

## BSF Executive Meeting Report: 11-12 October 2014

The BSF Executive held its annual autumn face-to-face meeting on the weekend of 11-12 October in Slough. Below is a journalistic report from that meeting.

### Attendance

**Present:** Stella Ackrell (President), Darren Prouty (Administrator), Mike Jennings (Treasurer), Beth Perkins (National Teams Officer), Fiona Thorley (Tournaments Officer), Liz Graham (Tournaments Officer – by phone), Claire Waldron (Youth and Schools Officer), Mark Wigington (Marketing Officer).

**Apologies:** Mark Munnery (General Officer), Jess Casey (Welfare Officer), Alan MacFarlane (London Liaison Officer), Chris Moon (BASU Representative).

**Guest:** Bob Fromer (BSUK).

### Financial summary

The BSF's latest financial year ended on 30 September 2014, and while the accounts are not yet closed, Treasurer Mike Jennings was able to present a summary of results to the meeting. The BSF had budgeted for an operating deficit of £7,300 in 2013-14, planning to use some of its reserves to increase spending on development and national team programmes. In the event, it looks like there will be a small surplus instead. Income was down around £2000 on budget projections, so the outcome is entirely due to some areas of discretionary spending being less than planned.

A full set of accounts, and a budget for 2014-15, will be circulated in the AGM Pack early next year and will be open for discussion at the 2015 BSF AGM.

One area of underspending (by around £2000) was on the rolling programme of Development Grants that the BSF has made available for many years to leagues, teams or occasionally individuals for development purposes. The Executive has decided to publicise these grants more widely over the coming months.

### Softball World Series

The 16th edition of the Softball World Series tournament on 13-14 September, run this year as a collaboration between the BSF and BSUK and funded by the BSF, was once again a successful tournament in which teams from Europe competed with UK-based “national teams” for trophies at three different levels.

Going forward, the BSF plans to talk to European Federations about sending national slowpitch teams or sanctioned club teams, rather than having random teams come from Europe that have no

connection with their National Governing Body. The BSF would also like captains of UK-based teams to recruit more widely within all areas of the UK and ensure opportunities for new players to take part in the event. They would also like to ensure that as many players as possible have valid connections with the country or region their team represents.

Although the traditional venue for this tournament, the BA Concorde Club near Heathrow, has now been taken over by Imperial College, next year's World Series at the venue has already been guaranteed.

## **GB Management Committee**

The GB Management Committee (GBMC) was established in 2008 to oversee and support all softball national teams, has proposed to the Executive that its remit be extended to include the organisation and delivery of fastpitch development in collaboration with BSUK.

In reality, the GBMC has been involved with fastpitch development, and also with the organisation of domestic fastpitch competition, for some time, and the Executive accepted that its role should be expanded. However, the fact that its expanded role is likely to require more income and expenditure on the part of the GBMC will require more oversight from the Executive.

In order to support its expanded remit, the GBMC plans to call a meeting in late November of around 50 fastpitch "stakeholders" – people who participate in or have an interest in the fastpitch format – to ask for volunteers to take on a variety of administrative tasks or development initiatives, either individually or in small working groups.

The group will also call a meeting of GB national team coaches and managers early in the new year to discuss matters of common concern, such as uniforms, equipment, fundraising, bursaries and training ideas.

Meanwhile, GBMC members have been meeting with BSUK to formulate plans for short-term projects to support fastpitch development and to put together a working group to create a longer-term plan for fastpitch. More details can be seen here:

[\[http://www.britishsoftball.org/news/view/fastpitch-development-plans-agreed-with-bsuk\]](http://www.britishsoftball.org/news/view/fastpitch-development-plans-agreed-with-bsuk)

Because six of the BSF's seven national teams are fastpitch teams, and because slowpitch is much larger and more established in the UK, the GBMC's focus has often tended to be on fastpitch. However, the group was always intended to function with regard to all national teams, and the GB Slowpitch Team, which participated more regularly when the GBMC was first formed, will be invited to do so again, particularly to talk about common concerns such as uniform designs, equipment purchase, player bursaries and fundraising. GBMC meetings may be reorganised so that some focus primarily on issues affecting GB Slowpitch.

## **National teams**

National Teams Officer Beth Perkins gave a presentation to the Executive on results achieved by the four national teams that were in official ESF or ISF competition in 2014.

Beth is also the Head Coach of the GB Under-13 Girls Team programme, and reported that the programme is now working in close partnership with London Sports, an organisation that runs baseball and slowpitch leagues at Wormwood Scrubs in West London. The GB Under-13 programme is helping to introduce fastpitch to London Sports and has been able to recruit a number of players in return.

Beth reported that results are currently awaited from surveys that the GBMC sends out each year to players on national teams (and parents on youth teams) that took part in official competitions. Following an analysis of the survey results, coaching and management appointments for national teams in 2015 will be brought to the BSF Executive for discussion and ratification.

## **Slowpitch development**

BSUK has asked both the Softball and Baseball Federations to submit development plans and visions for their sports. The BSF has already submitted an Outline Plan for fastpitch development, which has formed the basis for recent discussions with BSUK, and will now begin work on a plan which involves drawing more new recreational slowpitch players into competitive BSF structures. General Officer Mark Munnery has been asked to lead on this project.

Meanwhile, the Executive would like to see more communication between BSUK and local slowpitch leagues with regard to BSUK-led slowpitch development projects in local areas, and would like to see a published list of development events and sessions to help with this process. BSUK compiles a quarterly list of new teams created through its development work, and the BSF will suggest that these lists could be sent to local leagues in each BSUK focus region – though with the proviso that contacts should be made through the regional BSUK Point Person. Contact could also be fostered between local leagues and University Softball Officers appointed by BSUK. The object is to encourage more players and teams created through BSUK development work to play within BSF structures.

The BSF plans to ask all slowpitch leagues what they are doing with regard to recruitment and development on a local level, and will ask League Heads to bring stories and plans to the annual League Heads Forum meeting on Saturday 8 November in Birmingham.

## **Co-ed Slowpitch Nationals and 2015 Calendar**

The BSF Executive has reaffirmed plans for the Co-ed Slowpitch Nationals to include all grades of play – including Premier or NSL – on the same weekend in 2015 at Farnham Park. The provisional date is the weekend of 22-23 August.

The draft calendar for softball tournament events in 2015 was reviewed and Tournaments Officer Fiona Thorley is currently circulating the draft calendar to all tournament organisers to see which dates can be agreed and which may need further discussion.

The 2015 calendar has been constructed to try to have better spacing between major tournaments and to ensure that there are sufficient dates for Fastpitch League play that do not conflict with major slowpitch events.

By agreement between BSUK and South Bucks District Council, which owns Farnham Park, six weekends each season are guaranteed for tournaments that require multiple grass pitches as well as the dedicated diamonds. Additional “all-site” weekends are possible, but cannot necessarily be guaranteed.

In 2015, one of these six weekends will be used for the BSF Co-ed Slowpitch Nationals, and BSUK is reserving two weekends, one for a major three-grade co-ed slowpitch tournament for which the provisional date is 18-19 July. The other BSUK event is likely to involve baseball, fastpitch and slowpitch competition on the same weekend, provisionally 6-7 June. Use of the other three “all-site” weekends at Farnham has yet to be determined by the BSF.

The BSF Executive is currently drawing up a document listing minimum standards that tournaments must achieve in order to be sanctioned by the BSF and listed in the Events section on the BSF website, and this will be circulated to tournament organisers.

Among the requirements will be a need for a Risk Assessment to be carried out for all aspects of the tournament, participating teams to be insured (either through the BSF or independently), incident forms to be used to report accidents and injuries and for BSF regulations regarding under-18 players to be fully observed.

The BSF plans to adopt standard Risk Assessment and Incident Report forms that will be distributed to tournament organisers.

## **BSF tournaments in 2014**

The Executive reviewed the tournaments that the BSF ran in 2014 – the Single-Sex Slowpitch Nationals, the Co-ed Slowpitch Nationals, the Premier Nationals and the Softball World Series. The **Single-Sex Slowpitch Nationals** attracted a record number of teams to Birmingham and was well received by teams and players, though it was noted that better catering is needed for this event and the BSF will negotiate on this with Birmingham City University.

The tournament demonstrated that there is clearly a demand for single-sex slowpitch, but the BSF believes it does not have the capacity to run more single-sex events. It will, however, encourage leagues or others to hold them if spaces can be found in the calendar, and will offer support in terms of providing bases and fencing and advertising tournaments on the BSF website.

The **Co-ed Slowpitch Nationals** at Farnham Park had 24 teams, down on previous years, but all pitches were fully-fenced and a two-umpire system was used for all finals. Organisers, teams and groundskeepers adapted well to a heavy storm on Sunday afternoon. Again, however, the quality of catering was an issue.

The **Premier Nationals**, also at Farnham Park, had a three-umpire system for most games thanks to BASU, who used the occasion to train a large number of umpires in the system that is used in Europe. This was appreciated by players, as was the filming carried out for the final and shown through the BSUK website. Again, catering was not as players would have liked, but getting commercial caterers for such a small tournament (eight teams) is difficult.

The **Softball World Series** has been discussed above. Catering is not an issue at this tournament as

excellent food is provided by the venue, the former British Airways Concorde Club, now re-named the Heston Venue by new owners Imperial College.

Tournaments Officer Fiona Thorley told the meeting that catering is the main issue the BSF needs to solve for its tournaments, as more and more players want more and healthier choices. She also believes that more people are needed on the ground to make sure tournaments run well and to deal with any emergencies.

Going forward, the BSF plans to form a small Tournaments Group to plan and oversee its events, and will look to enlist local volunteers to help run them.

The Executive is also looking at new ideas for trophies and prizes, better opening and closing ceremonies and provisions for involving players' children in softball and other activities.

## **BSF website**

The BSF has agreed to continue using its current website over the next year, but will be carrying out a general review of the website to see if any information or functionality needs to be changed. In particular, there will be a review of the registration process to see how well it worked in 2014 and whether it can be improved.

The BSF's key aim is to increase the number of teams that register and roster their players, including the provision of (at minimum) email addresses so that the BSF has a way to communicate directly with its affiliated teams and players.

BSF Administrator Darren Prouty and General Officer Mark Munnery will take the lead on the website review.

With regard to the league and team management functionality available through the website (the BSF currently pays the charges for the teams that use it), the BSF hopes to provide a demonstration on how to use this functionality at the League Heads Forum in November. The BSF is also looking for a Communications Officer with a specific remit to drive the BSF presence on social media. Anyone interested in exploring this position should contact BSF Administrator [Darren Prouty](#).

## **2015 AGM**

The 2015 BSF AGM has been tentatively set for Saturday 28 February 2015, though this date will need to be confirmed.

The BSF AGM alternates between North and South, and this year will be held in the South. The BSF will confirm venue and timing details shortly.

The deadline for motions to the AGM and nominations for the BSF's annual awards will be 20 December 2014 and the deadline for nominations for positions on the BSF Executive will be 23 January 2015. The AGM Pack will be circulated around 1 February 2015.

More details on the process for submitting motions and nominations will be announced shortly on the BSF website.

The BSF plans to widen the requirements for attendance at the AGM, which is linked to participation in National Championships. Attendance will now be required by:

- A representative from each league that wishes to send a team or teams to National Championships.
- A representative from each NSL team and from any other independent team that wishes to take part in National Championships.
- A representative from all league teams that have qualified for National Championships in 2015 by virtue of their league position in 2014 and that wish to take up their place in National Championships. The list of qualified teams will be announced by the BSF shortly.

## **BSUK Committees**

BSF Executive members attend the various BSUK Subcommittees – Finance, Development, Commercial and Governance – and there was a brief report from the most recent meeting of each of these groups.

## **Next meetings**

Dates for the next conference call meetings for the BSF Executive have yet to be set.

The next face-to-face meeting for the Executive will follow the 2015 AGM.