

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT: 22 FEBRUARY 2014

The BSF Executive met in Manchester following the 2014 BSF AGM on 22 February. This document is a report from that meeting.

Attendance

Present: Stella Ackrell (President), Vicky Hall (outgoing Administrator), Mike Jennings (Treasurer), Beth Perkins (National Teams Officer), Liz Graham (Tournaments Officer), Claire Waldron (Youth & Schools Officer), Mark Wigington (Marketing & Communications Officer), Mark Munnery (General Officer), Chris Moon (BASU Representative).

Apologies: Fiona Thorley (Tournaments Officer).

Guests: Bob Fromer (BSUK), Lesley Morisetti.

Copy to: Darren Prouty (incoming Administrator), James Clarke (new Communications Officer).

Thanks

BSF President Stella Ackrell welcomed everyone and thanked them for all their work over the last year and in preparation for the AGM. The Executive presented outgoing Administrator Vicky Hall with a card, flowers and gift voucher as she steps down after four years on the Board.

AGM review

The Executive noted that 58 people had attended the 2014 BSF AGM earlier in the day at the Hough End Centre in Manchester. BSUK and BASU representatives were present and 17 of the 19 BSF-registered leagues were represented. There were representatives from 34 clubs or teams.

Leagues not represented were the Norfolk Softball Association and the London Legal League.

All teams that played in the National Softball League in 2013 sent a representative. Three teams that played in Platinum or Gold Nationals in 2013 did not send a representative: Raiders, Mescalitos and Guerrillas. These three teams will be advised that due to their non-attendance, they cannot enter National Championships in 2014

The AGM, scheduled from 2:00-4:30 pm, ran more than an hour over length, with the result that several members had to leave before the end and some agenda items plus the BSF's annual and Hall of Fame awards had to be rushed. The BSF will look at the format and content of the AGM for 2015 and beyond so that this situation can be avoided in future.

A full report on the AGM can be read here: <http://www.britishsoftball.org/news/view/key-issues-debated-at-2014-bsf-agm>.

Co-ed Slowpitch Nationals

One of the longest discussions at the AGM concerned the date of the 2014 Co-ed Slowpitch National Championships, which are due to be played as a combined tournament involving all grades of play including A-grade/NSL at Farnham Park on the weekend of 9-10 August.

This date was queried at the AGM by 2013 Nationals Winner Chromies and 2013 NSL Champions H2O, because these two teams have qualified for the European Slowpitch Super Cup in the Czech Republic from 29 July-2 August and felt that their players would not have time to recover before Co-ed Nationals on 9-10 August. They requested that the Premier Nationals be held separately from the other grades of play on 30-31 August or 6-7 September at Farnham Park.

However, this will may not be possible because the BBF's National Baseball Championships are at Farnham on 30-31 August and it's not clear whether the dirt softball fields will be available.

The queries raised by Chromies, H2O and other A-grade teams at the AGM will be taken back to the Nationals Working Group for consideration with regard to the longer term, but Chromies and H2O will need a decision from the BSF on the 2014 Co-ed Nationals by Friday 28 February so they can consider their position in relation to the European Slowpitch Cup. The deadline for withdrawal from any ESF competition without penalty is 1 March.

Starting in 2015, the BSF plans to fix the dates for National Championships, then open up other dates on the season's calendar to tender by other tournaments. The BSF will also require proof that a minimum standard of tournament delivery can be achieved before a tournament can be sanctioned and included on the calendar.

The Executive feels that holding the Co-ed Nationals later in August would have advantages, both for teams entering the biennial European Slowpitch Cup and because it would give other teams more time to plan once they know they have qualified for Nationals.

Another issue raised by A-grade teams at the AGM was that there are not enough A-grade tournaments and that those that exist are mostly bunched together too closely in the middle of the season. The BSF agrees that this is a problem that needs to be solved in future, even if the calendar for this year is largely set.

During the AGM, the Manchester Softball League offered to run an A-grade and B-grade tournament in May to help spread out the NSL tournaments across the calendar. However, the BSF will need to consider the impact on the Great Britain Fastpitch League, which has scheduled four playing dates in May to avoid conflicts with major slowpitch events. The other question is whether a majority of NSL teams, most of whom are South East-based, will travel to Manchester.

Softball Strategy

The BSUK Development Strategy Committee (DSC) wants to consider future strategies and objectives for softball and baseball in isolation from BSUK's own long-term organisational strategy.

So the BSF plans to develop its own "Whole Sport Plan" to bring to the DSC, and to start the

process off, each person at the meeting gave their opinion on how they would like to see softball move forward over the next years in terms of values and outcomes. Growth and quality featured in responses covering various areas of the sport.

BSF Marketing Officer Mark Wigington and General Officer Mark Munnery will draft a short BSF Strategy document based on these contributions for discussion at the next Executive meeting before the Strategy is developed in more detail.

ESF Congress feedback

BSF President Stella Ackrell and Treasurer Mike Jennings reported back from the ESF Congress they attended on 14-15 February in Prague.

A BSF motion to use the results from the previous tournament as seedings for the next tournament in the larger European Championships was defeated by two votes. The ESF apparently still prefers to have seeded groups which are then picked out of a hat at Congress to establish competition pools, even though this distorts results achieved by teams at the previous competition.

John Austin, ESF Slowpitch Development Officer, reported some positive developments. A fastpitch-to-slowpitch conversion course is being held in Holland next month, with assistance from GB Slowpitch Head Coach Steve Patterson.

The ESF is considering running Masters Tournaments from 2015, though softball formats and age categories are still under consideration.

Mike Jennings explained that the ESF's twinning initiative with American Amateur Softball Association (ASA) State Commissions has made slow progress, but that relationships are developing. GB and Croatia are twinned with ASA Massachusetts, with whom we have a good relationship, although limited work has been carried out so far.

Bat tester

The ESF has one bat compression tester, but this is not enough when European tournaments run simultaneously. Mike Jennings has proposed that the BSF and ESF purchase a second bat tester between them, at a cost of approximately £250 each, and the ESF has agreed to this plan. The bat tester can be used in Britain at domestic tournaments at the beginning of the season and then go to Europe for ESF tournaments in July and August. The Executive agreed to proceed.

Mike Jennings will ask BASU Umpire-in-Chief Jes Sandhu if BASU would like to contribute something to the BSF's share of the purchase.

Reports from BSUK Committee meetings

BSF General Officer Mark Munnery attended a meeting of the BSUK Governance Committee on 20 January in place of Stella Ackrell. He reported that the meeting discussed succession planning and

is looking to book governance training for BSUK Directors who would like to attend.

Subjects for discussion at the next meeting of the Governance Committee will include diversity and equality.

Senior Softball USA tour

Three men's softball teams from the Senior Softball USA organisation are coming to the UK this summer, and the BSF plans to run a Men's Slowpitch Tournament around their visit on 21 and/or 22 June.

A venue for the tournament has yet to be confirmed, but once it is, invitations to men's slowpitch teams will be issued.

National Softball League in 2014

Tournaments Officer Liz Graham reported that the eleven teams who played in the National Softball League in 2013 plan to enter again.

Manchester Thunder, who played A-grade softball very competitively last year but outside the NSL structure, have asked to take up the twelfth NSL place in 2014, and the Executive agreed to offer the place to them.

Additional facilities at Farnham Park

BSUK Joint CEO John Boyd informed the Executive that the Farnham Park Golf Club, opposite Farnham Park Sports Ground, has full meeting and restaurant facilities and is available for hire. Use of these facilities would be positive for softball's tenure at Farnham Park.

Next meeting

The BSF Executive will continue to have conference call meetings on the second Thursday of each month provided that those dates are possible for new Administrator Darren Prouty and new Communications Officer James Clarke.

For now, the next BSF conference call meeting is scheduled for Thursday evening 13 March. Anyone with an item they wish to place on the agenda should contact BSF President Stella Ackrell on: stella.ackrell@britishsoftball.org.