

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT: 10 NOVEMBER 2022

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 10 November 2022. Below is a report on the main discussions and decisions.

Attendance

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

Apologies: Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Stella Ackrell (General Officer).

Guest: John Boyd (BSUK).

Upgrade of BSF container at Farnham Park

There are two major problems with the BSF storage container at Farnham Park: the incursion of damp, especially in the winter, which can damage equipment and kit; and the need for separate lockable storage areas so that equipment belonging to different organisations – the BSF, national teams, the Great Britain Fastpitch League etc -- can be stored separately and safely.

The latter issue is a BSF responsibility, but discussions have been ongoing with BSUK about solving the damp problem, and BSUK has presented the Executive with a number of options and costs.

It was decided to try an inexpensive solution first: renting and installing a number of dehumidifiers to see if this will have any impact on the damp problem. BSUK will install the dehumidifiers, monitor their effect and report back to the Executive before Christmas.

If a more expensive solution is needed, there will be further discussion between the BSF and BSUK about sharing the cost.

Service Level Agreement

Each year, the BSF purchases a number of services from BSUK that are not regarded as development through a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

In the BSF's financial year that ended on 30 September 2022, 120 SLA hours were purchased but only 90 were used, mainly for communications support. This means that 60 SLA hours will be carried forward to 2022-23. A BSF-BSUK meeting will be held in December to look at how many more SLA hours will need to be purchased for 2022-23, bearing in mind that additional Comms support may be required.

BSUK Financial Report

In the week preceding the BSF meeting, BaseballSoftballUK CEO John Boyd circulated BSUK's half-year financial report to the BSF Executive, and there was a brief discussion at the meeting about the finances of Farnham Park.

John told the meeting that the current aim – which is essentially being met with the help of income from the Home Plate Clubhouse – is to break even on the operation of Farnham Park, including maintenance work, fees for maintenance staff, support for events etc.

However, with little scope for raising charges to users from the softball and baseball communities, money for further investment and upgrades at Farnham Park needs to come from other sources. Use of Farnham Park by MLB for events connected with future London Series will be one important source of revenue, and the hope is that local community use and further bookings for batting cages and other facilities can provide additional income.

Report from RBI Wales

Members of the Executive commented favourably on a report received from Holly Ireland, director of the RBI Wales development project in Cardiff, on what the project had accomplished over the past year and how the BSF Development Grant received by the project had been spent.

The programme has achieved a lot of engagement in Cardiff and the surrounding area and is bringing a significant number of new young participants to fastpitch softball and baseball.

International issues

WBSC Slowpitch Working Group. Mike Jennings, who sits on the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Slowpitch Working Group on behalf of Softball Europe, said that the Working Group is no longer meeting, at least for the time being, because the WBSC has agreed to stage a Co-ed Slowpitch World Cup for national teams in 2023. The key question now is whether official specifications for organising the tournament will be discussed and agreed at a meeting of the WBSC Board later in November so that bids to host the tournament can be invited.

BSF votes for WBSC Athlete Representatives. Elections have taken place for male and female fastpitch athletes to sit on the WBSC Board as Athlete Representatives, and BSF President Ieuan Gale has voted on behalf of the BSF, after extensive consultations at home and in Europe. Ieuan has voted for a Czech player to be the male Athlete Rep so that Europe will be represented. With no European standing as the female Athlete Rep, Ieuan voted for USA Softball legend Monica Abbott, who is widely influential in the sport and who has a mission to see softball returned to the Olympics on a permanent basis.

Request from Ukraine. The BSF, along with other countries in Europe, has received a request from the Ukrainian Softball Federation for help in providing opportunities for Ukrainian national team athletes to

train and compete abroad next year since they cannot do so with safety in Ukraine. The BSF and BSUK will consider the possibility of hosting an international friendly competition in the UK next year but will also explore a joint European response to this request.

European tournament hosts. Mike Jennings told the Executive that no bids have come forward as yet to host next year's European Under-18 Women's Fastpitch Championship or the European Co-ed Slowpitch Super Cup, despite rumours about countries that might come forward. It may be that hosts will not be agreed until next year's WBSC Europe Congress in February, but Mike assured the Executive that Softball Europe has a strong commitment to making all the events on its calendar happen.

National teams

National Team vacancies. As reported recently on the BSF website, Colin Barrett has stepped down as Head Coach of the GB Men's Fastpitch Team for personal and work reasons, and there is also a vacancy for a Team Operations Manager for the team, which will compete in the European Men's Championship next summer. These positions will be advertised shortly on the BSF website. With most GB Men's Team players now UK-based, the preference is to find a Head Coach based in the UK if possible, or at least in Europe.

GB Under-18 Men's Team Manager. Two applications have been received by the BSF for the vacant post of Team Operations Manager for the GB Under-18 Men's Fastpitch team, and interviews will be conducted shortly.

Programme merger. It has been agreed to merge the GB Under-13 and Under-15 female fastpitch team programmes as part of an effort to unify the women's fastpitch pathway and performance programme. In line with this decision, Jo Malisani has stepped down as Head Coach of the GB Under-15 Women's Team and the merged programme is currently being put together under the leadership of GB Under-13 Team Operations Manager Julie Spittle and BSUK Head of Performance Services Gary Anderson.

National team logo. Currently, there are two logos for GB Softball National Teams: one for our two slowpitch national teams and another for our eight fastpitch national teams. At its upcoming face-to-face weekend meeting in January, the BSF Executive will consider whether the current arrangement should continue or whether there should be one logo for all our national teams, as part of a review of BSF's branding and style guide.

BASU

BSF Technical Officer Pete Saunders told the Executive that thanks were due to Sara Daughtrey and all the crew at the Home Plate Clubhouse at Farnham Park for their help in making the Memorial Day for BASU and European umpire Chris Moon a success on 22 October. "The day," Pete said, "went as well as it possibly could have done."

Dates for online BASU training courses, beginning in January, will be released shortly and will be publicised on the BSF website.

The 2023 BASU AGM has been set for the afternoon of Saturday 4 February at Farnham Park.

Pete also offered a reminder to tournament organisers working on budgets for next year's events that, as previously announced, BASU umpire fees will go up by £2 per umpire per game in 2023.

ESCA Camp

Four British fastpitch coaches, jointly supported by the BSF and BSUK, attended the annual European Softball Coaches Association (ESCA) Camp held in the Netherlands at the end of October, and reported that it was an excellent experience from both a technical and a networking point of view.

Next meeting

The next monthly BSF videoconference meeting will be held on the evening of Thursday 8 December 2022.

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