

North West & Central Canoe Polo Committee

Committee Meeting

Minutes for the Saturday 2nd November 2013, 13:00 – 15:45

Attendance: Niall Evans, Alex Jones, Mike Moffitt, Matt Carter, Heather Carter, Darren Bohanna

Guests: Paul Kelly, Chris Benson

1. Apologies

Robert Holdway – Attending National Slalom Competition

Dylan Tomlinson – Attending National Div3C tournament

Rachel Ford – Private Appointment

Antony Kingdon

2. Approval of Minutes

Previous minutes were assumed to be approved although no copy was circulated at the meeting. It was indicated by NE that the minutes are, and will continue to be slightly lacking in content and style until the position of secretary is filled.

3. National League/National Committee

- NE gave a verbal report on the National Committees current agenda.
- The current consultation and vote on multiple teams in National Division 1 was discussed by the committee. No consensus was reached.
- 10% of available places in the National League remain unfilled for 2013/14 season. The reasons for this decline were discussed by the committee. It is accepted that entries to National League will continue to decline as regional leagues become more attractive to new and developing teams.

National Structure (Appendix One)

NE circulated proposals he put to the National Committee at their last meeting, regarding the structure of canoe polo in the country.

The committee agreed this was the best option for developing canoe polo in the country and will continue to champion reforms. The committee also wished to express their desire that the country moves in the same direction to avoid conflicts with other regions and the National Committee.

4. Treasurers Report/Financial Matters

HC stated that everything is looking a lot better financially than last year, expecting to be fewer problems to overcome in terms of chasing teams and collecting monies.

NE indicated that we are looking at having roughly a 2k surplus at the end of the current season.

Spending this surplus was discussed. It was always been the intention to keep a permanent surplus to act as a buffer to aid cash flow and to meet any unexpected costs arising from any incidents or unforeseen events. Once the surplus has reached an appropriate level to ensure this, any future spending will be at the committee's discretion.

5. Divisional Reports

Not Given due to time constraints, although there are no major issues to report.

6. Regional League Structure

There were several proposals and options put forward for discussion. **(Appendix Two)**

Division One

NE raised some concerns on Division1.

- Cost of Stockport increasing to £150 an hour next year
- Large difference in competitive standard of the region's top 8 teams.

To combat these issues, NE proposed a consultation on changing the structure of division one from an 8 team league to a 12 team league. While there are benefits to a 12 team league there are also cons, these were discussed by the committee and it was felt that a consultation of all Div1 and Div2 teams should be undertaken. **(Appendix Three)**

This consultation will last until all views have come in or until mid-January, when the bookings for next season are made.

Division Three & Four

The committee discussed the location of tournaments and its future role in the Midlands. While it has always been the intention of the leagues organisers to split the Divisions three and four into separate entities for the NW and Midlands regions, this is proving difficult as participating teams in the NW is racing ahead while competing teams in the Midlands is declining.

The committee reached the consensus that all tournaments should be brought into a NW venue for next season and greater effort placed ensuring more NW clubs, especially from Cumbria to participate in the leagues in the future.

'Gala' Tournaments

It was proposed that Div3 and Div4 tournaments are held 'back to back' at Cheadle. The following benefits of this was recognised by the committee

- Increased Supporters
- Cheaper transportation for teams
- Ability to hold refereeing and skills presentations/courses
- Possibility of cheaper 'day rates' and pools.

The committee strongly supported this proposal. As a result NE is to look at this with Cheadle Pool management for 2014/15 season. It is envisaged this would offset the extra distance faced by the midlands University clubs who can opt to enter 2 teams while keeping the cost and calendar constraints under control.

New External Teams

While primarily the regional league is for the regions teams, we would be welcoming of teams outside the region wanting to compete. Any new team wanted to enter will be accepted into an appropriate division. This will be applied for the next few years until the regional league has matured.

7. Local Leagues

The following local leagues now operate in the region. All leagues operate in 25m pools and are fantastic to introducing new people to the sport.

- Liverpool Local League
- Manchester North Scout League
- Cumbria League

Setting up pathways from the local leagues to the regional league should be a priority.

- MC to engage with Cumbria league
- NE to engage with Scout League
- MM to facilitate Liverpool league progression

8. Development

Not discussed due to time constraints.

9. Refereeing and Disciplinary Procedures

Not discussed due to time constraints.

10. Website/Publicity

Not discussed due to time constraints.

11. Any Other Business

Liverpool Summer Series of Events

It will be the Liverpool Internationals 25th year this summer. To celebrate this FOA will be running a series of competitions over summer in addition to the Liverpool International. These competitions will be at heavily discounted rates and open to all level of teams.

Shot Clocks

There are currently no commercially available shot clocks in the UK. When they are available the committee will look into acquiring one for Stockport tournaments.

END. 15:45.

Regional Empowerment/Devolution

This is a big one, and what I think will have the biggest impact on our sport, although I think it could pose some significant challenges. We all know we are struggling in terms of recruiting volunteers to assist in running our sport, as well as questions on how we want our sport to look like in 10 years' time.

I would propose creating a semi-formal role between these committees would allow us to devolve a lot of responsibilities and act as a pathway for volunteers to progress from club level to regional level to national level. The four English regions would be NW, NE, SW, and SE.

There are obviously a lot of things to thrash out on the detail for this one and probably a few political issues as well. It would also be good to have a decision from Canoe England in how they want regional discipline groupings to operate (either under the local canoe England associations or under the national disciplines committee) – Dave says a decision is coming soon, but regardless, how we want our sport to be run is a decision for us to make.

Some of the things we can devolve (examples only)

- National League dates/pool bookings (already de-facto in some areas)
- Div4's
- Player Disciplinary issues – 1st level
- Organising Referee courses
- Share Website/publicity management
- Youth polo
- Development Days
- Competitions

The main thing is it **will empower & encourage more people to volunteer and improve our sport**. I fully expect the National committee to aid in setting up a funding scheme, where the regions are paid directly for their effort, similar to the canoe England regional bodies. Did you know that the 12 Canoe England Regional Development bodies receive direct funding from canoe England for existing and holding meetings? Surely something similar can be arranged if we get these arrangements formalised.

Surely having 5 formal committees help running our sport is better than 1.

Governance Changes

Constitution/Governing Document

I think this is quite important, I still don't really know what the national committees about?, what it's trying to achieve? Having a document with our core aims should help focus efforts and start to think a little more long term.

- How the committee operates
- Priorities

- Mission Statement

Action Plan

I really have no idea where certain tasks and projects are up to. What progress has been made and what needs to be done. I think most good clubs, including mine have them, it makes sense that we do to.

- Kept and maintained by secretary.
- To keep track and work through updates at meetings
- Can be shared before meetings.
- Will be able to keep track of outstanding actions/see and assign actions

National league Changes.

25% Outdoors

The 1st National league tournament for all divisions to be held outside (End of Sept/Early Oct), there are no obstacles to this. There are enough venues, teams understand the reasons. This should go away to reduce tournament fees, which must be passed onto teams by a reduction on fees.

Currently only Div2's are playing outdoors, with 50% of their games outside.

Date Consolidation

Build some predictability into when tournaments are held each year. This will allow regions leagues and other events to be planned accordingly, and go some way to ensure teams can maximise turnout at tournaments. There are enough venues to do this and there's 8 possible dates to choose from. This will in effect create a larger calendar for other events and competitions to take place as fewer dates are taken up by National League or diminished by clashes.

For Example: 2nd week of each month will be Div1's & 2's, 3rd week of each month will be Div3, 4's.

Obviously there will be some issues here and take a few seasons to work out, there will always be yearly exceptions and probably require earlier bookings to be made.

APPENDIX TWO - League Structure

Division One – I am concerned about the future of the Div1. There are two challenges that we need to address, I have noted some points and I really want to have a brain storm on ideas on how to manage these challenges. There are a number of options I can think of but there may be more I haven't thought of.

- 1) The cost of Stockport is rising to £115 to £150 an hour for next season.

Options

- Big rise in tournament fees and Keep all indoors
 - Moderate rise in tournament fees, keep all indoors and lower game times to 8mins.
 - Moderate rise with increased subsidy from lower leagues.
 - Small/No rise in tournaments fees, and have one tournament outside at Liverpool Docks.
- 2) There is a huge gap between the **National Div1** teams and the **National Div3** that compete in **Div1NWC**. This in my mind caused a number of **National Div3** level teams not to want to play **Div1NWC** this season, which reduced the number of teams competing to 8 teams.

Options

- Do nothing, accept that's how it is and hope more top level teams enter from outside the region or existing teams improve.
- Implement a 12 team league system. Appendix 1.

Division Two

I think Division Two is working well in its current form, possible to repeat the 12 division system in the medium-long term, if entries warrant it.

Division Three & Four

It has always been my intention to have dedicated NW Division Three and Four based in a local venue for the NW and for the Midlands. While good progress has been made in the NW and Shropshire, I feel the East Midlands have continued to decline. This puts us in a difficult position as we are almost able to run the leagues as an entirely NW affair. We need to make a decision on the general direction we take.

Division Three and Four NW

I am exploring the idea of running tournaments back to back at Cheadle, (I am calling them 'Gala days'). I feel this may dramatically increase the number of teams universities can field, make the league easier to manage and open up the calendar for other events.

Obviously I need the pools agreement to make this work. If we do increase University participation we may need to look at the calendar, i.e. tournaments in Sept/Oct may not be practical.

Division Three and Four Midlands

Derby will be available again for next season, received the news last month. Viking where back in the pool this week.

It is possible that with tournaments back at Derby and with a jump in the number of teams entering via the local league pathways and the gala days initiative we could have enough teams to run a Division Four Midlands.

We really do need someone to figurehead the East Midlands clubs, as I doubt it would work without universal participation in this region.

Other League Structure Conversation Topics

Additional Teams - Really need to determine how many new teams are progressing to the Leagues next season from the various local leagues and how many additional university teams will enter via the gala day initiative.

Shot Clocks – Will use shot clocks in Division 1 as soon as they become commercially available in the UK. Expected would be able to attain a grant for the purchase relatively easily if National Committee doesn't provide one for Stockport tournaments.

Derby 50m Venue - Need to ascertain when new 50m venue in Derby opens and if this is available for tournaments and how we can fit into Div1NWC.

APPENDIX THREE - What's a 12 team Division?

At the start of the season, the teams entered are seeded (based on last season's results) and split into 2 groups.

i.e. (on 2012 results)

Group A

Group B

Pennine B (1 st)	Viking X (2 nd)
Pennine A (3 rd)	FOA B (4 th)
Manchester Wildcatz A (5 th)	FOA A (6 th)
Liverpool Canoe Club A (7 th)	Derby Rammers (8 th)
Manchester Wildcatz B (9 th)	Welsh Warriors (10 th)
Loughbrough Students (11 th)	Notts A (12 th)

These teams then play each other once at one tournament. The top 3 teams from both groups go on to form **Division 1A** and the bottom 3 teams from both groups go on to form **Division1B**.

i.e. (on 2012 results)

Division 1A (1st-6th)

Division 1B (7th-12th)

Pennine B	Liverpool Canoe Club A
Pennine A	Manchester Wildcatz B
Manchester Wildcatz A	Loughborough Students
Viking X	Derby Rammers
FOA B	Welsh Warriors
FOA A	Notts A

These teams then play each other twice over 2 tournaments for the final league standings.

Key Features of this Structure

- Teams play 3 tournaments with 5 games a tournament.
- You don't play everyone in the division.

Pros

- Condenses seasons down to 3 tournaments, opening up the calendar for other events, reducing chances of clashes.
- Clubs could enter 3 teams with no adverse effect on the league (as long as they all don't finish in the top/bottom of the initial groups)
- Each Division is more competitive, while allowing **National Div3** teams to challenge harder teams.

Cons

- No choice on which tournament to attend.
- Overall costs would remain the same, but spread over 3 tournaments instead of 4.