

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

11 JULY 2022

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Monday 11 July 2022. Below is a report on the main discussions and decisions.

As many Executive members were unable to attend because of other softball responsibilities, the number of topics that could be discussed was limited.

Attendance

Present: Ieuan Gale (President), Liz Graham (Competitions and Membership Officer), Mike Lott (Coaching Officer), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Mike Jennings (General Officer), Lesley Morisetti (General Officer).

Guest: John Boyd (BSUK).

Registration update

Competitions and Membership Officer Liz Graham reported that all leagues that are operating this year have now paid affiliation fees on behalf of their teams and virtually all independent teams have also paid. A total of 291 teams have affiliated to date.

This means a better-than-expected financial result: the BSF has so far received fee income of £49,200 as against a budgeted amount of £40,600.

This suggests that the recovery in team numbers post-pandemic is better than expected, despite the fact that the Bankers and Legal Leagues in London have not re-started this year and that numbers in two other major London leagues – the London Softball League and the London Advertising Softball League – are still down on pre-pandemic levels.

BSUK Facility Grants

There has been no response from any softball league about the possibility of applying for a BSUK Facility Grant based on the information provided to them after the June Executive meeting.

The reasons are probably to do with the fact that slowpitch leagues feel they have a minimal need for permanent facilities and slowpitch leagues and teams often have no control over the venues they use. The fact that these grants require match-funding might also be a deterrent.

WBSC Congress

BSUK CEO John Boyd gave the Executive a quick report from the WBSC Congress in Taiwan, held in somewhat difficult logistical circumstances due to Covid restrictions in the country, which he and BSF General Officer Mike Jennings attended during the first week of July.

John reported that because this was an Election Congress, little was actually achieved in the way of policy. The current WBSC President, Riccardo Fraccari, was returned to office for a further seven-year term, and the current Secretary-General and Treasurer were also voted back in. There is a good representation from European softball and baseball on the WBSC Board and on divisional Boards and Commissions.

The WBSC is continuing to promote alternative formats such as Baseball5, e-sports and Blind Baseball, which has Paralympic aspirations.

No decisions were taken at the Congress about details for the inaugural WBSC Co-ed Slowpitch World Cup in 2023, though delegates seemed to be happy that the event is taking place.

Improvements at Farnham Park

John Boyd told the meeting that work is proceeding at Farnham Park with regard to improvements on Pitches 2 and 5.

The idea of fixing a small electronic scoreboard to the railings on top of the new BSUK office building adjacent to Pitch 1, suggested by the BSF, is under consideration but is considered a lesser priority for the moment.

GB National Teams in Europe

The meeting conducted a brief review of the performance so far of GB National Teams playing in European Championship competition.

The **GB Men's Slowpitch Team** kicked off the European competition season in June and won the second European Men's Slowpitch Championship, played in Colorno, Italy, adding to its gold medal at the first competition in 2018. Players and coaches reported that the standard of play this time was much improved, which is good to see.

The **GB Under-22 Women's Fastpitch Team**, playing in Kunovice and Brno in the Czech Republic, was unlucky to lose a tight first-round game to France by 5-4, which put the GB Team into the consolation pool rather than the Championship playoffs. The team then proceeded to win all five consolation pool games by wide margins and finished ninth, the highest placing possible. The tournament was won by Italy.

During the week before the BSF meeting, the **GB Under-23 Men's Fastpitch Team** competed in the European Under-23 Men's Championship in Sezimovo Usti in the Czech Republic, which was also a

qualifier for this autumn's inaugural WBSC Under-23 Men's World Cup in Argentina. The GB Team performed at a high level against strong opposition and had a chance to qualify for the World Cup if they could have beaten Israel in the bronze medal game on the Saturday. But Israel scored seven runs in the first inning and went on to an 8-0 win, despite the rest of the game being essentially even. The tournament was won by the Czech Republic, who if anything are increasing their dominance in Men's Fastpitch in Europe and are aiming for a high world ranking. The Czechs and Israel will represent Europe in the World Cup because Denmark, which finished second, is unable to take up its place.

BSF President Ieuan Gale, who attended the tournament and wrote reports on GB games for the BSF website, told the meeting that the GB Team had done themselves proud in relation to previous performances by GB junior men's fastpitch teams in Europe, but that the results pointed to the need for GB players to have more, and more challenging, game experience if we are to make up the gap between our programme and the other European countries that take men's fastpitch seriously.

During the week that the BSF met, the **GB Co-ed Slowpitch Team** was attempting to win its 12th European Co-ed Slowpitch Championship in 13 tries and qualify for the inaugural WBSC Co-ed Slowpitch World Cup for national teams in 2023. This tournament is being played in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Later in July, the **GB Under-15 Women** and the **GB Senior Women** will be playing European Championships in Enschede in the Netherlands and Sant Boi in Spain respectively. Both tournaments will also be World Cup qualifiers.

There will then be a short break until the second week of August when the **GB Cubs**, the GB Under-13 Girls' National Team, will compete in the annual European Massimo Romeo Youth Trophy tournament in Collecchio, Italy.

With the GB Senior Women's Team now funded by UK Sport with the goal of winning a medal in the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles, Ieuan Gale told the meeting that there will need to be a thorough debrief process at the end of the competition season for all national teams, but especially the female fastpitch programme, to ensure that lessons are learned and progress can be made.

Next meeting

The next BSF Executive monthly videoconference meeting will take place on the evening of Thursday 11 August.

Anyone from the Executive or the softball community who has an item to bring to the meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer (bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org).