

English Racketlon Association Extraordinary General Meeting

Saturday 27th September 2014

Venue: Oxford University Sports Centre

Meeting Chair: Keith Lesser (KL)

Meeting Minutes: James Pope (JP)

Present: Duncan Stahl (DS), David Ridout (DR), Malcolm Boden (MB), Dominique Ford (DF), Rachel Lawrence (RL), Luke Barnes (LB), Katie Barclay (KB), Jack Bishop (JB), Ray Jordan (RJ), Richard Middleton (RM), Piers Boden (PB), Julian Kashdan-Brown (JKB), Ed Harvey (EH), Dylan Leigh (DL)

Apologies: Leone McKinley (LMc)

Agenda

1. EU Funding

RJ: Romania and Marcel Weigel (MW) are leading an application to an EU Funding pot which is designed to aid non-recognised sports with their development. The funding works through a sport pledging to spend a sum of money that they raise themselves, with the EU funding pot matching four times what the sport has pledged. In essence, 80% of the money being spent on the sports development originates from the EU and 20% from the sport itself. The FIR submission was made in April 2014, with a decision imminent. The ERA has contributed an amount to the FIR pledge, which across 12 nations represents 250,000 Euros. Should the bid be successful, the ERA will receive four times the initial pledge (which RJ has forgotten the exact amount), from the 1 million Euros the FIR will receive. The ERA 20% is never banked in any particular account, we just have to indicate that any monies spent using this project will have to be accounted for showing the 20% we have contributed. Should the bid be successful, contracts will be signed in October 2014 and the funding available from January 2015.

KL: A suggested use of the money by the ERA would be to aid the development of the sport in the UK through having a paid part time (1 day a week) employee. However the money can be spent on office costs or other administrative expenses. The advantage of using this money to start up a part time employee would be that the person developing the sport would eventually raise money through developing entries to events and sponsors.

Action Points: A follow up meeting to be held at Dudley specifically on this topic and the future of ERA given we should know the decision at that point.

2. FIR Update

The FIR had an EGM at the World Championships. Included with these minutes is a .pdf file that contains KL's notes on the meeting and some points were touched upon.

KL: There is a Union for Sports Governing Bodies that we could work with to try and get racketlon through Sport England IE a Union that Sport England are answerable to.

RJ: Sport Accord is a body that recognises the official existence of ALL sports. To be recognised by Sport Accord, you need 40 countries to have their sports association recognising that sport officially. Presently this is ~12 for Racketlon (primarily the Eastern European nations).

KL: The new Sport Accord president (who is not a huge fan of the Olympics) wants to develop a Sport Accord World Championships (to rival the Olympics) with the idea being that all sports would have their world championships at the same time.

KL: There is a EU Funding week next year and the 2015 Austrian Open has been moved in the schedule to coincide with the event (7th to 13th September).

DS: The ERA/DS/DS' father are running a Malta Open (Agenda Item 6) to aid Malta recognising Racketlon as a sport and to add something different to the World Tour. **KL:** ERA is also looking to support Ireland further after the first challenger in 2014 but they have gone quiet. A further idea from DS is to pursue Hong Kong Football Club which is in the pipeline and a chap with strong links in Shanghai played the 2013 South London Open which is a further development possibility.

KL: For a number of years **MW** (Marcel Weigl) has struggled to attract a sponsor for the FIR World Tour. The FIR are investigating the possibility of a sponsorship lottery to find a sponsor. The FIR and member nations looks to sell tickets at £1000 to companies. Out of all the entries, a company is drawn and this winner becomes the main tour sponsor. **DS** raised concerns and intends to speak to **MW**, he is doing something similar and does not consider it a viable option. Primarily you need to apply (and pay) for a gambling license in each country where you sell tickets.

Action Points: DS to speak to MW

DL asked whether there was or is a UK tour sponsor? **KL** replied stating that there was not at present, acquiring a sponsor is incredibly hard work and again comes back to the employed person as noted above (and discussed in Agenda Item XX). **DS** pointed out that we need to develop the sports image to make the sell easier to potential sponsors. A main difficulty of getting sponsorship is that the opening 5 minutes of a meeting is spent explaining the sport. **KL** added that we need to utilise the people we know and the people we have playing the sport. **MB** asked is there is any spin off in this area from the world championships? **DS** replied that there is, primarily that seeds have been sown with some company representatives which breaks down some of the barriers faced. **JP** noted that it would be worthwhile updating the promo video which might make the sell easier. **DS** agreed that this was a a good idea.

DS: Will be launching a new initiative called "my club draw". In this, people pay a monthly subscription and when they register nominate their sports club. There are monthly prizes of varying amounts in both each entrants nominated club and also (larger) national prizes. The club receives 50% of the monthly subscription, with a club entering the 25 minimum entrants to be included raising £700 for themselves. **DS** indicated that he could set up the ERA as a club and if we were able to enter 25 players then we would generate a new income stream.

KL: MW has suggested a famous president for Racketlon someone recently retired from one of the Racketlon sports. The aim would be to give the sport increased exposure.

KL: The FIR is also considering that players would be required to do some umpiring at FIR events to support any formal referees/line judges that have been arranged.

Action Points: RM and KL to draft proposal for presentation at the FIR AGM in Poland. DS to run ERA my club draw.

KL: The Racketlon trademark and racketlon.com are owned by two gentleman and this could have posed a long term risk to the sport should he have pulled out his blessing for the use of it. He has now agreed to pass 50% of the trademark to the FIR named through **MW and LE (Lennart Eklundh)**. The racketlon.com website is presently not updated and better represents a museum to the sport. However, with the trademark announcement, there is some security for the FIR.

KL: There are a number of suggestions for developing sponsors, with people suggesting Red Bull who presently sponsor the Chinese badminton team. **JKB** asked about a TT shop that frequents various junior events. However, **RJ** stated that through conversations with him that it is unlikely to lead to anything within racketlon.

3. Poland Update

RM: After a rather long selection meeting last week (*Editors note: the time of finish, 11:30pm seems to fit suspiciously well with when the pub closes*). A number of teams have been selected and once flights are confirmed by all players these teams will be officially announced on the ERA website. **DS** will notify the invitational "C" team on the Sunday 28th September. The selected players are required to arrange and finance their own flights and accommodation and then they must confirm this information to **DS** once they have done so. **JKB** asked if there was any support for university students who were selected to play in the U21s? **DS** reported that there was sadly no funding to support players. However the ERA are paying for team entry fees. **DF** asked if there was a separate Ladies O55s? **RJ** replied that there was not. However the ERA was pushing for this as a future inclusion. **KL** added that he is probably going to have to finance the shortfall in the world champs financials in the region of £5K in the short term and that ongoing discussions were happening with SSP on the way they invoice ERA and also the FIR regarding the payment of affiliation fees and the amount of these (which for various reasons is disputed).

4. Future of English Racketlon Association

KL: A primary facet of the future of the ERA is the employment of a part time employee to develop the sport. A .pdf document outlines a possible job description for the role. A likely candidate is Phil Todd (PT), but at present this has not been confirmed. **DS** believes we need to wait for the EU Funding to be confirmed before we sit down and work out what we want to spend the money on, a sentiment that **DF** agrees with. **RJ** also stated that future discussions are needed (as per Agenda Item 1 Action Points).

DL questioned whether we could offer an ERA UK Tour “season ticket” with players paying upfront and then not paying entry fees for the tournaments as per the crowdfunding offer in the World Championships. **KL**: This never really kicked off primarily due to a lack of awareness from the community.

Action Points: to be discussed further after EU Funding result is known. DS/others to review KL Job Description document

5. Racket Master SWT Event

KL: Next summer the ERA will host a Super World Tour event, “The Racket Masters”. It will run from the 7th to 9th August at the Surrey Sports Park. The idea is to create a UK branded event s a new branded event like King of Rackets that will become a big and popular international tournament. **RL** and **DF** note they won’t be around that weekend for various (reasonable) reasons.

Action Points: DS to consider KL idea of payment website / module for accommodation as main idea of process improvement following world champs (managing the accommodation and payments was a considerably manual process requiring a lot of effort).

6. Malta Open

DS: The Malta Open is an International World Tour event that the ERA is running from the 2nd to 4th October 2015. It represents a new event in a new country for next year thanks to **DS** with the aid of DS’ father (who lives out there). The event should be excellent, with a fantastic venue and great weather! Cheap accommodation will be available, and flights from around the UK and EU are available. **RJ** has long bemoaned that Racketlon events take place in colder northern European cities and he wants to sit in sun with a beer, Malta not Malmo for **RJ**. **DS/KL** would really appreciate it if there was a large ERA attendance at the Malta Open. This is all very positive and a great idea for a holiday.

7. Corporate Racketlon

KL: We are looking for a central London venue that would host a taster day for a company / or a general racketlon taster session. We need a good venue in terms of customer service and location. The Roehampton Club is a possible venue, (Paul Lindsay who was runner up in the Men’s E at the World Championships is the contact). They hope to host a club taster session early next year and things will develop from there. **DS** reported he has had a meeting with them and stated they are a very lovely club, to quote “*properly nice*”, and the club hosts Wimbledon qualifiers. **KL** suggests that there are two branches to all this, the corporate events to raise money and contacts, but also we should generate new interest and players through taster sessions to grow the body of players. This way we can increase interest for people without the need to play a competitive tournament.

8. Sport Specific Training Days

KL: In addition to the Centre Parcs/Nottingham University training weekends it would be good to set up sport specific training days. **DR** considers this an alternative method to help people into the sport, another variation on the taster sessions. If people know people entering tournaments they may be more keen to enter themselves.

Possible venues include:

a) Fusion table tennis

DS reports that it is a club in SE London, really nice club. The club professional there will run a camp for all abilities with coaching, match practise etc.

b) Milton Keynes Badminton

c) Guildford Tennis Academy

d) David Lazarus – Squash at Redbridge

9. 2015 UK Racketlon Tour

KL: The 2015 UK Tour is a little under done compared to this stage in most seasons. If the ERA takes someone on, the tour would be a main focus for them, ensuring we have a wide range of profitable tournaments, once a tournament is established it is a scalable enterprise with effort. As with everything in Racketlon, it is the time the event organiser has to chase entries and promote the event which is a limiting factor. **DL** pointed out it is also important to think about keeping first timers in the sport and making them feel part of the community. It should also be noted that **DL** is a ranking points whore and will travel to any tournament with a ranking point available! **KL** finished this by say that people who want to start arranging dates and organising the tournament should ensure they speak to **DF** or **KL**. 2015 UK Tour likely to kick off with Cheshire mid January (David Lloyd) organised by Jason Morris.

Action Points: KL to add 2015 dates to ERA website. EG Welsh Open date now known (same as Swedish Open) so will be a challenger in 2015 and aim for IWT in 2016 onwards.

10. Sport England

DS: Three years ago the ERA applied to Sport England, who responded with a rejection to our official recognition as a sport. However, they did supply feedback on our application. This feedback was mainly technicalities (such accounts, child protection policy, grievance policy). **DS** through through studying other sports standards has addressed the feedback. **DS** resubmitted the application in March 2014 and was notified it would take Sport England 6 to 8 weeks to review the application. Reply eventually came in late August stating that additional documents were required. Again this was minor but time consuming information. As a result our re-application is still pending. Based on unofficial work via Paul Millman who attended both the British Championships (where his son Stuart got to the semi's of the B. Stuart has played racketlon for years) and the World Championships and was impressed. The process is rather protracted and is likely to take a couple of years to reach fulfilment, but will keep pushing.

AOB

RJ: Is hoping to arrange an event at Kent University. They appear are eager with a taster for the students in mid-January. Around the Easter period a Kent Open could then be held at the University. There is a slight negative of an 8 minute walk to the tennis courts, however all facilities are inside. **DR** asked if anyone from Kent University played in the Universities Championships, which would act as another contact at the University. The answer was unknown and is one for LMc.

JKB: The Midlands Open required a push on entries and the tweaking of the entry deadlines on Tournament Software.

KL: The Richard Lawrence Open has raised £500 for Lifeblood.

MB asked if there are any plans to rename the Vets categories as Masters? **RJ** felt that this was a tad pretentious. **MB** is also working with a school teacher at Harrow, Mike Mace, who is keen to get it going in the school. Is there a conflict here with the naming of say the ATP Masters Series which is not for Vets but for Open? Legends another option but is this all getting rather confusing for a new sport and at least the age specific categories should be clear. Legends suggests for example players of former glory which is not necessarily the case.