

## 2016 UK Racketlon AGM Minutes

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> October 2016, TIME

**Venue:** Letchworth Squash & Tennis Club

**Present:** James Pope (JP), Dom Ford (DF), Dan Busby (DAB), Dianne Baker (DMB), Alex Du Noyer (ADN), Keith Lesser (KL), Leigh Sands (LS), Duncan Stahl (DS), George Roberts (GR), Johnny Bispham (JB), Harry Pearce (HP), Alistair Prades (AP), Helen Ford (HF)

**Apologies:** Ray Jordan, David Ridout, Jack Bishop, Richard Boreham, Richard Middleton, Matthew Daggitt

### 1. Election / Re-election of committees (10 mins)

The attendees were asked if they approved of the current committee members where they are named. Vacant and new spaces were filled with nominees from the floor.

Current/Proposed:

- a) Ray Jordan – Chairman – **Approved**
- b) Dave Ridout – Vice Chairman - **Approved**
- c) Keith Lesser – Finances - **Approved**
- d) Duncan Stahl – Sport England - **Approved**
- e) Vacant - Sponsorship/Marketing – Luke Barnes (nominated by DS and KL) - **Approved**
- f) James Pope – Comms/Reporting/Database - **Approved**
- g) Jack Bishop – UK Tour - **Approved**
- h) George Roberts – Back office & Events - **Approved**
- i) Dan Busby – GB Selection - **Approved**
- j) Dominique Ford - Volunteers - **Approved**
- k) Richard Boreham - Rankings - **Approved**
- l) Matt Daggitt - Website - **Approved**
- m) Vacant - Twitter (New) – Johnny Bispham (nominated by KL & JS) - **Approved**
- n) Vacant - New Players (New) – Jon Spinks (nominated by DS & JP) - **Approved**
- o) Regional Organisers – Malcolm, Rich Colman, Jon Spinks/Sam Barker, Brendan/Pete Bridgeman, Dave Lazarus, Johnny Bispham, Paul Mathieson, Lee Gregson. - **All Approved**

p) Event Support – Rachel Pitson, Neil Byrne, Steve Bispham - **Approved**

q) FIR Council – Richard Middleton - **Approved**

r) Non Exec – Stuart Foster - **Approved**

## **2. 2016 review**

James Pope delivered the following report. “To date in 2016 we have had 957 UK based players at 17 events. Of these 491 are unique players (i.e. I count multiple times in the 957 number, but only once as a unique player). In terms of unique players and total players this is the biggest year for Racketlon in the UK, both in terms of our absolute numbers and the average numbers of players per event (56.29). In 2015 this was 868 players (425 unique) from 16 events at an average of 54.25 per event.

Using Tournament software, I am now able to compile the numbers on a range of details from Racketlon, and I feel three numbers that I have determined are key for our future development.

1) Players playing more than 1 event per season

2) Player retention (ie playing 1 or more events in consecutive seasons)

3) Our tournament male to female ratio

Numbers 1 and 2 are very much linked in my mind. Between 30 and 40% of our players play more than 1 event per season, and between 30 and 40% of our players are retained season to season. Now while some players play just the annual event local to them, the vast majority of our retained players play more than one event a season. It is in my mind, crucial that we as an organisation work hard to ensure that players play multiple times per season as that is strongly linked with players returning.

On number 3, our season by season M/F ratio is

2014 - 4.37

2015 - 3.86

2016 - 4.56

and an average over these seasons of 4.22.

We are marginally out performed by the world tour, which averages 3.93 over the same period.”

After his report, Duncan asked what is the barrier to women playing. Dianne Baker suggested it might be the distance to tournaments, fewer female players are used to travelling to play in sporting events as the men. Alistair Prades remarked that from his conversations with female players they

often remarked (as an example) “I don’t play squash” and that female players are more concerned as to whether they will embarrass themselves. This point was supported by Duncan, Dianne and Dan Busby. Dominique Ford also suggested this might be influenced by the intimidation factor of having fewer categories for ladies which results in them playing in the A event, which is labelled elite. Dan suggested we dropped the labelling to reduce that intimidation. Keith remarked that this is currently being trialled through reducing entry to Men’s, Women’s, Vets and Juniors. Dominique made the point that perhaps we should ask the ladies who played this year why they played and what influenced them and stopping them.

### **3. 2017 Tour latest**

George Roberts reported on behalf of Jack Bishop. George was able to confirm that a few tournaments have already been booked in and a few are soon to be confirmed. It is acknowledged that the spacing of events through the calendar is crucial, primarily to avoid having events in the same/similar player catchment in the same few week period, such as the Staffordshire, Shropshire and North of England (Manchester) Opens in 2016. Jack and George hope to be able to release more information to the membership in the coming weeks.

### **4. Finances**

Keith Lesser reported that UK Racketlon tends to make a small loss. This is primarily as some events break even, a few make a profit, but some big events and international events do make a loss. There has been something of a hangover from hosting the 2014 World Championships and covering some player events after the sudden changes that occurred during the 2014 World Teams & Doubles. However, UK Racketlon is now cash flow positive. In the long term, profit comes from sponsorship and this profit can be reinvested in the development of the sport. One recent change in the past 12 months has been that we have raised entry fees. This is mainly as venue costs have risen in recent years, however while it was a £5 jump 12 months ago quite suddenly, it is in line with the long term percentage increase in venue costs.

After Keith’s report there were some further comments. Duncan Stahl raised the point that we can’t offer sponsors the sort of exposure that they would expect, and sports sponsorship is a highly competitive environment. However that is not to stop us doing targeted sponsorship and looking for sponsorship in kind (i.e. shuttles for events). Keith commented that elsewhere people have used personal contacts and got friends businesses to back events. He was able to confirm that Lesser & Co will sponsor the English Open in some capacity.

### **5. GB Racketlon Projects**

#### **a) Sport England latest**

Duncan Stahl is following up on the original Sport England application made by Julian Kashdan-Brown. Duncan dealt with feedback from Sport England point by point which included things such as making copies of the accounts and AGM minutes online and public as well as a robust membership scheme. Sport England then refused that application, with some new, previously unmentioned reasons and the membership scheme. Duncan plans to meet with Sport England to determine what they really want from us, in particularly by way of a robust membership scheme. We won’t be

applying again until we know exactly what they want and mean by a robust membership scheme.

**Action Point** – Sitting down with Sport England, to be led by Duncan Stahl.

**b) Website (now getting more regular queries from potential new players). Any other feedback or improvements needed?**

James Pope needs to finish off the transfer to the new site, primarily this is fixing links in news articles. External feedback is very positive and the site is achieving what we hoped for with the re-design. There was wide spread approval for the new site and praise for the work done on the site by Matt Daggitt. Keith Lesser feels that the first banner image, a TT Doubles shot is even to a “non-TT player” is too serious. James commented that while that may be the case it is hard to find images that meet the criteria for a banner image and that one really works. Until he has better it will remain.

**c) Scotland**

Keith reported that since the change in FIR president from Marcel Weigl to Kresten Hougaard, the FIR Council have approved the merge of Scotland to GB Racketlon. This is (still) opposed by Marcel, who feels it will cause issues such as to who the World Title won by Calum Reid is attributed to. Marcel’s objections aside, the merger is on the agenda for the 2016 FIR AGM and Keith is hopeful to have it passed at the AGM.

**d) Taster concept (first timer category, 11-up, cheap entry, half day event, capacity permitting)**

Keith reported on his idea of a half day, 11-up taster category with reduced entry. Dianne Baker observed that time wasn’t an issue to the new players. Keith commented that the Dave Lazarus events at Redbridge suggest that half-day events are popular with the new players. Duncan raised the ‘Malta Taster’, and suggested that these style of events, which could be flexibly formatted (i.e. maybe not in the traditional monrad/round robin draw or played in the regular Racketlon order) are a way of reducing the intimidation factor of international or “big name” events such as the British Championships. Keith suggested that these taster events could be stand alone non-tour events, maybe in areas soon to see a UK Tour event.

**e) Ipro Sports Racketlon clothing store**

Duncan Stahl report that – iPro Sports (manufacturers of GB Racketlon team kit can set up a UK Racketlon buying page for a range of clothes that we (UK Racketlon) design. There would be no minimum buy and people would choose, order and pay as individuals. The main issue is to design the brand and it was queried as to whether it should be distinct from GB team kits.

**f) Regionalisation of the sport (this is linked with the point on membership)**

Keith discussed whether the use of the county structure to start setting up regional community companies (e.g. Nottingham Racketlon Association, Kent Racketlon Association, etc). Keith thinks this is a good way to start. The aim being that each region would effectively act as a local club rather than players joining the national body directly. The local clubs then affiliate to the national body

which gives UK Racketlon its membership. Keith pointed out that regional Racketlon groups might be a pathway to enhancing our membership.

The consensus of the room was that there are some challenges, but the concept was widely approved by the attendees. Jon Spinks informed us that Nottingham have used social media (such as Facebook) as a hub, whilst WhatsApp is used in the London area. Keith asked if people want a regional community, and some felt it was quite a lot of effort for small reward in some areas. Regions like Cambridgeshire have some difficulties in arranging training venues, but do have some social interaction through WhatsApp it was reported by Dianne Baker & Leigh Sands. Duncan Stahl suggested that the tournament directors have the main motivation to build up their local community.

#### **6. Rankings survey update**

Dan Busby reported on the recent survey he initiated on the current ratings based rankings system. There are mixed review of current system, its complexity and punishment of defeats being key concerns of players. However others suggested it was beneficial as it made sure that every match counted equally. Ultimately, unless someone can provide a better system with evidence for its improvement we will stick with the current system. Some modifications will be created for next season: we will exclude international events and there will be a 12 month qualifying period for the rankings. **Action Point** – Create a rankings sub committee, Dan Busby to initiate.

#### **7. Membership scheme election of sub committee**

To deal with developing a more robust membership scheme with respect to a future Sport England application a membership sub-committee was elected. The successful nominees were: Keith Lesser, Duncan Stahl, Jack Bishop, George Roberts and James Pope. Dan Busby expressed a distinct wish to not be involved!

#### **8. AOB**

With no AOB, the meeting was adjourned.