

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

11 FEBRUARY 2021

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 21 January. Below is a journalistic account of the main discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Jenny Fromer (President), Liz Graham (Competitions Officer), Alexis Markham-Hill (National Teams Officer), Mike Lott (Coaching Officer), Pete Saunders (Acting Technical Officer), Mike Jennings (General Officer), Steve Getraer (General Officer), Ieuan Gale (Co-opted General Officer), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer).

Personal Accident and Injury insurance

BSF General Officer Mike Jennings reported that the cost of Personal Accident and Injury insurance from our previous providers – assuming the same number of leagues and teams agree to purchase it as in 2019 – will increase this year, but not massively. The cost will remain in the vicinity of £20 per team.

Attempts to get quotes from other providers have been unsuccessful: they have declined to bid because the numbers involved are too small.

However, if the number of leagues and teams committing to purchase the insurance this year falls substantially because of uncertainties around the pandemic, then the cost per team could go up sharply, perhaps to levels that teams will be unwilling to pay.

At the League Heads Forum meeting on 13 February, Mike asked League Heads to provide an indication of willingness to commit to this insurance as soon as possible so that the BSF can make a decision on whether to proceed. The problem is that if the insurance is purchased and there is no season, then all or most of the money will simply be lost, as the insurers will not provide anything like a substantial refund. The BSF suffered this loss in 2020 but cannot afford to do so again on its own in 2021.

NSL regulations

A survey of NSL1 and NSL2 teams regarding the possibility of conducting a trial during NSL play this summer of the “1-and-1 with one-to-waste” proposal has produced five teams in favour and six against.

In view of this, and the BSF’s stated intention to only run a trial if there was significant support from NSL teams, the Executive has decided that no such trial will be run this year.

BSF AGM

The Executive discussed progress on several pledges made at the 2019 BSF AGM in response to member requests that were not immediately actioned:

- **Survey slowpitch teams that qualify for the League Nationals by winning their league or league division and then don't take up their place, so we can find out why this happens.** Rather than doing this historically, since the last League Nationals was in 2019 and seems a long time ago, Liz Graham will conduct the survey with any teams that don't take up their places this year.
- **Look into holding National Co-ed Slowpitch Championships, on occasion, at locations other than Farnham Park.** The suggestion was made that the BSF might run League and NSL Co-ed Nationals on a four-year cycle, with three years at Farnham Park but the fourth year open to bids from leagues, teams or other organisations based on published criteria, including a requirement to promote the tournament to local audiences. Taking these kinds of major events to other parts of the country could be seen as a development tool.
- **Develop a single set of rules for Indoor play.** There is currently a set of Indoor rules designed for London in the Resources section on the BSF website. However, compiling a uniform set of rules for the increasing amount of Indoor play around the country (in normal times) would be difficult because of venue-specific issues. If there is a further request for this, the BSF will look at whether a core set of rules can be developed.

New BSF website

An overhaul of the BSF website (www.britishsoftball.org) has been carried out over the past few months by BSUK Head of Operations Tim Stride, and the plan is for the new site to go live during the week before the BSF AGM on 27 February. In contrast with the existing website, the new site will be compatible with a wide range of mobile devices.

While a good deal of information has already been transferred from the old to the new website, a full transfer of information will take place gradually over the next few months.

National Teams and the GBMC

National Teams Officer Alexis Markham-Hill reported that of the two candidates who submitted applications for the position of GB Men's Team Head Coach, only one -- Colin Barrett -- had responded with regard to attending an interview.

Accordingly, a GB Management Committee (GBMC) Panel interviewed Colin earlier in February and enthusiastically recommended his appointment, which has now been ratified by the BSF Executive.

Colin is very keen on developing men's fastpitch in the UK and as a former international player and coach for South Africa, is in a good position to help do so.

Colin will now join a GBMC Panel that will interview the only candidate who has applied for the GB Men's Team Manager position.

The GBMC has also had over 20 applications for physio positions with GB Teams, so all vacancies should be able to be filled.

With regard to player applications for the 2021 season, there have been 80 applications across the five women's fastpitch teams and 42 applications across the three men's fastpitch teams.

The GBMC had met on 9 February and had a number of questions for the BSF, to which answers were able to be provided:

- **How can DBS checks be done for all national team staff, and can this be an annual process?** This can be done through BSUK Lead Safeguarding Officer Mark Caress and will be done annually.
- **The GBMC would like every national team staff member to access some form of safeguarding training. How can this be done?** This can be organised through Mark Caress, who can provide both in-person (albeit remote) training and point people to online courses as appropriate.
- **The GBMC would like Team Managers and Head Coaches to have GDPR training, since they handle large amounts of personal data.** Mark Caress may be able to provide this training, or it can be accessed online through providers such as Educare.
- **Can the BSF help to develop Covid guidelines and protocols for the full National Teams programme?** The BSF will follow Return to Play protocols negotiated by BSUK with the DCMS, as it did last year, and protocols for 2021 are likely to be similar. The GBMC is free to add to these where they see a need.
- **Can National Teams train free of charge at Farnham Park?** Over the past two years the BSF has agreed and paid a fee to BSUK which allows national teams to book training sessions at Farnham Park without any direct cost. Once need is assessed for 2021, the BSF will negotiate this year's fee.

BSF Articles and Constitution

Both of these documents need updating, and this is something that the Executive – particularly Ieuan Gale, Mike Jennings and Bob Fromer – will turn their attention to after the AGM.

The Constitution in its present form, which predates the Articles, has now lost most of its relevance and could be replaced by Standing Orders governing and defining BSF roles and operations.

BASU

BSF Acting Technical Officer Pete Saunders is inviting comments on modular online umpire training materials that BASU has been creating over the off-season with invaluable help on animation and graphics from BASU umpire Chris Lunn.

The work is still ongoing, but BASU plans to contact League Umpires-in-Chief to talk about running local remote training sessions backed up by the new modules and followed, when possible, by in-person assessments.

In recognition of his work on the project, Chris Lunn has been put forward by BASU to attend the upcoming ESF Slowpitch Umpire Training Course and to umpire in Europe.

Feedback from BSUK Board and Committee meetings

The only meeting to have taken place since the BSF last met in January was a meeting of the BSUK Governance Committee, which looked at an organisational risk assessment, safeguarding and the organisation's Governance Action Plan.

Next meetings

The 2021 League Heads Forum took place as a remote meeting on Saturday 13 February (a report will be published shortly on the BSF website) and the BSF AGM will be held as a remote meeting on Saturday 27 February.

The Executive's next monthly videoconference meeting will be on the evening of Thursday 11 March. Anyone with items to raise at this meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer [bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org].