

BSF Executive Meeting Report: 13 March 2014

The BSF Executive held a monthly conference call meeting on the evening of Thursday 13 March. This document is a report from that meeting.

Attendance

Present: Stella Ackrell (President), Darren Prouty (Administrator), Mike Jennings (Treasurer), Fiona Thorley and Liz Graham (Tournaments Officers), Claire Waldron (Youth & Schools Officer), James Clarke (Communications Officer), Mark Munnery (General Officer).

Apologies: Mark Wigington (Marketing Officer).

Guest: Bob Fromer (BSUK).

BSF tournaments

The BSF will host a Single-Sex Slowpitch Tournament on Saturday 21 June at Farnham Park. Three Men's Masters slowpitch teams will be visiting from the USA that weekend, and will take part in a men's competition, but with news that other grass pitches can be guaranteed for that weekend, the BSF hopes to host a women's competition as well. An announcement inviting entries to the tournament will be made shortly.

Following discussions at the AGM and negotiations with BSUK over the availability of dedicated pitches at Farnham Park, the BSF is likely to hold the Premier Nationals for the top eight teams in the National Softball League on the weekend of 30-31 August, rather than as part of the Co-ed Slowpitch National Championships on 9-10 August. A final decision will be made by 19 March.

If the Premier Nationals move to the last weekend of August, it means that the BSF's plans to combine all grades of co-ed slowpitch play in one National Championship tournament on one weekend at Farnham Park will be postponed until 2015. The combined Nationals may be held later in August from 2015 onward to avoid any future clashes with European slowpitch competitions.

This year, the BSF intends to provide a route to the Co-ed Nationals for tournament teams. Four teams each will be able to qualify for the B-grade and C-grade Nationals based on results obtained by playing in at least four out of six specified tournaments over the summer. Details of how teams can qualify through this route will be published shortly on the BSF website. The other 12 teams in each of the B-grade and C-grade Nationals will be teams that have qualified through league positions.

The open-entry Single-Sex National Championships will be held this year on the weekend of 12-13 July in Birmingham.

National Softball League

BSF Tournaments Officer Liz Graham told the meeting that 12 teams will compete in the National Softball League this year, with Manchester Thunder joining the 11 teams that took part in 2013.

NSL competition will be held at the three Diamond Series tournaments, the British Airways Tournament and the Pioneers Tournament if it goes ahead.

The Manchester Softball League has offered to host an NSL event in May, since NSL teams feel

there are not enough tournaments with A-grade sections, but many of these same teams have expressed reservations about travelling to Manchester. Another issue the BSF will consider is that introducing another A-grade tournament in May could have a detrimental effect on participation in the GB Fastpitch League on that weekend. The GBFL has scheduled most of its dates in April and May to avoid clashes with major slowpitch competitions.

BSF vision

BSUK has asked both the BSF and the BBF to put forward one-page summaries of their vision for their sport over the next five years.

Following the AGM in Manchester on 22 February, the BSF Executive met that evening and spent time putting forward ideas, and now General Officer Mark Munnery has shaped these into a development pyramid diagram.

The Federation visions will be discussed at the next meeting of BSUK's Development Strategy Committee (DSC) on 9 April, as part of an effort to align Federation objectives with BSUK's development work and strategies. Mark Munnery, along with Marketing Officer Mark Wigington and Youth & Schools Officer Claire Waldron, are likely to attend.

BASU questions

In light of the BSF's drive to ensure that all teams that compete in BSF-sanctioned tournaments are affiliated and covered by insurance, and the effort to make sure that all tournaments comply with regulations governing the use of under-18 players in adult teams, BASU has asked the BSF to clarify what action its umpires should take, if any, in situations where these rules are not adhered to.

As Tournaments Officer Liz Graham has pointed out, this question raises the need for the BSF to provide a checklist of requirements that tournaments need to fulfil in order to receive sanction and a place on the BSF calendar.

BSF Treasurer Mike Jennings has clarified to the Executive that in the event of non-affiliated teams taking part, affiliated teams and any BASU umpires involved in a game with a non-affiliated team are still covered by the BSF's public liability insurance – only the non-affiliated team has no cover. He has also pointed out that BASU umpires do work at events involving non-affiliated teams, such as charity tournaments and American School events.

The BSF will consider this issue further. In general, however, the BSF would like all teams taking part in BSF-sanctioned events to be affiliated and registered.

Registration for 2014

The 2014 Registration system for leagues, teams and players is more or less in place after some intensive cooperation between the BSF, BSUK and Spawtz.

Data from 2013 has been migrated to 2014 on the BSF website and Mike Jennings, who has led this effort, is about to notify leagues that they can go on the site and update their data for 2014. Following this, leagues will require their team captains to update team details and register at least 18 core players (if they have that many) by providing names, email addresses and (if possible) dates of birth.

At the same time, Mike Jennings will be sending fee invoices to leagues and independent

tournament teams.

The deadline for registering teams and players is 30 April, but the deadline for payment of fees is 31 May.

The BSF will be urging teams to take advantage of the extensive team management functionality available through the Spawtz system on the BSF website. This remains optional, but the BSF will cover the costs for any team that registers to use this system.

GB Team staff

With coaches and managers for all seven GB National Teams having been confirmed and approved for 2014 by the GB Management Committee (GBMC), National Teams Officer Beth Perkins will now present the full list to the BSF for approval.

The GBMC, as a semi-autonomous BSF Committee, has the main role in approving staff appointments, but the BSF can raise questions about appointments if they choose.

Protective equipment for under-18s in adult teams

BSF regulations governing under-18 players in adult teams require that all such players use a helmet when batting or baserunning and a mask while catching. This will happen automatically in adult fastpitch teams, but has not necessarily been the case with slowpitch teams.

To help slowpitch teams comply with the regulations, the BSF has arranged with The Baseball and Softball Shop to make a package consisting of a helmet and a catcher's mask available for £40, and the BSF will pay half this amount. For more information, teams should contact Mike Jennings on: mike.jennings@britishsoftball.org.

BSUK SLA

Traditionally, the BSF purchases a range of non-development services each year from BSUK for an agreed fee. This includes services in areas such as communications, public enquiries, events, IT support, national team support and others.

Following discussions with BSUK on 13 March, the BSF has again agreed to purchase £4,000 worth of services from BSUK in 2014-15, the same amount paid over the past couple of years, although slightly fewer hours of delivery will be involved.

Bat tester

Following a decision at the last BSF Executive meeting, the BSF is teaming up with the ESF to purchase a bat compression tester. BASU may also contribute to the cost.

The bat tester is being purchased through the American Amateur Softball Association (ASA) and will be brought to the UK in May for use during the ESF Slowpitch Umpire Course to be held here on 7-11 May.

In general, the BSF will have use of the bat tester during the first half of each season, then the ESF will use it at its Championship and Cup tournaments in July and August.

BSUK Committees

BSF Executive members sit on various BSUK committees along with representatives from the BBF and from BSUK's Board and staff, and reports from BSUK committee meetings are now a standard part of the agenda for BSF Executive meetings.

General Officer Mark Munnery attended the last meeting of BSUK's **Development Strategy Committee** and reported that BSUK has already exceeded its target for new participants this year (the target was 1100, and so far 1183 people have taken up one or another of the sports). The BSF has requested a quarterly report from BSUK on new teams that have been created through the agency's development initiatives and the number of players progressing from development activities to affiliated BSF teams.

A major part of the meeting was devoted to a debate on how BSUK and the Federations can keep track of people who take part in our sports while at university or college and direct them into Federation leagues and clubs during the summer break and/or after they finish their courses. The BSF has requested that BSUK provide information about all students involved in softball who are in their final year, along with where they live, so that the BSF can connect them with local leagues where these exist.

Mark Munnery also attended the latest meeting of the **Commercial Committee**, which is not a BSUK Committee but a tripartite committee of BSUK, the BSF and the BBF. The Committee wants to know about any commercial deals that either Federation currently has, including through leagues, clubs or national teams, and has indicated that 2014 may be the last year that stand-alone deals are allowed.

Next meeting

The next BSF Executive meeting will be a conference call on Thursday 10 April. Anyone with items for the Agenda should contact BSF Administrator Darren Prouty on: darren.prouty@britishsoftball.org.