

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT: 7 FEBRUARY 2022

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 3 February 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), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Lesley Morisetti (General Officer), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Simon Mortimer (Communications and Marketing Officer), Stella Ackrell (Safeguarding Officer).

Guest: John Boyd (BSUK).

Financial matters

BSF accounts for 2020-21 are with the auditors and will receive final approval from the Executive once they're returned. The accounts will then be uploaded to the BSF website.

Meanwhile, a summary of the accounts for 2020-21 and the proposed budget for 2021-22 are in the 2022 BSF AGM Pack, available to download from the BSF website here:

https://www.britishsoftball.org/uploads/documents/AGM_Pack.pdf.

Coverage of GB National Teams in 2022

The BSF is trying to decide how website and social media coverage of the seven GB National Softball Teams playing in European Championships this summer can best be provided.

The BSF does not have the funds to send reporters or other media staff to Europe, but one possibility is that volunteers from the softball community can be paid to follow GB games remotely through the play-by-play provided on the Softball Europe website and to provide both social media updates and post-game reports for the BSF website.

Coverage of key domestic events in 2022

BaseballSoftballUK has created a menu for professional coverage of key domestic softball league play or tournaments, to be called 'Crown Jewel' events.

Among the ways in which Crown Jewel events can be reported are webstreaming of games, game action photography, video features and interviews and real time social media output.

In discussing these possibilities in relation to available budget, the BSF Executive expressed a preference for commissioning photography, video clips and social media for a wider range of games and events rather than webstreaming a small number of games from one or two competitions.

Events that the BSF hopes to cover in 2022, at a minimum, are both the NSL and League Co-ed Slowpitch Nationals, the Softball World Series, NSL league play, Great Britain Fastpitch League play and a series of men's fastpitch games between GB and Sweden that will be played at Farnham Park on 28-29 May.

Final decisions on Crown Jewel events and media used to cover them will be made over the next few weeks.

Team registration for the 2022 season

Shortly after team affiliation fees for the 2022 season are approved at the BSF AGM on 26 February, BSF Competitions and Membership Officer Liz Graham will send out registration forms to teams and leagues.

This year, registration forms will contain additional fields concerned with safeguarding.

BSF AGM and League Heads Forum

The annual **BSF League Heads Forum** will be held as a remote meeting from 2.00-4.00 pm on Sunday 20 February and the **2022 BSF AGM** will be held as a remote meeting from 2.00-4.00 pm on Saturday 26 February.

As noted above, the AGM Pack can now be downloaded from the BSF website here:
https://www.britishsoftball.org/uploads/documents/AGM_Pack.pdf.

The AGM Pack contains:

- Instructions and a link for joining the AGM.
- AGM attendance requirements.
- A report from the 2021 BSF AGM.
- President's Report.
- Competition Officer's Report and NSL Overview.
- Coaching Officer's Report.
- National Teams Report.
- Summary of BSF Accounts for 2021 and Budget for 2022.
- Team Affiliation Fees for 2022.
- Annual Awards and BSF Hall of Fame inductions.
- Information for the Election of BSF Officers.
- BASU Report.
- 2022 Softball Calendar as of 8 February.

Eleven new members will be inducted into the BSF Hall of Fame during the AGM, the first such inductions since 2018. The long gap since the last induction ceremony is due in part to the Covid pandemic, but the Executive has decided that, going forward, new inductions will be made every two years.

BSF Annual Awards based on the 2021 season will also be announced.

2022 Calendar update

BSF Administrator Bob Fromer reported that most issues and clashes on the 2022 Softball Calendar have now been resolved – though a surge in the number of events overall and in events that want to play at Farnham Park has meant that not all events or series have been able to get their optimal dates.

The latest version of the Calendar is part of the BSF AGM Pack (see above for link).

Two of the most difficult aspects of sorting out the final Calendar have been resolving competing demands for dates at Farnham Park by softball and baseball and balancing the needs of slowpitch and fastpitch.

With an eye on making the process easier for next year, BSUK is planning to bring BSF and BBF representatives together in June or July of this year to discuss requests for dates at Farnham Park in 2023.

NSL and National Championships

Competitions Officer Liz Graham told the meeting that she has had a request from one NSL1 team to drop to NSL2 and from one NSL2 team to drop to NSL3. Her search for teams prepared to go up a division to replace these teams appears to have been successful, and if all the teams involved still want to do this, then the swaps will be made.

The Executive has no objection in principle to this process and is happy for Liz to manage it as she thinks best.

WBSC Europe Congress

The annual WBSC Europe Congress took place on 11-13 February in Ljubljana, Slovenia, attended by BSF President Ieuan Gale. BSF General Officer Mike Jennings attended in his role as Softball Europe's Competitions Director and John Boyd was there on behalf of BSUK.

Meeting a few days before the Congress, the BSF Executive considered motions submitted by Ukraine and by Denmark in order to direct Ieuan on how to vote.

The Bulgarian motion was that for the top eight countries from the last Senior European Fastpitch Championship, their Senior National Team could only participate in the next Championship if their Federation sent an age-group team to a European Championship in the previous or current year. Although the rationale is to encourage development, the BSF regards this as an unnecessary regulation which could penalise some countries, especially with Covid still present, and the decision was to vote against it.

The Danish Federation's motion is to establish set weeks during the summer in which specific European Championships will be played. At the present time, there are set weeks for European Cups but not for Championships; dates for Championships are at the discretion of the host country. In principle, the BSF is in favour of this, and it would help us avoid clashes with European events in planning our domestic calendar. But whether this is feasible is open to doubt.

In the event, the Congress was opposed to the Bulgarian motion and in favour of Denmark's motion, but recognised it would probably be impossible to implement because it would be too restrictive for tournament organisers. Final decisions on these motions will be up to the WBSC Europe Board.

Meanwhile, BSUK CEO John Boyd told the Executive that he hoped to have discussions at the Congress that would allow us to progress the WBSC's fast-growing Baseball5 format in the UK for both baseball and softball.

A full report on the Congress, including the result of elections to the combined WBSC Europe Board, will be posted on the BSF website soon.

WBSC Slowpitch Working Group

Mike Jennings, who is representing Softball Europe on the WBSC Slowpitch Working Group, told the meeting that the Working Group will convene for a remote meeting on 23 February, its first for a number of months.

GB Management Committee

No one from the softball community responded to the recent ad on the BSF website looking for an Administrator for the GB Management Committee, which supports and oversees all slowpitch and fastpitch national team programmes. However, BSUK's Head of Operations, Erica Barrett, has offered to take on the role on an interim basis, until the BSF can find someone permanent. The Executive has approved this appointment.

The Executive also discussed whether there is a need to recruit a Fastpitch Development Officer. The role would have nothing to do with national teams but would involve oversight of the Great Britain Fastpitch League and any other domestic fastpitch competitions. It would also involve liaising with BSUK around fastpitch development plans and programmes. No decision was made on whether to proceed with this, but BSF Administrator Bob Fromer will draw up specifications for the role.

BASU

Technical Officer Pete Saunders told the meeting that links to the new online BASU slowpitch umpire qualification course have recently been sent to League Heads. Windsor, Bristol, East Midlands and Cardiff Softball Leagues are already running online courses and London, Oxford and Scotland are interested.

The main news from the BASU AGM held on 5 February is that BASU fees will go up £2 per game in 2023, the first rise in many years. The announcement will give leagues and tournaments over a year to prepare. Game fees for slowpitch umpires will increase from £16 to £18, and the fee that umpires receive will go up from £15 to £17. The remaining £1 goes to BASU for administration costs.

There was a discussion about the need for more fastpitch umpires in light of the growth of the Great Britain Fastpitch League (GBFL) and the likelihood that other domestic fastpitch competitions may soon develop. In addition, with eight fastpitch national teams and two club teams currently playing in Europe and only three BASU fastpitch umpires now qualified at that level, the requirement that we send an umpire to Europe for every competition we enter may become difficult to fulfil.

Pete acknowledged that BASU may need to develop a fastpitch umpire qualification course in the near future, something that BASU Fastpitch Officer Darrell Pitman is keen to do. But there will be a need for more fastpitch players to commit to training as umpires; they can't all be crossovers from slowpitch.

It could be, in the near future, that every GBFL team will be required to have at least one qualified umpire on its roster, as is the case with a number of slowpitch leagues in the UK.

Next meeting

The BSF Executive may have a brief remote meeting after the AGM on 26 February, but the BSF's next monthly videoconference meeting will be on the evening of **Thursday 10 March**.

Anyone from the softball community who would like to put something on the agenda for this meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer (bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org).