

The Minutes of the Open Forum Meeting held at Brooklands Hulmeians Lacrosse Club on Thursday 12 February 2009 at 8 pm.

Present: David Marsden (Chairman) and representatives from the following clubs: Ashton, Boardman & Eccles, Brooklands Hulmeians, Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Heaton Mersey, Hull, Leeds, Manchester Waconians, Mellor, Newcastle, Nottingham, Poynton, Rochdale, Sheffield Steelers, Sheffield University, Stockport, Stopfordians, Timperley, Wilmslow and York University.

The following clubs were not represented: Birmingham, Heaton Mersey Guild, Liverpool, Norbury, Oldham & Werneth, and Staffordshire University.

Apologies for absence were received from Alan Holdsworth and Steve Bottrill.

1. The Secretary reported that the anticipated letter from the MPC detailing the authority of the Disciplinary sub-committee had still not arrived, and that the MPC had changed its mind and instead would simply minute their decision and provide John Partt with a copy of their Minutes.
2. There was a long discussion about the idea raised earlier in the season to allow increased squad sizes. Bill Oxley reported that Mellor felt that up to 18 players should be allowed on clubs' lowest registered teams, with the limit on higher teams being unchanged from the present limit (up to 13). Neil Crosby reported that the Yorkshire clubs felt that only 15 players should be eligible to be in the game at any one time ie. on the pitch and on the bench, but with unlimited squad sizes; they felt this would encourage new players to gain experience of lacrosse and motivation to continue. David Marsden however, disagreed, pointing out the inequality which would result from having the possibility of 20 or 25 players playing against a squad of only 10. Matthew Nugent expressed the opinion that larger squad sizes would assist the progression of the sport, and John Farmer agreed with allowing larger squads. John Leach stated that a move to larger squads should move forward at a slower pace, rather than the whole structure changing at once. Les Grainger commented on the need to provide an adequate game for younger players. Eventually, a straw poll showed a 50/50 split in opinions at the meeting.
3. Another lengthy discussion took place regarding the current lack of referees and how to acquire new ones. Matthew Nugent expressed the view that the existing system did not work, and that it should be a pre-requisite for entry into the league competitions that each team provide a referee, to referee at both home and away games (as opposed to just being a home referee), with any 'spare' referees being allocated to matches by the Referees' Appointments Secretary. He said this should create about an additional 15 referees. John Leach commented on injuries and unavailabilities which occurred to referees (as was the case with players), and felt that such a scheme should apply initially to the top 2 divisions only, and gradually be extended to other divisions. Dennis McCulloch said that in order for a club to provide 2 such referees it would need to have a pool of 3 or 4 volunteers, and the Appointments Secretary would have to know who was available each week. Les Grainger said the Referees' Association needed to organise more courses; this led to a debate about the cost of courses (which had been determined by the ELA and had been a cause of concern). However, Dennis McCulloch reported that the course he had recently attended had cost him £40, and this was now the set rate. John Farmer wondered whether the ELA, with all its money, should bring in referees from other countries in the same way it brought in players to act as LDO's. It was generally felt that the abuse suffered by referees was a de-motivating factor, and indiscipline especially from younger players. Tim Holdsworth commented on the fact that so many players take the refereeing courses with no intention of

actually refereeing matches, but just to use as a cv booster. Richard Gartside stated that the structure for refereeing courses had to be in place in order to obtain funding from Sport England, and that although 12 participants on each course was the ideal number, a smaller number would suffice. A straw poll was taken, and revealed that there was a general feeling in favour of the mandatory provision of team referees. Roger Ambler commented that if the clubs decided to make something mandatory, there had to be consequent penalties imposed for failure to comply. He also suggested that the intention should be for all teams to provide competent (rather than qualified) referees from the beginning of season 2010/2011, but others, especially Richard Gartside said it should apply to the top 2 division teams from season 2009/2010. The Management Committee would give further consideration to the matter.

4. The Secretary commented on a recent incident of a team travelling a long distance only to find that its match had been called off earlier in the day. There had been a breakdown in communication, and there was a necessity for all match secretaries to communicate personally, rather than leaving a message on an answerphone.
5. The Secretary reported that a gap in the current Senior League Championship Rules had recently been found. As a result, it was intended to put the following proposition to the AGM in May, as Rule A 11:
If a match is played, subsequent to which the Management Committee upholds a protest or claim for points made by the losing team, the records shall show the result of the match as one goal scored by the winners, none by the losers, and the points awarded to the team whose protest or claim is upheld.
6. The AGM would be held on Thursday 7 May, but a venue had yet to be found, although Heaton Mersey might be available. Their representatives at the meeting would check.
7. David Withington complained that smaller clubs were struggling, partly due to larger clubs strengthening their lower teams when their higher teams did not have a fixture, and there was therefore a need to make the bona fide status rules more robust. Roger Ambler stated that all such claims were investigated by the Management Committee, but that if the evidence was inconclusive, there was little that could be done. Matthew Nugent said he received about 90% of team sheets from clubs, and could therefore check that information.
8. David Marsden commented on recently minuted comments in the Management Committee minutes regarding the LCLA; and felt the currently defined structure of the Territories in the ELA Constitution/Bye Laws needed reviewing. This led to a wide-ranging discussion of the need for 'County' games, as well as Territorial administrative structures and their relationship to the MPC, Neil Crosby stating that a few years previously he had suggested that there should be 2 representatives each from NEMLA and SEMLA on the MPC, but this had not progressed. David Marsden felt the NEMLA Open Forum system had 'by-passed' the ELA structure, and should have influence on the ELA as regards finances. Neil Crosby reported that at the recent MPC meeting the Territories had been asked to give opinions as to what monies should be spent on, and the YCLA had done so, but it was uncertain as to the exact input from CCLA and LCLA.
9. Tim Holdsworth handed out information on the 2010 World Championships Legacy Project.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.50 pm. with a vote of thanks to the Chair.