

Dear friends,

a report on the activity and the problems of the EBL's Senior department needs to operate a choice beforehand: whether to just talk a little bit about the usual arguments, basically quoting numbers, or, instead, talking openly about the deep sorrow that I feel after 18 months of my term as Chairman of the Senior Committee, and its reasons.

I feel like to have an EBL Senior Committee is totally unuseful at the moment, since it looks like just a way to get a label or to sit on a chair (and even a small one).

For the ones who are interested to know the reasons of my skeptical approach, and of my perplexity, I'll try to give a simple explanation based on facts, leaving to the auditorium the task of coming to conclusions, ready to be convinced that I am wrong if anyone would be able to.

During this period, there have been different events organized by the EBL, Antalya, Pau, San Remo, and by the WBF, Shang Hai and Beijing, and nobody has ever asked an opinion, if not an advise, or submitted any program, or urged any comment, from the members of the Senior Committees.

We don't have any pretention to be given the right, and the power, to take any final decision, but we would like to have what we should have constitutionally, the role of a body that should be consulted before those decisions.

It is sad to note that our opinions are not only not taken into any account by the Executive Committee, but are also felt as they were tedious and annoying by people who, strangely enough, are Senior themselves.

In the circumstance of a meeting of the Executive in Madrid, I advanced the proposal of stopping for two years time the automatic increase of the age required to belong to the Senior category. That proposal was unanimously accepted, and eventually formally presented to the WBF Executive in Shang Hai, where it was adopted only partially (the age's increase was stopped for one year) and, once again, without any previous consultation of the WBF Senior Committee.

Since the proposal was unanimously thought to be good by the members of the EBL's Executive, that body should have acted more strongly within the WBF Executive in order to

that proposal to be accepted fully, instead of being partially rejected without any specific motivation behind it.

In Verona we had the demonstration that when there is the goodwill, the regulations can be easily overwritten even at the last moment; there the format of the competition was changed from a two phases one, as originally scheduled, to a straight, one phase event, and it was done just to avoid the cut of some illustrious player from the Final stage, in name of “flexibility”, word apparently not available anymore in Shang Hai.

However, I am pretty sure that it would not have possible to do the same in the Open or Ladies, a further proof that the Senior bodies, and the Senior players that they represent, do not play any substantial role in the world of Bridge, or, in other words, that they have not even the least power, or authority.

Is rather significant that, despite the participation of many former World and European champions, during the European Teams Championships in Pau, not a single line of the 15 issues of the Daily Bulletins has ever been dedicated to the Senior event, unless we count results and rankings!

The ridiculous budget assigned to the body testimonies that, in fact, there is no request for it to really operate, and that there is no will to give it any autonomy. That budget has always been used just to cover the expenses of some of the old delegates, and it continued to be so even though I have formally called it off by the bodies which are in charge of controlling those expenses.

It is fairly possible that this inability to get any power depends by our own, and by our predecessors, however, I strongly believe that continuing on the same path would be outrageous, against the wishes of our members and, at the end, against what should be our marketing approach.

If is definitively true that our future relies on the youngsters, and that we must then concentrate most part of our efforts on them, and is also true that governments, either locals or nationals, are willing to finance developing projects if they involve youngsters, on the other hand is also true that the 80% of the bridge players is made of Seniors.

It is, then, the attention paid to that large majority, and the “maintenance” of it, that guarantees our survival and the development of our sport.

At this point, I frankly ask myself a question, though without being able to give a completely satisfactory inclusive answer: does the EBL function include the organization of “just” major events and championships, of high competitive level, and/or should take care also of competitions and events which are more oriented on the playful and joyful side of our sport, such as Festivals?

It looks to me that we have pointed to that direction with the organization of Menton, Tenerife, Antalya and, this year, San Remo, but the schedule of those events is still too tight for Senior people (and I have sadly to repeat that even though we have pointed it out many times to the Executive, our opinion, once again, has been ignored).

Let me quote, then, the Senior festival held yearly in Riccione, Italy, and in doing so I don't want at all to be sciovinist, but just to present a possible and already operating solution.

That Festival has taken over for the Italian Senior Championships (actually, it has overlapped it), and is open to foreigners for the third time this year.

There were 250 participants (counting the total of entries of pairs, teams and individual) in 2006, when it was restricted to Italians, but 450 in 2007, and as many as 572 in 2008, with more than a 1000 players competing in at least one of the events. Even though there were not many foreigners, we have had people coming from Finland, Germany, Wales, Austria, Israel, Australia(!), England, Switzerland, France, and the “international” taste increased pretty much the appeal of the event for the Italians themselves.

The format is simple: on one hand the technical organization is of the highest possible level; with pre duplicated boards all over, both in pairs and teams, qualification stages followed by finals, barometers in the final of the pairs events, bridgemates; on the other hand, the play takes just five ours a day, in the afternoons.

Comments by the participants are simply enthusiastic.

I have many times recommended, and stimulated, the creation of an European circuit of such Festivals, like happens in Golf, under the sponsorship of the EBL, with, of course, the indispensable cooperation of the NBOs. It would be enough to start with three Festivals to give it some meaning.

To do so, however, we need funds for various activities: we need a dedicate website, we need to get the possibility to help those NBO's which don't have the necessary know how,

sending them our experts, we need, in other words, to be able to act positively, instead of the passivity we have been confined to so far.

In doing so, we would not betray the EBL statutory functions, which remain steady, but it may be an opportunity to show attention, sensitivity and empathy for what are the needs and the requests of the Senior players.

Thank you for your attention,

Guido Resta