

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

19 JANUARY 2023

The BSF Executive held a videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 19 January to follow up on items discussed at its weekend meeting in Manchester earlier this month and to meet with BSUK Board Chair Phil Veasey and BSUK CEO John Boyd to talk about strategic issues. Below is a summary of the main discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Ieuan Gale (President), Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Competitions and Membership Officer), Mike Lott (Coaching Officer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Mike Jennings and Stella Ackrell (General Officers), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Lesley Morisetti (General Officer).

Guests: Phil Veasey and John Boyd (BSUK).

European Cup competitions

At the present time, Great Britain has six club teams entered in four different European Cup tournaments, and none of these tournaments as yet has a host.

If no hosts come forward at the WBSC Europe Congress in the second week of February, the time limit to find them may be extended to the end of February – but after that, tournaments without a host will be cancelled.

As far as the European Co-ed Slowpitch Cup is concerned, where there are two British entries (H2O and Travelling Dodgers) and 17 teams currently entered in total, any potential organiser may require financial help to take it on. Germany has already pledged some support, and the Executive has decided that we can contribute £1000 if necessary. We are also taking the lead in talking to other participating countries to see if they can help.

We also have two entries (The Stags and a GB Men's Fastpitch Development Team) in the European Men's Fastpitch Super Cup. Mike Jennings told the meeting that Softball Europe President Gabriel Waage, with his extensive men's fastpitch contacts throughout Europe, is probably in the best position to find a host for this competition, though it is also a large tournament and at least three fields will be needed.

We also have an entry (2022 GBFL Women's Division winner The Mix) in the European Women's Cup and in the European Women's Cup Winners Cup B (2022 GBFL Women's Division runner-up Barbarians). But these are smaller tournaments and it is likely that hosts will come forward at the Softball Europe Congress.

Grant to GB Slowpitch

On the assumption that the first-ever WBSC Co-ed Slowpitch World Cup for national teams will go ahead this year, almost certainly in November, the BSF Executive has decided to award a grant of £6000 to the GB Slowpitch Team to help with preparations and the costs of attending the tournament.

This is the largest amount that the BSF has ever given to support a national team at an international competition, but it reflects the importance of a Slowpitch World Cup to British softball.

Because the tournament itself will fall in the BSF's next financial year, the idea is to commit £3000 in 2022-23 and a further £3000 in 2023-24.

Some of this money will be used to pay the entry fee for the tournament, which the WBSC has set at US\$2000.

GB Senior Men's Team Head Coach

GB President Ieuan Gale told the meeting that there have been several applications for the position of Head Coach for the GB Senior Men's Fastpitch Team, which will be competing in a European Men's Championship this summer for the first time since 2018.

These applications will be vetted and a panel set up to interview the most promising applicants.

In the absence of a Head Coach, work on arranging trials for the team and a programme leading up to the European Championship has been carried out by GB Men's Fastpitch Administrator Jill Russell.

Financial matters

The BSF Executive sets out a budget each year, and then items or opportunities that require expenditure but haven't been budgeted for always come up. To provide for this, the Executive has agreed to create a £4000 Contingency Fund, taken from reserves, which will make it better able to respond to these situations.

Registration

Membership Officer Liz Graham told the meeting that she has set up 290 BSF member teams on the new free Teamlinkt site, and both league and NSL teams are currently registering without problems. Each team will get a unique ID number, and the names, mobile phone numbers and email addresses of individual players will also be captured, which means that the BSF will be able to communicate with most of its community.

Six leagues will also be using the new system for their league admin requirements.

WBSC Europe Congress

The 2023 WBSC Europe Congress will be held in Belgrade, Serbia from 9-11 February, and President Ieuan Gale and GB Softball Performance Director Gary Anderson will attend for the BSF, while BSF General Officer Mike Jennings will attend in his role as Softball Europe's Competitions Director.

Two motions have been submitted to the Congress by member countries and a number of motions have been submitted by the WBSC Europe Board.

One motion, from Lithuania, is to establish an annual European Baseball/Softball Day on which the sports can be celebrated in each European country. Ieuan Gale, who will have the BSF's vote, will vote in favour unless reasons emerge at the Congress not to support this.

Another motion, from Belarus, is to allow youth teams from Belarus and Russia to compete in European tournaments this year even though adult teams from these countries are banned because of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. Ieuan will see how the arguments develop on this before deciding how to vote, but there is a view among some members of the Executive that this is the thin end of a wedge for these countries and that the ban should be total, at least until the war is over.

Most of the motions from the WBSC Europe Board are anodyne and concerned with changes in language and terminology in the WBSC Europe Constitution. But one motion would give the Board the power to allocate competitions when there are multiple bids, a power that has traditionally been exercised at Congress by the countries taking part in them. The Board wants the power to do this so that decisions on bids can be made earlier, giving the chosen host more time to prepare, but there are questions around how transparent these decisions would be. Again, the Board is happy for Ieuan to decide how to vote on this after hearing the arguments.

Finally, with the changeover complete from the old European Softball Federation to WBSC Europe and Softball Europe, Congress documentation suggests that selections to the WBSC Europe Hall of Fame will happen for the first time this year. But we will want assurance that the British members who were inducted last year – Chris Moon, Steph Jardine and Brett Gibbens, plus Libby Moss, who was inducted some years ago -- will be carried across to this new Hall of Fame.

BSF Annual Awards

The Executive approved a final three BSF Annual Award nominations at the meeting, and a slate of eight awards will be announced at the BSF AGM:

- The 2022 Glover Cup
- The 2022 League Glover Cup
- The 2022 President's Club Award
- The 2022 Umpire of the Year
- The 2022 Tournament of the Year
- The 2022 Young Fastpitch Player of the Year

- The 2022 Young Slowpitch Player of the Year
- The 2022 Betsy Holden Award

As the AGM is a virtual meeting, trophies will be presented to the winners at appropriate competitions or events during the season.

Next meeting

Because the next scheduled BSF Executive meeting, on Thursday 9 February, will clash with the WBSC Europe Congress, this meeting has been moved to **Tuesday 7 February**.

Any member of the softball community with an item to bring to the meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer (bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org).