

## BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT: 8 AND 15 SEPTEMBER 2022

The BSF Executive held a monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 8 September, then reconvened on 15 September to consider additional topics. Below is a summary of the main discussions and decisions at the two meetings.

### Attendance: 8 September

**Present:** Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Competitions and Membership Officer), Stella Ackrell (Safeguarding Officer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Mike Lott (Coaching Officer), Lesley Morisetti (General Officer), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

**Apologies:** Ieuan Gale (President), Simon Mortimer (Marketing and Communications Officer), Mike Jennings (General Officer).

**Guests:** John Boyd (BSUK).

### Attendance: 15 September

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

**Apologies:** Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer).

**Guest:** John Boyd (BSUK).

## MEETING OF 8 SEPTEMBER

### Message on the death of the Queen

BSUK had prepared a generic message on the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and the Executive agreed that BSUK could publish it on our behalf.

### Financial matters

The Executive approved the assignment of £1000 to Budget Code 3065 (GB Coach Training) in the 2022-23 Budget to provide support for coaches that will be attending the European Softball Coaches Association (ESCA) Camp in October.

## BSUK staff updates

John Boyd gave the Executive an update on recent BSUK staff and role changes:

- The role of Fastpitch Development Manager has become redundant because the requirements of the role have changed. However, Alyson Spinis-Valainis's skills are highly valued by BSUK and they will be retained on contract with a new set of responsibilities as a Pathway Performance Coach, helping to recruit and upskill new fastpitch players, particularly with regard to pitching.
- Colin Barrett has now become BSUK's Pathway Performance and Academies Manager and will be responsible for all Academies and HPAs for baseball and softball, including a Slowpitch Academy. His job is to create – over time – a flow of athletes in this country that are “national team ready”. Both Colin and Alyson will report to BSUK Head of Performance Services Gary Anderson.
- There is currently a vacancy for a Development Manager for London and the South East, but this role is likely to be filled through funds from MLB and the London Mayor's Office to provide a Legacy Manager for the MLB games to be played in London in 2023 and 2024.
- Calum Opere-Hoyal has been appointed to a part-time role as a Development Officer, concentrating on club development.
- Gary Anderson's role as Head of Performance Services for GB Softball and GB Baseball has been upgraded to a full-time position.

## Fastpitch Development Plan

Chris Rawlings has circulated an Outline Fastpitch Development Plan for 2022-25 to the BSF Executive. John Boyd told the meeting that the Plan is designed to build fastpitch in the UK to “where we should be as a European nation”, and that fastpitch has the opportunity to be the next big summer sports for girls. “BSUK's commitment to fastpitch,” John said, “has never been stronger.”

A meeting has been scheduled for 26 when members of the BSF Executive can discuss the Fastpitch Development Plan with John and BSUK Head of Development Chris Rawlings and also hear a debrief on this summer's GB Women's tour and plans to take our Olympic programme forward, including the recruitment of a new Women's Team Head Coach to replace Rachael Watkeys.

## NSL Nationals

BSF Competitions Officer Liz Graham reported that the NSL Nationals went well, though there were some queries about dispensations. Teams were happy with the schedule, with not having to play placing games and with the fact that the awards ceremony at the end got underway quickly. There was

a positive response to the video that went out after the event, created by BSUK under our Crown Jewel arrangements.

However, there appear to have been some teams consuming alcohol in the dugout during games, and while this is problematic at a National Championship event, it was even more so because there were Academy players at Farnham Park during the tournament.

There are already rules in place that forbid drinking and smoking in dugouts during games. Next year, these rules will be heavily publicised and will then be enforced at BSF events by warnings and then, if necessary, by ejections.

### **Rachael Watkeys resignation**

The BSF Executive agreed to the following Motion in response to the recently-announced resignation of GB Women's Fastpitch Team Head Coach Rachael Watkeys:

The BSF Executive unanimously thanks Rachael Watkeys for her extensive achievements on and off the field during her six-year tenure as GB Women's Fastpitch Team Head Coach, and before that as Head Coach of the GB Under-19 Women's Team. Both teams and programmes have improved significantly while Rachael has been in charge, and she has created a solid foundation for the Women's Team to progress towards its Olympic aspirations in 2028. The BSF Executive would like to express good wishes to Rachael as she moves to a different work situation.

### **2023 Calendar**

BSUK has sent the BSF a draft Farnham Park Calendar for 2023, incorporating BSF, BSUK and – to some extent – BBF requests and requirements for next season.

Softball has been given most of the dates we requested, and the BSF will continue to negotiate with BSUK over the rest.

## **MEETING OF 15 SEPTEMBER**

### **Meeting with Phil Veasey**

A meet-and-greet meeting has been arranged for Tuesday 20 September between all members of the BSF Executive able to attend and BSUK Board Chair Phil Veasey. Those unable to attend have been asked to send any questions they have for Phil to BSF President Ieuan Gale in advance of the meeting.

### **Re-writing BSF Articles**

Ieuan Gale, Bob Fromer and Mike Jennings will convene in December to re-write and update the BSF Articles for presentation and approval at the AGM in February.

The new Articles will include clauses prepared by BSUK, and accepted by the Executive, about shared jurisdiction with the BBF and BSUK over new WBSC formats (Baseball5, Blind Baseball, and Baseball/Softball E-Sports).

Before then, John Boyd will let the Executive know whether our funding from UK Sport and our Olympic involvement requires any specific changes or additions to the Articles.

### **Website upgrade**

It has been agreed by BSUK and the BSF, on advice from Tim Stride, that upgrading the BSF and BSUK websites to the latest Expression Engine CMS is not something that needs to be done in the near future.

### **Fastpitch Development Officer**

Because no one from the softball community has come forward to take on the new BSF position of Fastpitch Development Officer, BSF President Ieuan Gale will add the role to his responsibilities in the short term.

The purpose of the role is to work with BSUK and current members of the fastpitch community to develop domestic fastpitch participation, competition, coaching and umpiring.

### **Softball World Series review**

Mike Jennings and Pete Saunders, who were TC and UiC respectively at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Softball World Series tournament at Farnham Park on 10-11 September, reported that the tournament went well and that teams seemed generally happy, despite a new format, some problems with a wet field on Saturday and fog on Sunday morning and the first-ever use of a playing field at Dair House School, across the road from Farnham Park.

### **Poll on the use of 11" balls in co-ed slowpitch play**

Mike Jennings and Liz Graham have carried out a poll among NSL players and others to get opinions on the use of 11" balls for female batters in co-ed slowpitch play.

The use of 11" and 12" balls in co-ed play has been common practice in the UK for well over a decade, is now part of WBSC Slowpitch rules and is general practice in co-ed slowpitch play in the US and most of the world.

Not surprisingly, a large majority of around 75 respondents were in favour of using 11" balls for female batters.

## Equipment and storage at Farnham Park

Three large kitbags of equipment used for the Single-Sex Nationals has been brought to the BSF container at Farnham Park, as has GB Slowpitch equipment previously kept by the late John Lehmann.

The Executive agreed that the container needs to be upgraded as soon as possible with regard to damp-proofing and separate lockable storage areas, and will ask BSUK to come up with costings, after which a BSF contribution can be discussed.

## BASU update

BSF Technical Officer and BASU Training Officer Pete Saunders reported that dates for BASU online courses in January and February will be announced shortly.

There was further discussion – carried on from the meeting of 8 September – about the need next year to widely publicise and then enforce -- with ejections if necessary -- BSF and WBSC rules that prohibit smoking and the consumption of alcohol in dugouts during games.

As a sport in receipt of UK Sport funding and with obligations to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), we need to ensure that the behaviour of all players conforms to existing rules. We also want to raise the image of our majority format at national tournaments and events that are BSF-run.

## Historic BSF documents

BSF General Officer Mike Jennings has recently come across a set of documents stored at his home relating to the very first BSF AGM in 1988 and to subsequent AGMs through 1994.

Ieuan Gale is keen to look at them, and Mike will turn the documents over to Ieuan at the next opportunity.

## Data collection project

The BSF will soon be launching a data collection project on current participation in every format and at every level of softball, and Mike Jennings will set out the information we want from those who will be asked to complete the survey.

For slowpitch, we are looking for purely quantitative information: how many leagues, how many teams, how many players per team etc. Fastpitch will need a separate exercise, with more help from BSUK.

The hope is to circulate the survey in October.

The ultimate aim is to provide a baseline against which future growth and development can be measured.

## Next meeting

The next BSF Executive videoconference meeting will be held on Thursday 13 October at 7.30 pm.

Any member of the BSF Executive or the softball community with items to bring to the meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer ([bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org](mailto:bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org)).