

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

10 MARCH 2022

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 10 March 2022. Below is a report on the main discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Ieuan Gale (President), Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Competitions and Membership Officer), Mike Lott (Coaching Officer), Simon Mortimer (Communications and Marketing Officer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Lesley Morisetti and Mike Jennings (General Officers), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Guest: John Boyd (BSUK).

2022 Registration Forms

Competitions and Membership Officer Liz Graham told the Executive that Registration Forms for the 2022 season will go out to leagues and independent teams by the end of March.

This year's Registration Forms will contain new fields for leagues and teams to complete regarding safeguarding, a declaration for the BSF's Public Liability Insurance and access to benefits through BSUK's Development Charter.

Liz also reported that schedules for NSL1, NSL2 and NSL3 league play are now online and team roster forms are starting to come in.

Future BSF AGMs

The last two BSF AGMs – in 2021 and 2022 – were held as remote meetings because of issues arising from the Covid pandemic.

The Executive considered whether future AGMs should also be held remotely or whether there should be a return to in-person meetings assuming that the Covid situation doesn't worsen.

The decision was that AGMs (and probably League Heads Forum meetings) will continue to be held remotely in future, because this allows more people to join and a lot of time and money is saved by the BSF and by those who attend.

It was recognised, however, that remote AGMs tend to make discussion and debate more difficult, and the BSF will look at how this might be overcome at future meetings. There was also some discussion

about BSF Executive members holding regional “surgeries” throughout the season, perhaps at selected tournaments.

Spawtz League Management System

Currently, only four or five leagues make use of the Spawtz League Management System provided through the BSF website. The BSF pays for the cost of this use, currently at a rate of £11 per team.

The Executive has decided that it will maintain and pay for the system in 2022 but will no longer do so after this year. A range of other systems are available for leagues to use, some of them free or at lower cost than Spawtz, and in future, it may be that all leagues and teams will be able to use a system being developed by the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC).

BSF Competitions and Membership Officer Liz Graham has offered to help affected leagues transfer to a different system.

Presentation of trophies to Annual Award winners and Hall of Fame inductees

The fact that the BSF AGM in February was a remote meeting meant that it was possible to announce the seven winners of BSF Annual Awards for 2021 and the 10 new members voted into the BSF Hall of Fame, but not to present them with their awards.

The plan is to present these awards, where possible, at ceremonies held at major tournaments over the course of the season, and the recipients will shortly be polled to ask at which tournaments they would prefer to receive their trophies.

BaseballSoftballUK Operational Plan

During the meeting, BSUK CEO John Boyd gave a short presentation to the Executive on the development agency’s Operational Plan for 2022.

The four main themes of the plan for both softball and baseball are mass participation, grassroots support, talent development and building sustainability.

The goal is to have 32,000 participants in both sports by the end of 2025 (there were 26,200 participants before the pandemic), and BSUK hopes to source investment of over £100,000 for up to 25 local field projects by the same date. Meanwhile, key measures will be put in place to create an effective talent development system that will support international success along with a wide range of measures to support softball and baseball at grassroots level.

Groups that the Plan particularly targets are women and girls, the LGBTQ+ community, members of lower socio-economic groups, ethnically diverse people and people with disabilities.

Copies of the Operational Plan have been sent to all Executive members, and John has invited comments and questions.

Baseball5

Some members of the softball community may be aware of the worldwide growth of **Baseball5**, described by the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) as “a new five-on-five, five-inning street version of the game of baseball/softball that can be played anywhere.” The game is played on a small-sized area with a ball but no bat or gloves; the pitched ball is struck with the hand.

According to WBSC President Riccardo Fraccari, “This faster urban discipline will help drive baseball and softball to new places not possible before.”

The WBSC has been pushing this new format hard and has been helping to fund its development for players of all ages around the world.

BaseballSoftballUK, as the development agency for both sports, would like to use Baseball5 in the UK as an entry level to baseball and softball for primary school children in Years 3 and 4. In order to maintain a single point of contact for primary school programmes, BSUK has asked to run Baseball5 on the BSF’s behalf.

The BSF Executive agreed to this request, but is concerned, despite -- or because of -- the name of the programme, that there are exit routes from Baseball5 to softball as well as baseball, and that development of Baseball5 should not interfere with or hold back fastpitch development programmes for young girls. John Boyd reassured the meeting on both points.

Crown Jewel events

BaseballSoftballUK has asked the BSF to designate selected competitions this year as ‘Crown Jewel’ events, where the BSF will buy professional coverage of these events from BSUK across a range of media.

At its February meeting, the Executive decided that it wanted to cover a wider range of events this year through a variety of media. To do so within its budget, the BSF will be purchasing coverage through photography, video clips and real-time social media (along with website reports) rather than web-streaming, which is more expensive and would therefore restrict the number of designated events.

Events to be given ‘Crown Jewel’ coverage this year will be:

- GB v Sweden Men’s Fastpitch Series (28-29 May)
- Great Britain Fastpitch League play (11-12 June)
- NSL League play: final day of NSL2 plus NSL3 Nationals (9-10 July)
- NSL League play: final day of NSL1 (23-24 July)
- Co-ed Slowpitch League Nationals (6-7 August)
- NSL Nationals (3-4 September)

- Softball World Series (10-11 September)

The BSF will evaluate responses to this coverage at the end of the season and will consider web-streaming major events such as National Championships in future years.

Reporters needed to cover GB Teams at European Championships

Eight GB Softball National Teams are planning to compete in official competitions abroad this summer, and the BSF will shortly publish an advertisement looking for people to cover these tournaments remotely and write daily game reports to be posted on the BSF website.

While the BSF budget for covering its national teams is not enough to send reporters to overseas competitions this year, it is sufficient to pay people to write reports based on online play-by-play accounts of GB games. The Executive has approved the principle of paying for these reports.

Ideally, the BSF would like to find a number of softball enthusiasts with good writing and reporting skills and some understanding of European softball tournaments to report on one or more of the following competitions:

- European Men's Slowpitch Championship (14-18 June)
- European Under-22 Women's Fastpitch Championship (27 June-2 July)
- European Under-23 Men's Fastpitch Championship (5-9 July)
- European Co-ed Slowpitch Championship (12-16 July)
- European Under-15 Women's Fastpitch Championship (18-23 July)
- European Massimo Romeo Youth Trophy Tournament (Under-13 Girls) (10-13 August)

The reporter assigned to each tournament will need to look at the play-by-play information on the WBSC Europe website from each game played by the GB Team, either in real time or afterwards, and use it to write a report on the game, including information on GB's progress and current standing in the tournament.

Assuming enough reporters can be found, the BSF will get feedback at the end of the season on whether this kind of coverage is what members want.

WBSC Slowpitch Working Group

Mike Jennings, who is a representative from Europe on the WBSC Slowpitch Working Group, reported to the Executive on the Group's recent meeting on 23 February, which considered proposals for the first-ever WBSC Slowpitch Cup for national teams, scheduled to take place in 2023.

At its next meeting, the Working Group will consider the issue of slowpitch development around the world, and to this end, a paper on slowpitch as an entry-level sport, submitted by BSUK, will be a valuable aid to discussions.

National Team appointments

The BSF Executive ratified two national team Head Coach appointments and one Team Operations Manager appointment at the meeting, as well as confirming a new post of Programme Administrator of all three GB Men's Fastpitch Teams.

Tara Tembey was confirmed as the new Head Coach for the GB Under-18 Women's Fastpitch Team. Tara, who was previously appointed an Assistant Coach for the team, was the unanimous choice of the interview panel (Rachael Watkeys, David Morris and Gary Anderson) from a field of four strong candidates.

Richard Brown was confirmed as the new Head Coach for the GB Under-23 Men's Fastpitch Team on the recommendation of the interview panel (Liz Knight, Ian Tomlin and Jill Russell).

Lars Looijen was confirmed as the new Team Operations Manager for the GB Senior Men's Fastpitch Team.

Jill Russell, already functioning as Team Operations Manager for the GB Under-18 and Under-23 Men's Fastpitch Teams, will take on an additional role as an Administrator for all three men's fastpitch national fastpitch teams to enhance cooperative working and efficiencies.

The appointments of Tara, Richard and Lars are for one-year probationary periods. After this, if things have gone well and they wish to remain in post, they will be appointed to two-year terms.

New Officers

The Executive has agreed to advertise within the softball community for two BSF Officer positions.

The first is a **National Teams Officer**, who will also chair the GB Management Committee (GBMC). This position has been vacant since the middle of 2021, and advertisements for it are also being posted, with help from BSUK, in the wider sports community.

The second is a **Fastpitch Development Officer**, a new role whose main remit will be to plan, develop, support and oversee domestic fastpitch competition structures and to work with BSUK in planning and delivering fastpitch development programmes, primarily for children and young people but also for adults. The Fastpitch Development Officer will carry out many of the same functions for fastpitch on the British Softball Federation Executive as the current Coaching and Competitions Officers do for slowpitch.

Athlete representatives on the GB Management Committee

The BSF Executive has approved the idea of appointing Athlete Representatives to the GB Management Committee in the near future, following general practice among progressive sports organisations.

The probability is that there will be three non-voting Athlete Reps on the GBMC, representing the three national team formats of women's fastpitch, men's fastpitch and slowpitch.

However, the immediate task for the BSF is to get the GBMC back up and running after nearly a year of inactivity, and the appointment of athlete reps will be delayed until this has been accomplished.

How athlete reps will be chosen remains to be decided.

BASU report

BSF Technical Officer Pete Saunders told the meeting that six regions are now running BASU's new online umpire qualification course, with another region about to start.

"Not everyone will finish the course," Pete said, "but we will still train more people this way that we did with in-person courses in 2019."

While the courses are generally going well, a few tweaks will inevitably be needed for next year.

Recognising team and individual achievement in softball

The BSF has been trying to track down and recover trophies won over the years by softball national teams, with the idea that it might be possible to find a place to display them in or around the Home Plate clubhouse at Farnham Park.

But this might not be easy – it is unlikely that many missing trophies will be found or surrendered and space at Home Plate is limited!

However, the Executive is now discussing other possibilities, such as putting up banners at Farnham Park that detail the medals won by softball national teams and perhaps creating a 'Wall of Fame' listing those elected to the BSF and European Halls of Fame.

Next meeting

The next BSF monthly videoconference meeting will be held on the evening of Thursday 7 April.

Anyone from the Executive or the softball community who wishes to suggest a topic for the Agenda should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer before the meeting date on:

bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org.