

The Creation of a Franchise-Based Professional US Table Tennis League

VERY ROUGH DRAFT

May 30, 2020

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Purpose

To start up a championship league system for top U.S. players, with the goal of becoming a major league with TV, spectators, substantial salaries for players, and profits to owners.

The USTTL will most likely start up in one region, one with a substantial population base and top players. It is hoped that other regional leagues will start up separately, which would lead to playoffs and a possible "World Series" final.

For the first two years of the league, to get the league off to a successful start, the League Commissioner would have near absolute say in all matters. All rules may be changed or waived by the Commissioner at any time during the first two years, but only for extenuating circumstances. This is to avoid bureaucracy. Only a 2/3 vote of the owners can overturn a decision of the Commissioner during this period. A 2/3 vote of the owners can also fire and commissioner.

It is the goal and plan of the USTTL to have the owners take more complete control of the league after two years. As the league's finances improve, player salaries and/or bonuses will increase, as will owner profits.

During the start-up phase of the league, it is hoped that owners, players, officials, spectators, and volunteers will assist in all ways possible to get the league off to a successful start. Owners and players need to look at the USTTL as a long-term investment, and do whatever possible to make the league a success during the formative years. It is hoped that the league will be a financial success within the first two years.

Teams

- All teams will represent a geographic area, generally a city.
- All teams will adopt a team name.
- All teams must have six players on the roster for the season, although only three may play in a given meet. Changes in team rosters must be made with at least one week's notice, with approval of the Commissioner.
- Players must reside within 50 miles of team's home venue. This rule is primarily to allow players to play at least half of their matches locally, and may be changed eventually or waived in certain cases.
- To be eligible to compete in the USTTL, a player must have attained a minimum rating of 2200 at some time in the five years previous to the start of the league. (This may be waived by the Commissioner if he deems it necessary or the player's level high enough.)
- All players on a team must wear matching uniforms, but different from the opposing team's uniforms. It is recommended that teams contact manufacturers and distributors to get sponsors for this, with assistance from the Commissioner.
- The two highest rated players who compete in at least 12 of 14 team matches during the first year automatically have the right to be on roster for the same team in the second year.
- Each owner will designate who the team coach will be. This person may be anyone, including the owner or a player on the team's roster.

Schedule

- All teams will play two team matches per month.
- Team matches will be scheduled on Friday nights, Saturdays, or Sundays in such a way that no two team matches ever take place on the same day. In this way, the Commissioner may attend and publicize all meets.
- The League would meet for six months of the year, with each team playing a league match roughly twice each month. These numbers may vary, depending on the number of teams in a league. If there are eight teams in a league, then each team would play seven home matches, seven away matches, or 14 team matches total.

Format

- All league matches will be best of 9, with 3-person teams, with each player on each team playing the three players on the other team.
- Generally, teams would play against all other teams in the league twice, once at home, once away.

Venues

- All franchises will be responsible for holding half their meets in a home playing area.
- Playing area shall have one feature table, two practice tables (preferably in separate region), and adequate seating for spectators.
- Venues should have concession sales available.

Owners

- Owners would pay a \$10,000 franchise fee, plus \$2,000/season (starting the second year), payable to USTTL. (These numbers may be initially adjusted by the Commissioner.) As the league grows, the \$2000/annual fee would also grow, though always with the intent that the owners make a substantial annual profit.
- Upon buying a franchise, an owner has *perpetual* rights to that franchise for the duration of the USTTL, unless he sells these rights with 2/3 approval of other owners. New franchises can only be accepted upon approval of the Commissioner in the first two years, and of 2/3 of owners thereafter. Changes in the franchise fee will be decided by Commissioner in first two years, by owners thereafter.
- Owners will elect a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary from among themselves; however, they will mostly be an advisory function for first two years, except for the treasurer, who, in conjunction with the Commissioner, will maintain all financial records.

Commissioner

- He shall organize and publicize each meet.
- He shall work with local owners in bringing in paying spectators, media, and sponsorships. The Owners and Commissioner will work closely with him on this.
- He will do whatever is necessary to turn the league into a success.

Officials

All team matches will be umpired by an umpire hired by the USTTL. Local owners will pay this umpire \$30/team match and possibly expense money. Umpires are expected to dress in appropriate uniforms. When finances improve, officials will be paid more, with preferential selection of those officials who participated in the early years.

Rules

For the first two years, the Commissioner's word is final in all matters. After two years, the owners will create bylaws, and run the league themselves via a hired Commissioner, who may or may not be the one brought in at the start.

Finances

- Concessions
 - 100% of concessions go to the local owner. Concession income must be reported to USTTL.
- Ticket Sales
 - 10% of ticket sales go to USTTL, the bulk of which becomes the salary of Commissioner.
 - 10% of ticket sales go to the Championship Fund.
 - 25% of ticket sales go to the local owner.
 - 15% of the ticket sales go to the visiting owner.
 - 40% of ticket sales go to the 6 players in the meet.
 - 60% of this money goes to the winning team's three players, divided evenly.
 - 40% of this money goes to the losing team's three players, divided evenly.
- Other Expenses
 - All local expenses, including fees to the match umpires, will be paid by the local owner.
 - Visiting teams must pay all their traveling expenses; however, local owners should assist in providing hospitality when possible.
- USTTL Fees
 - 90% of all USTTL fees (after expenses) go to the Commissioner.
 - Remaining 10% goes to the Championship Fund.
- Championship Fund
 - The Championship Fund will be split by top four teams in the league in the following proportion: 1st 40%; 2nd 30%; 3rd 20%; 4th 10%. Players who win these funds split them evenly in proportion to how often they played.

Sample Match Finances

As the league grows, money would grow from more spectators and sponsors.

- 50 spectators, \$10 each, \$500 total
 - \$125 to local owner (minus \$20 umpire fee and other expenses), plus concessions
 - \$75 to visiting owner
 - \$50 to USTTL
 - \$50 to championship fund
 - \$120 to winning players (\$40 each)
 - \$80 to losing players (about \$27 each)

Championship Fund

If there are 8 teams, and each team plays each of the other teams twice, there will be 56 team matches. At \$50/meet, there will be \$2800 in the Championship Fund. These are just at the start - as league grows, money would grow from more spectators and sponsors.

- 1st:\$1120
- 2nd: \$ 840
- 3rd: \$ 560
- 4th: \$ 280

USTTL Finances

Annual Income for 8-team franchise

- Initial \$80,000 in franchise fees would go toward commissioner's first-year salary, expenses, and promotion.
- \$2000/franchise/year, or \$16,000
 - \$8000 of the \$80,000 initial franchise fee goes to expenses and league promotion.
- 10% of all ticket sales, or \$2800
- Commissioner, working with local owners, would work toward sponsors.
- Total annual fees: \$18,800 minus expenses
 - 80% to Commissioner
 - 20% to USTTL

Expenses

- Salary
- Flyers
- Advertising
- Promotion
- Other?