



Larry Rose

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Margaret Smith
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One Olympic Plaza
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Dear Margaret:

This letter includes my detailed comments on the NetEdge Software. Please consider these as a part of my evaluation.



Let me preface this by saying that I've tried to be fair about reviewing this software – ignoring past involvement in competing for the tournament software development job for USATT.

That said, I am extremely disappointed in the performance of the software package. I will not risk the success of an event by using it again without significant improvements.

I reviewed only a portion of the software. I did not attempt to look at the scheduling portion of the software, for reasons that will be made clear.

When I first installed the software, I started it, looked around a bit, and finally exited the program. Upon exiting, the program warned that certain information would be lost if I exited. No option to save this information was evident, so I must assume that it is all kept in memory. As far as I can tell, this information has to do with time scheduling and table assignments. There **must** be a way to save information prior to exiting, rather than keeping it all in memory and losing it on program exit. Consider that up until this year, I ran all my tournaments using a desktop computer (this year, I brought my laptop). If there were to be a power glitch during the tournament, I would lose all information pertaining to tournament scheduling and table assignments.

I decided at that time to wait until tournament day to investigate time scheduling.

I used the software to enter information about the tournament and the events. I believe that several improvements should be made to the user-interface of the program. Why, for example, is the general information about the tournament under a menu option called "Utilities"? A much bigger flaw than this is that all the information about the tournament ended up on my Windows '95 desktop, rather than in a program subdirectory. Further, suppose I generally run 3 tournaments a year – this tournament (a two-day event with 8 tables and about a dozen events), a smaller 2-man team event, and finally a giant Round Robin format event. Ideally, I should be able to save the setup information about each tournament in a different directory (perhaps, even save the results to go back and review at a later time). Then, when I want to run the same, or a similar tournament the



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following year, I could just create a new subdirectory, copy the appropriate files into the directory, and be ready to go.

Tournament registration does not provide a way to create temporary USATT ID numbers for players not in the existing database. We sold roughly 16 memberships at this tournament – about half were new memberships. Additionally, we had a number of members who were not included in the ratings information obtained from USATT. Without an ID number, the final exporting of results to be processed for ratings is impossible.

I entered numbers for some of the players, but for three of them, I failed to fill in the field. The software did not provide a warning that no USATT ID was entered. It did, however, complain about a lack of a rating. Unrated players are normal operating conditions for a tournament. The software should deal with them in a better manner.

The software exhibits the Year-2000 bug. This is only partially the programmer's fault, as the ratings.txt file received from USATT HQ included only 2-digit year fields. However, since USTTA was not even an organization until 1933, the software could easily have made the assumption that 08/31/00 was the last day of August 2000, rather than the last day of August 1900. The software displays a 2 digit year, and clearly calculates expiration dates on that basis – telling me that the person with a membership expiring on 08/31/00 needed to purchase a new membership is an inexcusable flaw this near to the turn of the century. USATT **must** change their practices for sending out membership info, being sure to use 4 digit years in all exported data.

There is no support for 3 year memberships, family memberships, junior memberships with no subscription, or tournament passes. These can be added by the user, but should be automatic.

Ratings fees are charged for each player entering the tournament – whether they participated in a singles event or not. Ratings fees should only be charged to players who play in singles events which are processed by USATT. Since there's a field in the event data which indicates whether the event is to be sent to USATT, and another field which marks doubles events, this should be easy.

I was never able to successfully print the desk sheet, so all registration had to be handled by using the computer.

At the tournament, the system crashed roughly 8 times per day. The computer used was well beyond the recommended system: 80486 DX/4-100, 20 MB RAM, several hundred Meg free disk space, and a VGA monitor. Since the software was unreliable, and the tournament scheduling/table assignment portion of the software clearly does not save its data, I did not review that module at all.

The ease-of-use of the program could be significantly improved. None of the buttons or window components make use of short-cut keys. For example, when entering the results of a single elimination match, you should be able to select Player A winning by pressing Alt-A, and Player B winning by pressing Alt-B.

The tab-order of controls can also be improved. Take the same screen as an example. When entering a 2/3 match result, the current dialog starts with focus on the radio group showing the winner. It then goes to the first, second, and third game score, and then to the Advance button. This is fine. However, when the same dialog is used to control a 3/5 match, the focus moves from the radio group to the first, second, and third game scores, and then **skips** the fourth and fifth games and proceeds to the advance button.

The logic of this screen (for a 2/3) should in fact, check to see whether the match is over after two games, and should then disable the third match, skipping immediately to the advance button. There should also be a Withdrawal option – similar to the Default checkbox.

The draw sheets for SE and RR draws show regions which must be clicked to print the match cards for a round. The cursor should change when it is over a region that has an action. There is also no

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way to print individual match cards. You cannot see the scores of previous rounds on the screen (I used VGA 640x480 resolution). The cursor should also change when it is over the match number. Double-clicking on the match number brings up the result entry field.

It was completely unclear that the checkbox in the RR form was the method to default a player from a RR. There is **no** way to default a player from a single match of a RR.

Printing of SE draws fails when you have a draw that will take longer than a single letter sheet. Placing legal paper in the printer allowed the draws to display well.

Please call me if you want to discuss any of the information above in more detail.

Sincerely,

Larry Rose
1997 Colorado Springs Open Tournament Director