

The Minutes of the Open Forum Meeting held at Heaton Mersey Lacrosse Club on Thursday 11 December 2008 at 8 pm.

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

The following clubs were not represented: Birmingham, Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Heaton Mersey, Liverpool, Manchester Waconians and Staffordshire University.

The meeting began with a few moments of silence in memory of Geoff Paulson, a past President of the NELA, who had died recently.

1. The Secretary read out a letter from the ELA Secretary, Ron Balls, mainly commenting on the allegations made at the October Open Forum meeting about lack of communication from the ELA MPC. Ron stated that the minutes of all committee meetings are posted on the ELA website for all to see, and that all NEMLA Management Committee and Open Forum minutes could be scanned onto the website by the ELA office (John Partt being a dinosaur and not having a computer). This would now be done. Neil Crosby reported that there had in fact been an improvement in producing MPC Minutes. Ron also made brief comments about the recent fine on Heaton Mersey.
2. The MPC had recently discussed the question of which Premiership team should play in the European Championships, representing NEMLA, if the reigning champions declined to go, and this was discussed by the meeting, which expressed general support for the reigning club to go. Clive Perrin reported on the European Championships which had been held in Hamburg, saying that the facilities had been superb, with all games on astroturf and very well organised. It was a very demanding tournament, lots of injuries occurring and necessitating a large squad, with shortened games but a full-length final. There had been a wide standard of lacrosse, but the sport was growing in Europe, and most matches were played in the summer months, hence the reason for holding the tournament in September when the participating teams were the respective champions in their current season. The 3rd week in September had been allocated to the games. Matthew Nugent, as Fixtures' Secretary, commented that this would not affect his programme. Clive further reported that 6 teams (all being league champions) had participated, and Wilmslow had won the competition. However, Clive was disappointed that there had been a lack of publicity of the event in the Lacrosstalk magazine, although American and European magazines had dedicated cover to it. The ELF wanted League champions, rather than Cup winners, to take part in the competition, and Clive reported that the ELA had provided a sum of £500 as sponsorship of the Wilmslow team. It had, however, cost the players a minimum of £330 each to go. The meeting felt the event should be supported, but that clubs could not be compelled to go and that it should therefore be made attractive for players to participate.
3. The scope of the NEMLA Management Committee disciplinary responsibilities was briefly discussed. Whilst John Partt had on file some correspondence from Ron Balls, dated January 2005, Alan Holdsworth reported that Ron and Anton Bryant were in the process of producing a document detailing the authority of the Committee.

4. Ken Haves reported that the MPC wanted each home team to provide a qualified referee. This led to a long discussion about the cost of refereeing courses. The Referees had set a charge of £50 per head for courses, and a minimum number of 12 participants (total £600). which Matthew Nugent felt to be excessive. He felt the price of a course should be fixed, irrespective of the number of participants, whilst David Withington suggested the course cost should be minimal, eg. £50 total, and Bill Oxley stated his opinion that a refereeing course should be provided every month for say £400. David Withington complained about the lack of panel referees in the 3rd division and David Marsden said the referees should be pro-active in pursuing the involvement of those already acting as 'home' referees. Richard Gartside felt the target should be for all travelling teams to take a 'home' referee with them. Alan Holdsworth would try to resolve some of the difficulties by liaising with Peter McGinnerty.
5. The subject of club accreditation was raised, and Alan Holdsworth reported that most clubs now had achieved at least level one.
6. Les Grainger commented on the mass of historical documents, records and physical memorabilia which no doubt was in existence in scattered locations, suggesting that these should be collected together if possible in an archive somewhere. There was no room for such items at the ELA office, but the records etc. could be kept on computer and made available on the web. Roger Ambler stated that all Ashton's records were on file at the Tameside archive department, and Neil Crosby said Brian Greenwood had much history on the YCLA, and felt it was important to preserve such information. Dave Hallows volunteered to collate information to be placed on the web, and it was understood that the ELA had an archive facility already in place. Derek Collins suggested that a contact at each club would be necessary.
7. Dave Hallows raised the subject of the disparity in minimum ages for playing in NEMLA and SEMLA matches. Whilst both stipulated age 16, dispensations for 15 year olds were granted by SEMLA, with certain safeguards and under certain conditions. Bob McEwan said 15 year olds should be allowed to play in NEMLA matches, but Matthew Nugent argued strongly against. Clive Perrin pointed out that in legal terms, under 18's were juniors, and David Marsden stated the situation was anomalous, even in the Under 19 league. Whilst it was known that under age players were playing now, if the age was reduced to 15, it would eventually result in teams illegally playing 14 year olds.
8. Ken Haves reported that the following clubs had still not paid their knockout competition entry fees, despite being past the deadline: Cheadle Hulme, Hull, Oldham, Newcastle and Sheffield University.
9. David Marsden reported on the significant progress made in arrangements for the 2010 World Championships. Manchester University were going to renew 2 of their artificial pitches in the summer of 2009, and Clive Perrin had been taken on an official tour of the Firs. He reported that the old pavilion, which was in an excellent location, was to remain instead of being demolished, and the facilities at the Armitage Centre would be available in addition. The website had been upgraded, and volunteers were needed from clubs to act as liaison officers with visiting teams; Alan Holdsworth was co-ordinating this. There was currently no funding difficulty, but it was unlikely the government would provide any money. The ticketing structure was being considered, and sponsorship was being sought; contact names from potential companies were needed. The Festival would now probably include junior teams.

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10. Bill Oxley queried whether any further consideration should be given to the matter of squad sizes, as discussed briefly at the previous Open Forum meeting. However, in view of the lateness of the hour it was decided to defer any further discussion to the next meeting.
11. The next Open Forum Meeting will be at Brooklands Hulmeians on Thursday 12 February 2009, at 8 pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.05 pm with a vote of thanks to the chair.