

# BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

## 6 APRIL 2023

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 6 April 2023. Below is a report on the main discussions and decisions.

### Attendance

**Present:** Lesley Morisetti (Interim President), Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Competitions and Membership Officer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Stella Ackrell (Safeguarding Officer), Nicola-Jane Dyson and George Stamets (General Officers), Ieuan Gale (International Ambassador), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

**Apologies:** Mike Lott (Coaching Officer).

**Guest:** Erica Barrett (BSUK).

### Points arising from the BSF's Executive meeting in March

**New scoreboard at Farnham Park.** Erica Barrett from BSUK confirmed that a small electronic scoreboard to be used at Farnham Park has now been ordered and should be in place by the beginning of May. The scoreboard will be moveable, but its main use, at least by the BSF, will be on Pitch 1 at tournament events. Although this will be far easier to operate than the manual scoreboards on other pitches that have more or less been abandoned, the question of who will operate the electronic scoreboard at various events remains to be solved.

**Old national team social media accounts.** The BSF and BSUK are now working together to contact people who set up social media accounts for various GB National Teams in the past but who are no longer connected to those teams, with the idea that these accounts, if they are still useful, should be operated by current personnel on those teams.

**BSF Style Guide.** The BSF and BSUK will be working together to create a Style Guide for the BSF that can help to make BSF communication more efficient and establish the BSF "brand".

**Used equipment donation at Farnham Park.** A receptacle will be set up shortly outside the BSUK office adjacent to Pitch 1 at Farnham Park where players can donate used – but still useable – equipment such as gloves, bats, balls, throw-down bases etc that can be employed for development purposes. Both softball and baseball players that use Farnham Park will be invited to donate equipment, and the donations will be shared between the two Federations. The BSF will use donations mostly for domestic development initiatives, but some may be sent to a youth development programme in Zimbabwe that has established connections with the GB Men's Fastpitch programme (<https://www.britishsoftball.org/news/article/gb-mens-fastpitch-programme-forges-links-with-zimbabwe>)

## Vacancies on the BSF Executive

Although the BSF Executive has recently been bolstered by the addition of Nicola-Jane Dyson and George Stamets as General Officers, vacancies remain for several positions including President, National Teams Officer and Fastpitch Development Officer. In addition, the BSF would like to find someone who could help BSF Treasurer Laura Burkhardt with financial tasks.

To recruit people for these roles, the BSF has created a poster advertising the positions which will be on display at Farnham Park during the season and, with the cooperation of member league, at softball venues around the country.

Anyone interested in any of these positions – or who wants to find out more – should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer ([bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org](mailto:bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org)).

## Regulations for Under-18 players

Based on new safeguarding regulations adopted at the WBSC Europe Congress in February 2023, the BSF published revised regulations earlier this year regarding equipment that would be mandatory for under-18 players in both fastpitch and slowpitch softball.

The main addition to previous regulations was that under-18 batters and baserunners would now be required to wear a **helmet with a built-in faceguard attached**.

However, as we approach the playing season, it's become clear that helmets with faceguards are both very hard to find and very expensive, and that having this equipment in place for all under-18 players in our sport as league and tournament play begins will simply not be possible.

Accordingly, the BSF has decided that the regulation for under-18 batters and baserunners to wear a helmet with a faceguard will be postponed until the 2024 season. This regulation will still apply, however, for under-18 players in national teams that are playing in WBSC Europe and WBSC competitions abroad in 2023.

Previous BSF regulations for under-18 players in both fastpitch and slowpitch remain in force:

- Players under the age of 18 shall wear a helmet when batting and baserunning in slowpitch as well as in fastpitch softball. Also, in accordance with WBSC rules, all players under 18 who are coaching, umpiring or acting as batboys or batgirls shall wear a helmet when on the field.
- Young players shall wear a gum shield if playing in any position in the infield in either fastpitch or slowpitch.
- Young players must wear a catcher's mask or faceguard if playing at the positions of pitcher, catcher, first base or third base in both slowpitch and fastpitch softball.

- The above equipment requirements can only be waived on the basis of an express written request from a player's parent or guardian based on medical considerations. Any other reasons given for a player not wearing the equipment will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

## Working Group reports

The BSF has set up a number of Working Groups which include BSF Executive members and BSUK staff members to focus on specific issues, and there will be a report from each group at BSF monthly meetings.

**Concussion Working Group.** This Working Group, which includes Safeguarding Officer Stella Ackrell and Technical Officer Pete Saunders from the BSF Executive, plus Kim Hannessen, who leads on sports therapy for GB National Team programmes, is chaired by BSUK Head of Operations Erica Barrett.

The group has met and work is well underway. A Guide to Concussion and Best Practice in Baseball and Softball has already been produced and will be circulated soon to leagues and tournament organisers and a shorter Guide for team captains and others will also be produced.

In terms of making decisions about whether a player can return to play after an incident where concussion is suspected, the basic adage will be "If in doubt, sit them out". The team captain and the player's teammates, who know them best, will be the first decision-makers and can monitor and look after the player after an incident, since concussion symptoms can take a while to develop. But umpires and First Aiders can also play a role, and there will be a campaign to raise awareness of the issue and provide at least basic training for league Safeguarding Officers.

The BSF will develop regulations, similar to the blood replacement rule, to cover players who are being checked for concussion symptoms while play continues.

**2026 European Championship Working Group.** This group, chaired by BSF Coaching Officer Mike Lott, will begin planning for the BSF and BSUK to host the 2026 European Co-ed Slowpitch Championship at Farnham Park, but the group has yet to meet.

**Individual Player Membership Working Group.** This group currently includes Competitions and Membership Officer Liz Graham and Administrator Bob Fromer from the BSF Executive plus BSUK CEO John Boyd and Head of Operations Erica Barrett, and is chaired by Erica.

However, the name of this Working Group is misleading, because the main discussion thread is not about exploring whether the BSF should move from its current system of team affiliation to individual player membership (which is the situation in most other team sports), but more about how the BSF can establish contact with individual players regardless of its affiliation model.

There are a number of reasons why the BSF needs to have contact details and other information from individual players, but this has been made more urgent by the recent Whyte Review into malpractice in British Gymnastics, which has increased the pressure on all sports in receipt of

government funding to establish means of communication with players around issues such as safeguarding, inclusivity, player opportunities etc.

This is not about the BSF (or anyone else) “marketing” things to players, and the contact and other information the BSF would like to acquire will not be passed on to BSUK or any other third party. It is about the increasing governance and safeguarding requirements that the BSF needs to meet.

The BSF has already seen 730 individual players register on its new Teamlink registration platform as of 6 April and this number is expected to grow – but this will only be a minority of players on affiliated teams.

The BSF plans to create and circulate information to explain why it needs individual player details from a community not used to providing them, and will engage with League Heads and Team Captains on this subject. A similar campaign aimed at baseball players will be run by the BBF, and BSUK has volunteered to set up and pay for a system to manage the information, though it will not have access to it.

**Marketing and Communications Working Group.** This Working Group currently consists of General Officer George Stamets and Administrator Bob Fromer from the BSF Executive, plus Erica Barrett and Public Relations Officer Chris Knoblock from BSUK. The aim is to create a marketing strategy for the BSF and marketing campaigns designed to achieve three key aims:

- Recruit more players to softball.
- Provide more income streams for the BSF.
- Create clarity for the softball community around the difference between the BSF and BSUK and the aims and activities of each organisation.

Chris Knoblock will create the first draft of a marketing strategy that the Working Group and then the Executive can review.

### **GB Management Committee (GBMC)**

The GB Management Committee (GBMC) is a standing subcommittee of the British Softball Federation, first created in 2008, with the general purpose of “supporting and overseeing” GB Softball National Team programmes. However, the GBMC has not been fully functional over the past two or three years and there is a need to redefine its aims and personnel.

At the same time, BSUK is in the process of advertising for a paid position that might be called a **National Teams Administrator**, though the title has not yet been decided. This person will work to support Team Managers on all softball and baseball national teams with a range of logistical tasks, and, with regard to softball, will be taking on much of the practical work that used to be carried out by the GBMC.

In light of this, the BSF plans to reconstitute the GBMC, but with a slightly changed remit: to oversee and formulate policy with regard to softball national team programmes.

The BSF Executive has now agreed that the new version of the GBMC should consist – to begin with -- of the following:

- A representative from the World Class Performance Programme.
- A representative from the BSF Executive.
- The BSF's appointed International Ambassador.
- A representative from BSUK's Senior Management Team.
- The new National Teams Administrator (when appointed).
- The Head Coach from the GB Slowpitch Programme.
- The Senior Head Coach from the GB Women's Fastpitch Programme.
- The Senior Head Coach from the GB Men's Fastpitch Programme.

Alternative representatives from the three national team formats – for example, senior Team Managers rather than Head Coaches – could be put forward at the discretion of these programmes.

Once the composition of the new GBMC has been agreed, a meeting will be called to decide how the group will proceed: how often it will meet, how it will function, what kinds of issues it will consider – and what it needs to do as we approach the 2023 competition season.

## **BASU**

BSF Technical Officer Pete Saunders reported that this year's online umpire training has gone extremely well. A number of the practical days that follow completion of the online modules have already been held and more are planned in April.

Because the courses have gone so well, Pete feels there is a realistic hope that BASU can increase the number of umpires working at national level this year.

## **Next meeting**

The BSF Executive will hold its next monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 11 May.

Anyone from the Executive or the softball community with topics to bring to the meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer ([bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org](mailto:bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org)).