

A New Approach to Victorian Selection

A New Approach

The current selection process for Victorian teams is difficult for most Victorians to access, and overly long and constraining for those who can and do participate. The VBA proposes changing the selection method for Victorian teams to a system much like the ABF's 'Playoff Qualification Point' process.

VQPs (Victorian Qualification Points) will be awarded for high finishes in Congresses, Regional Championships, and major State events. The number of VQPs available for a given event will depend on the strength and size of the event. There will be 3 groups of Congresses (small, medium and large) and the VQPs will be the same for each event in the same Congress group.

This will dramatically expand the number of qualifying events from 2 to around 60. The point scheme is structured to enable the most successful Congress players to participate in the playoffs while ensuring the overall integrity of the selection process.

The format for the Open team playoff will continue to be teams-based but the entry will expand from 2 teams to 6. Teams will form and nominate themselves. Any player with a VQP will be eligible for the playoff. The 6 teams with the highest average VQPs per player will contest a one-weekend playoff, structured much like the Pennant finals are currently. The Saturday will be a round-robin, with a head-to-head final on Sunday.

We anticipate continuing to use a pairs format for the Women's and Senior's because the smaller pool of players in those categories will make it harder to form enough teams for a good playoff. If there is enough demand for places, we would prefer to conduct the Women's and Senior's playoff in a teams format also.

Advantages

The new process will dramatically expand the number of qualifying events from 2 to about 60. Anyone who plays a Congress will automatically participate in the process.

Every player in Victoria will have access to multiple qualifying events held near them. We expect several teams of successful Congress players would contest the Open Playoff.

The qualifying will be completely flexible – there will be no specific event(s) one has to play to qualify for the playoff. The only required event will be the playoff itself, which is just one weekend.

As a concomitant benefit, we will be able to determine and crown **Congress Champions** for the year (eg overall, under Life Master, under 50 masterpoints).

This new structure, and the concept of congress champions, will promote the congress circuit as a whole. The VBA will support that through regular updates in the VBA Bulletin.

Note that there will be no additional administrative overhead on clubs. The information required is easily extracted from existing reports and returns. The VBA will manage that process.

Summary

This restructure of the Victorian selection process achieves many important objectives

- Increase the flexibility of the selection process
- Make it easy for every Victorian to participate in the selection process
- Promote the Victorian Congress circuit
- Reward and honour regular and successful Congress players

We propose introducing this scheme for the 2014 playoffs, with VQPs counting for events from March through the following February. Under the draft VQP scheme the 2014 Victorian Open Team Playoff would likely consist of:

- the Pennant winner
- at least 1 and probably 2 Congress teams (players who won all of their VQPs in Congresses)
- 1 or 2 teams who earned the majority of their VQPs in State events
- 1 or 2 teams whose VQPs were more or less balanced between State and Congress events

Based on a detailed analysis of all 2012 State and Congress event results, we anticipate that the 6th entrant in the playoff would average about 24 VQPs. As a matter of interest, 251 different players would have earned VQPs in 2012 and been eligible for the playoff. 216 of these players earned their VQPs solely on the Congress circuit.

We ask for your feedback on the new structure by **Friday 28 June** (to the VBA Match & Tournament Committee). Of course it will be impossible to adjust the scheme for every different point of view, but we do value and will use your feedback.

A few specific questions on which we seek feedback:

- Should we introduce the VQP scheme for the Open playoff only in 2014 or should we use it for the 2014 Women's and Senior's playoffs also?
- Should we have some transitional arrangements for the first year? For example, that VQPs are awarded in the first year from July rather than March.

FAQ

What's the problem with the current selection process?

The selection process for Victorian teams suffers for being both difficult for most Victorians to access, and overly long and constraining for those who can and do participate. The process is most awkward for players in Outer Melbourne because they don't have a regional pathway, yet it can be difficult for them to get to the VBA for the main State championships.

Qualifying for the 2013 Victorian Open team took at least 14 sessions of bridge at the VBA or 11 through a region, including 2-3 full weekends, on set dates. For many players, that entire chain plus the 6 days of the Interstate if you qualify for a Victorian team can be a difficult commitment to make, no matter where they live and play.

We need to change to a more flexible selection process, while ensuring the overall integrity of the selection process (ie both that it chooses very good teams, and that it gives all Victorians an opportunity to participate in the process).

Who will be eligible to play in the Victorian team playoff?

Anybody eligible to represent Victoria who has any VQPs, even 1. In 2012, there would have been 251 eligible players. 216 of those players earned their VQPs solely from Congress events.

How does a player form a team for the playoff?

The VBA will regularly publish a list of players and their VQPs. Players can use that to figure out who to ask to form a team. As a guide, we estimate that an average of about 24 VQPs per player will be enough to earn a place in the Open Playoff. That's roughly equivalent to winning two large Congress events.

How do we know how many VQPs each event will attract?

We'll publish the final schedule on the VBA website (just like the ABF does for the PQP scheme).

How do players claim their VQPs?

Players don't have to do anything. The VBA will automatically track results from VQP events, and will publish current standings on a regular basis.

What will happen to the Country Teams Championship?

It will continue exactly as before. Each region will qualify representative teams to the Country Teams Championship, and the winner earns a place in the Pennant finals series. In addition, the Country Teams Champion will be awarded VQPs (12 in the current model - the same as for a large Congress).

What will happen to the country places in the Butler finals?

Those places will still be available. The Open Butler is one of Victoria's premier events and the leading pairs will earn a significant number of VQPs.

Do players with VQPs have to enter the playoff?

Absolutely not. Entering the playoff is entirely optional.

Will there be different VQPs for Women and Seniors?

Slightly. VQPs earned in "Open" events (Congress, Regional and State events) count for the category playoffs. There will be additional category-specific VQPs for selected Women's and Senior's events.

Appendix

Outcomes

We calculated what the VQP totals would be for the 2012 calendar year with the draft scheme.

The top 10 ranked players were all successful in one of the 2 current selection events (Pennant and Interstate Butler), however their selection performances alone were not sufficient to rank them in the top 10. A top 10 ranking required them to do something like win the Pennant and 3 large Congress events.

2 of the top 20 and 10 of the top 36 (ie the 36 players best placed to enter the Victorian Playoff) earned VQPs solely from Congress and Regional events. Only 9 of the top 36 earned their VQPs solely from State championships.

2012 Congress Champion

If the VQP scheme had been in place in 2012, the Congress Champion that year would have been Kim Frazer of the Moonee Valley Bridge Club (and also the VBA Secretary).

The top 20 **Congress** players in 2012 (using VQPs earned in Congresses only) were:

Rank	Player	Club	Congress Wins	Congress VQP
1	Kim Frazer	Moonee Valley	8	72
2	Stan Klofa	VBA	7	65
3	Charlie Schwabegger	Waverley	6	50
4	Bob Geyer	Moonee Valley	6	48
5	Ben Kingham	Bridge Fanatics	5	45
6	George Lovrecz	Melbourne	4	40
7	Chelliah Arul	Waverley	3	35
8	Andy Hegedus	VBA	1	32
9	Steve Weisz	VBA	3	31
10	Neil Ewart	VBA	3	28
11	Andrew Mill	Alphington	1	28
12	Jamie Thompson	Echuca	2	28
13	Bob Gallus	VBA	3	27
14	David Happell	Geelong	4	27
15	Blaine Howe	VBA	2	24
16	David Thompson	Echuca	2	24
17	Jan Tunks	Waverley	2	24
18	Justin Howard	Alphington	2	23
19	Len Meyer	VBA	1	22
20	Shirley Collins	Waverley	2	22

Just as a matter of interest, Andy Hegedus ranked 8th although he only had one Congress win. However, he also had four 2nd places and another four VQP-scoring placings.