic health conditions (diabetes, COPD, cardiovascular disease or cancer). In Portugal 95% of the fatalities have been people over 60.

Current evidence suggests that the virus is transmitted mainly through:

- Direct contact: airborne droplets produced when an infected person coughs, exhales or speaks; these droplets can be inhaled or can enter the mouth, nose or eyes of people nearby (<2 metres).
- Indirect contact: touching a surface or item contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 and then touching one's mouth, nose or eyes.

The World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11th March 2020. Portugal put in place phased public health measures to prepare for and respond to epidemic outbreaks, with a view to gradually reducing transmission rates, providing adequate healthcare for those affected by the disease, and protecting the public.

The success of these public health measures depends on the cooperation of all citizens, institutions, organisations and society as a whole. It is known that the risk of infection increases with exposure to larger numbers of people, especially in an indoor environment.

Sports facilities present, because of their purpose and design, a high risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection by direct or indirect contact.

As players and affiliated organisations are aware, the FPB Board suspended events in Lisbon and Oporto from 8th March and nationwide from 20th March, by government decree following the declaration of the state of emergency.

With the progress of the pandemic and the changing epidemiological, health, social and economic situation, the restrictions on national and regional organised sports have gradually been eased.

2 – Legal Framework

At the moment sport is regulated by Article 19 Paragraph 1 of Resolution 40A/2020 (29th May) of the Council of Ministers, which restricts particular disciplines of physical and sports activities in non-competitive settings.

Annex 1 of that Resolution decreed the closure of indoor facilities with the exception of those designated for professional and competitive training at regional and national level.

Within the framework of the Resolution, the Ministry of Health has issued Guidance 030/20, which came into force on 12th June 2020, giving details of *Prevention and Control Procedures for Leisure, Physical Activity and Sports and Other Sports Facilities*.

The Guidance is aimed at minimising transmission of the disease in all sports facilities, but with special focus on physical sports.

Bridge, in common with chess and draughts, is a mind sport with no physical element, played indoors using clean equipment, and needs specific measures within the general framework of preventing infection and protecting the health of players and officials.

3 – Resumption of competitions

With the likely rolling out of the government plan for easing lockdown, the FPB Board believes there is a need for rules and procedures specific to our sport, in line with Guidance 030/2020.

Rules and procedures are particularly important in bridge, in which 49% of affiliated players are over 60.

The rules and procedures drawn up by FPB are based on the Ministry of Health guidance and the *Biological Risk Assessment Document for Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Bridge Activities* issued by the World Bridge Federation (WBF) on 25th May, and have been approved by the Sport Confederation of Portugal's Medical Commission.

4 – National Competitions

The FPB Board, in consultation with clubs, regional associations and other competitive bridge organisations, will assess and identify venues which meet the requirements set out in the attached document.

As soon as competitive activity is legally permitted, the FPB Board will publish the calendar for this season's remaining national competitions.

5 – Commencement and Future Changes

The *Covid-19 Prevention and Control Standards and Procedures for Face-to-Face Bridge*, set out in the attached document, will come into force immediately for education and training, and will apply to competitive bridge, as soon as the legal framework permits these types of competition to be held indoors.

This Advisory Letter will be promulgated via the usual channels of communication between the Board and FPB affiliated organisations and players.

The appropriateness and effectiveness of the *Covid-19 Prevention and Control Standards and Procedures for Face-to-Face Bridge* will be reviewed whenever there are significant changes in the risk associated with face-to-face competitive bridge in the context of COVID-19.

Carnaxide, 23rd June 2020

Board of FPB



COVID-19 PREVENTION and CONTROL STANDARDS and PROCEDURES for FACE-TO-FACE BRIDGE

v.1, 23rd June 2020

The rules and procedures contained in this document apply to all official competitions (national and regional championships) and tournaments officially recognised by FPB, and also to non-competitive bridge such as training and education, conducted under the aegis of FPB.

In addition to players, directors, caddies and other personnel in competitions, all management and support staff at the venues where competitions take place are subject to these rules and procedures.

The organising bodies for sports activities or, by explicit and agreed delegation the companies or organisations which own or manage the venues, are responsible for the adoption, promulgation and application of and compliance with the entirety of these rules and procedures.

Any failure on the part of individuals to comply with these rules and procedures will be subject to disciplinary penalties. Organisations which fail to comply will be subject to administrative sanctions.

These rules and procedures, applicable specifically to the sporting discipline of bridge, must be seen and acknowledged as supplementary to the good practice recommended by the Ministry of Health, in particular as set out in the document *HEALTH AND DAILY ACTIVITIES – General Measures for the Prevention and Control of COVID-19*, which warrants the widest possible dissemination by all bodies involved in the organisation of sports activities.

Players and other individuals involved in the sport must read and study this document before entering or participating in the bridge activities referred to in the first paragraph. They should enter and participate only if they are confident that the security and safety measures implemented by the organising body are adequate. Organising bodies should not assume any responsibility for the effects on the health of participants of the arrangements for an event or the conditions under which it takes place.

In entering and participating, players and other participants agree that they have read and understood the conditions under which the event takes place, and accept complete responsibility, irrespective of the cause and/or agent, for the effects of their participation on their own health and wellbeing.

1) Access to playing areas

Access to playing areas for face-to-face participation in the sport of bridge is restricted to affiliated players, team captains, chief and assistant directors, support personnel, trainers and coaches. Spectators are prohibited.

In venues in which bar service is available to participants, employees strictly necessary to the provision of this service are permitted to be present.

Disinfection personnel and administrative staff are also permitted to be present.

Before entering any venue in which the practice of the sport takes place, all authorised persons must have their forehead temperature taken by means of laser temperature detection equipment. If the reading exceeds 37.5°C, the person concerned will not be granted access. These temperature readings will not be recorded.

Access to playing areas is prohibited to any person who:

- Presents symptoms of respiratory infection;
- Is an active case of or presents symptoms of COVID-19;
- Shares a dwelling with anyone who has symptoms of or is an active case of COVID-19;
- Is, or shares a dwelling with someone who is, subject to a quarantine requirement related to COVID-19.

A register must be kept of every person present at every session. This register must be maintained for as long as FPB Information Circular 3/2020 remains in force, and made available to the health authorities upon request.

2) Personal protection equipment

Every person authorised to enter and remain in the playing area must carry personal protection equipment (PPE) in the form of mask or visor and use it for the whole time they are on the premises.

Unlike in physical sports, the use of masks and visors is completely compatible with bridge activities.

3) Individual hygiene practices, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing

Every person present must adhere to the practices recommended by the Ministry of Health for minimising transmission of COVID-19, as follows:

- Washing hands upon entry to the playing area;
- Frequent washing of hands, preferably with an alcohol-based liquid;
- When coughing or sneezing, do not use hands to cover the mouth and nose, but use a handkerchief or forearm instead;
- After coughing or sneezing, throw away the handkerchief and always wash hands;
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth; if it is absolutely necessary, wash your hands before doing so;

- Avoid handshakes and other physical contact;
- Try to maintain a physical distance of at least 1 metre.

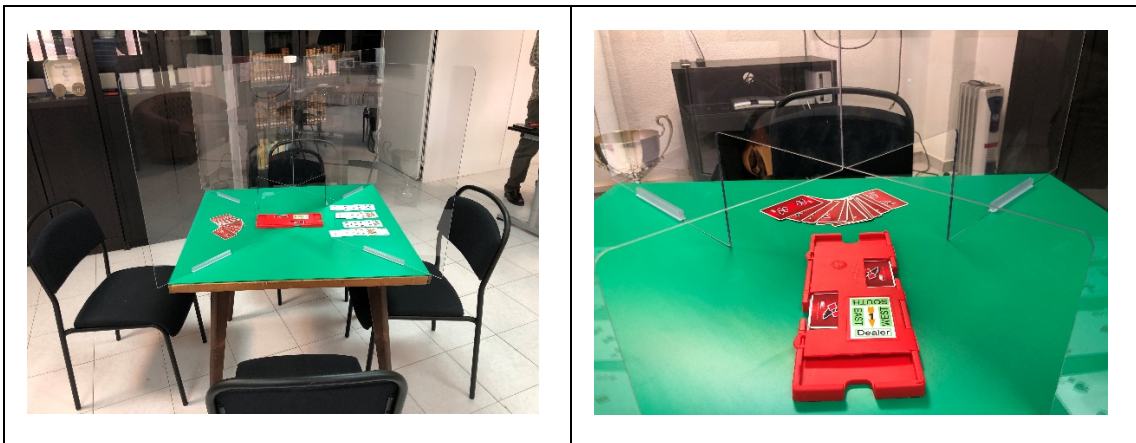
Directors must maintain an adequate distance, of at least 1 metre, when called to the table.

Food must not be consumed at the table during play or training. Drinks and other non-alcoholic beverages must be consumed from single-use cups or personal bottles.

4) Sports equipment

a) Playing tables

In order to create a physical barrier between the four players, playing tables – typically square and 80-90cm a side – must be fitted with a four-way separator, preferably of unbreakable transparent polycarbonate crystal (Perspex). The usual tablecloths must be replaced by an easily-cleaned material such as wood, PVC or plastic. The following photographs show one possible solution, which can be supplied by FPB.



In the case of tables with screens, it will suffice to install a single separator perpendicular to the screen.

Alternatively, tables measuring 1.3 metres a side may be used, to guarantee a minimum distance of 1 metre between the four players.

b) Cards and boards

In order to eliminate the passing of cards between players, competitions must be played in barometer format, with a complete set of boards for each table.

Sets of hands must be prepared using a dealing machine. The operator of the machine must wear a mask or visor during the duplication, and must wash their hands before and after each duplication session.

Cards may be reused only once 72 hours have passed since their previous use.

c) *Bidding boxes*

In order to eliminate the use of bidding cards by more than one player, a *bidding box* must be issued to one player and not passed to any other player. Each player must use their own designated *bidding box*, clearly labelled as theirs, for every competition or teaching or training activity.

d) *Bridgemates*

Bridgemates must be operated by one sole player at each table for the duration of the session. Normally this will be North, but in any case it must be a player who is seated at that table throughout the session.

e) Convention cards

Convention cards must be laminated or contained in plastic sheaths (such as polypockets), such that they can easily be disinfected.

5) Arrangement of playing areas, cleaning and disinfecting

Playing areas must be arranged so that the playing tables are at least 4 metres (centre to centre) apart, providing 16 square metres of ambient space per table.

Smoking is completely prohibited in any playing area once the tournament or other bridge activity has begun.

In refreshment areas the procedures set out in Ministry of Health Guidance 023/2020 apply.

A hand washing gel dispenser must be placed at the entrance to the playing area, in the lavatories, on each side table and at the director's table.

Good ventilation of all areas must be ensured, by means of natural ventilation or air conditioning (ideally with at least six changes of air an hour).

Likewise, at the end of each session or before the start of each session, all the furniture (chairs, playing tables and side tables) and all playing equipment (separators/screens, table coverings, bridgemates and boards) must be washed and disinfected.

Surfaces handled or touched often and by many people (such as door handles, door plates and light switches) must be disinfected.

Sanitary installations (lavatories) must be washed and disinfected, preferably with a combined detergent and disinfectant, at least three times during each session. A distance of at least 1 metre must be maintained between people using the lavatories.

6) Format of competitions

Bearing in mind the need to minimise circulation of players and to maintain a physical distance of at least 1 metre, teams competitions are to be preferred as not requiring movement between tables (or requiring it only once, during split matches).

If the playing area is large enough to allow a very low number of players per square metre, pairs tournaments may be held provided all participants respect the physical distance of at least 1 metre. The organising body must provide prominent signage for tables to avoid unnecessary movement by players.

Whatever the format, the tournament must use barometer scoring, with pre-dealt hands and with a complete set of boards for each table, so that cards are not passed between players.

7) Contingency measures

In the event that anyone present unexpectedly display symptoms conforming to those of COVID-19 (fever, cough or breathlessness) and if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the person may be infected, the following measures must be taken:

- Play must stop
- The suspected infected person must - preferably themselves - put on a mask and be isolated from others present;
- Everyone else must leave the premises;
- The premises must be closed;
- The incident must be reported via the SNS 24-hour telephone line (808 24 24 24).

The FPB is very grateful to Laura Woodruff for the translation of these documents into English.
