
MINUTES

South East Region : Committee Meeting

25th June, 10:30 am, The Fencing Salle, King's School Recreation Centre , St Stephens Road,
Canterbury

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were given by Marc Chapman, Laurence Peplow, Tim Schofield, Peter Huggins and Emmanuel Therond. Ian de Whalley – Surrey (IdW) attended most of the meeting via speakerphone.

Present at the meeting: Jamie Miller (JM), Meg Shepherd-Foster (MSF), Phil Shepherd-Foster (PSF), Jane Clayton – Kent (JC), Sharon Blackman – Sussex (SB) and Dom Pitman (DP).

2. Welcome from the Chairman.

i – Congratulations to Sharon Blackman for British Empire Medal
JM congratulated Sharon on her award.

ii – Current fencing numbers, including clubs and schools fencing in the SE
JM stated that there were over 1058 British fencing members affiliated to the South East Region (number obtained from Head Office, June 2016). JM pointed out that it was difficult to get exact numbers of fencers in the region. The Random sampling used by Sport England can lead to interesting results. He also offered Brixton Fencing Club as an example of a club who are affiliated to the South East Region, but whose fencers tend to fence for London. PSF and JM commented on the difficulties this posed for Winton. JM outlined the way that BFA members now choose their region using Sport80.

iv – Regionals news/results, including Cadet Winton & Winton
PSF congratulated JM who led the cadet team to another victory in 2015.
He reported that the Senior Winton is in two weeks time and that we are going for our 5th victory. JM commented that we were able to field full teams. We are currently selecting through rankings. Getting positive feedback and good results.

3. Competitions Review

i – current attendance

JM stated that there had been a minor drop in numbers attending competitions after 2008/9, but numbers are pretty consistent give or take 20 entries. He said that this reflects a poor percentage of fencers in the region. We can do better.

ii – hosting?

JM described his vision for how we could achieve better numbers at regional events. His proposal was based on a system he had seen working effectively in the United States. This was based on the understanding that, too often, it is left to the same people to run them year after year. In the states they license the competitions to clubs to run them. They have a bidding system. Emphasis is on the quality of event run. Hosts to provide equipment etc. He was able to give an example where this system that had been used for last 6/7 years and raised a profit of over £13,000 for a club.

After some discussion, JM suggested a 'license' to run competitions. Fencing is a very expensive sport. Clubs need funds.

JC queried Winton funding.

PSF/JM – Region currently funds the Cadet and Senior Winton. MSF offered the accounts provided by the treasurer. These were not re-inspected, however for the record, last year the cost of Cadet and Senior Winton came to £2673.62 of which £290.00 was the entry fee for Senior Winton and the rest was Cadet Winton. £1660 was paid in to the region by the Cadet Winton entrants, so the overall cost of Cadet Winton was £1013.62. Therefore, to cover these costs next year we would need to aim to make at least £1303.62.

JC raised a concern that allowing a bidding system could create a divide between ever growing large clubs and smaller clubs that could not stage the events. This concern was echoed by DP.

JM pointed out that in the big picture, we are looking at a vast reduction in numbers of fencers. We are competing with Xbox and Playstation and have to do something.

MSF agreed with JC and DP that the potential unfairness to smaller clubs should be considered.

JM argued that when running a large event, considerable resources are needed. He put forward an example. 10 referees for LPJS they are running. JM also argued that the region also needed to use these events to develop a workforce that could return to the smaller clubs and help turn them into bigger clubs.

JM now referenced a fencer from Crawley who was concerned that the last BYC event was poorly run. For example, U12 referees refereeing their own poules.

JM now commented on the motivation for fencers entering and the quality of the medals currently offered. Medals are £0.50, we can do better.

MSF interrupted to ask how the counties feel about the competition license for clubs proposal.

SB (Sussex) gave an example of SE competition was run by a combination of Crawley and Chichester who work together. Perhaps smaller clubs could put forward a joint bid. She talked of the embarrassment of presenting a fencer with a medal in a plastic bag. She also said that the No 1 cadet fencer needs to be refereed properly.

JM agreed, he said that we need to have fully refereed events. We can do better. The more competition the better.

MSF asked if we were ready to put forward a proposal for a vote. "Instead of counties running competitions (SE Closed events) we create a bidding system for clubs, or combinations of clubs to apply to run a competition."

JC raised another concern. Will the club make a loss if they make a loss? She also asked who would run the sabre?

MSF was able to speak for MX who would be prepared to put in a bid to run the South East Closed.

IdW spoke up on speakerphone— Surrey would have no resistance and would welcome it. To some extent they have already tried to do this. He absolutely would support it. Historically, these things had always been a team effort with several clubs working together. Within Surrey, the effect would differentiate better between the bottom grass roots, who would attend the local county events and perhaps might have to referee themselves there, and the regional ones which would be more competitive and more like real competition. Potentially creating an event with more people.

PSF asked: Why not add an extra incentive of giving a spot on the Senior Winton team to the winners of the closed?

JM reiterated that one of the big barriers to developing a club is workforce development. We need to look at how to increase the numbers of people who are able to actually run them. He described a vehicle used in Germany that works extremely well. The region is able to use the facilities of the host competition to train people in the region. "My vision is to have 20-30 strong clubs. Fencing is in many ways like a shop. Some people want to shop once a week and some want to shop 5 times a week. We should allow progress of all of these things."

IdW asked what sort of entry fee are we looking at. JM suggests £25. MSF queried why do we have to change it. Idw, £25 is less than we charge now, qualifiers have to pay £36 to go to BYCs. JM feedback from a number of parents is that entry fee is £50/60. MSF asked if we should spread the fees across everyone. Idw argued that in the case of the BYCs it is not that simple. JM a rough look came out at £25-30.

PSF suggested that this would need to be the information that would need to be submitted.

JM referenced the elite epee event organiser, who asked, 'We are continually throwing money at regional events – why?'

CH has set up an elite series. This is a model that can be used for the benefit of the region and expand the region.

MSF asked if we were ready to vote on a proposal.

JM asked if he could first hear any concerns remaining.

DP stated that he did still have concerns for small clubs in the region. Jane Clayton agreed, commenting that it's just going to make the big clubs bigger

MSF asked if there was a way to compromise or work round this problem. At the moment there is no money. If we set it up as a percentage then the region gets money too.

Jane Clayton queried where the region in all this, then there would be no need for the region.

JM rejected that argument.

DP asked JM if he disliked the existing set up.

JM replied, 'absolutely'.

DP disagreed.

PSF put forward his view. That it is the same system with a different vehicle with a slight incentivisation for the club to run it. He said, 'I can sell this to my fencers. If you enter this competition, the club can get a new box.'

JM added, 'if you have a 100 fencers in your club, why would you travel 80 miles to fence 1 or 2 people.'

MSF suggested that we vote on a proposal. JM put forward the following.

Proposal: "We have a detailed look at a bid system for competitions."

In favour: 5

Against: 1

Abstain: 1

It was therefore agreed that this proposal would be put forward to the whole committee and another vote would be called for from all committee members once a fuller discussion had taken place and with more information about how it would work.

PSF proposed that "Going forward, the champion of each SE Closed event will be automatically selected for Senior Winton."

For – 6

Against – 0

Abstain - 0

iii – dates

MSF asked committee members to check through the list of events that she had researched for any obvious errors. She went through the proposed dates for competitions, highlighting any possible clashes. The committee agreed that the South East Epee should take place on the 22nd January, 2017 and that the South East Foil should take place on the 13th November, 2016. PSF is going to look for alternative dates to propose for the South East Sabre, as the current date (14th May, 2017) clashes with the Camden LPJS.

MSF pointed out that there are multiple potential clashes with all of the proposed dates for BYC qualifiers. The weekend of the 25th February, however, is currently available.

MSF suggested that we move all BYC qualifiers to one weekend (25th Feb). JM after initially ruling out Kings as a venue, then said that if the Foil and Sabre were combined on the Saturday, the Epee could be run on the Sunday. MSF is going to try to double check that this weekend really is clear and also ask clubs in the region if they have a reasonable venue available for that weekend. IdW was able to rule out venues in Surrey.

iv - regional equipment

MSF proposed getting banners for 1st 2nd and 3rd place and stated that she had a quote that she would return to later in the meeting. (This didn't happen, so the request will go to an email vote instead. For the record, projected cost is £170.15).

v – trophies and medals

The topic returned to the regions medals. JM Argued that higher quality of trophies and medals led to an improved quality of fencing competition. He spoke passionately about the experience of school children who are asked to go up in assembly and receive a cheap medal, when the next kid has something awesome. He suggested that these children would feel embarrassed and disenchanted with fencing as a result and that ultimately these medals weren't aspirational.

MSF commented that although she liked the medals and the fact that there was some history there, it was a shame that they didn't have ribbons. JC and SB agreed.

PSF asked if we were discussing medals that get given away and never come back, or trophies/shields?

JM focussed on medals, but agreed that we should try to get trophies too. He emphasised the importance of club contact and signatures for these.

PSF – “going for history rather than shiny tat”

JM suggested that if we did get trophies, we could go back and get histories.

JM added that the possible purchase of any trophies or updates should be looked at when possible to do.

There was some discussion around this issue, however a proposal was put forward by MSF.

Proposal – “Should we keep supplier with medals with ribbons? (Or look into changing medals)”

For – 3

Against – 3

Abstain – 1

IdW commented on the lack of information about costs. PSF queried the cost of the sample medal and an estimate for 24 medals was over £700. SB commented that she could get trophies much cheaper than that.

The committee decided that JM was to investigate other suppliers for both trophies and medals and that we would have another vote as soon as possible based on this information. It was agreed that MSF would establish what trophies the region already had. JM added that Leon Paul have offered a reduction on cost of medals and pistes.

vi – selection date for Cadet Winton

JM: We now have a rolling ranking for Junior Rankings. JM would like to move the selection date further away from the current date. Traditionally, after second selection event. LP happy to go with an earlier date. JM: suggested the end of September. Cadets should have had 3 events by then. Sticking with current system. Unanimously approved.

vii – timings and rule changes

PSF informed the committee of expected rule changes for sabre at the ranking events from September. These included a change of the timings and also the new en-guarde rule. MSF reported that Leon Paul had quoted £50.00 for each LP box to be updated. PBT likely to be wildly different since her quote was based on the euro. PSF also pointed out that the 800N glove rule comes in at club level from September. MSF suggested we make sure all clubs know. This raised a question of whether we should apply these rule changes at South East Events.

PSF put forward a proposal “We should apply changes to senior closed event (assuming it doesn’t change)”

For – Unanimous

Against – 0

Abstain - 0

Should we also to apply to BYC qualifers?

MSF to ask Katie Rhodes about BYC Nationals.

4. BYCs

i - switch to one weekend?

ii - review of how fees are charged

It was agreed that these agenda items had already been covered and that further discussion would take place after the possible changes to competition hosting had been discussed and voted upon.

5. Communication

i – change of webmaster and url

IdW is handing over the website to MSF. The new url will be

www.southeastfencinghub.co.uk and the existing website will point to this new address.

MSF was able to show the committee a preview of the new website, which uses the old hub website skeleton. MSF proposed a vote of thanks to IdW for all his hard work.

ii – newsletter

MSF is volunteering to put together a newsletter either once or twice a year.

iii - volunteers to help maintain Facebook/Twitter Feeds

MSF asked for more volunteers to help maintain the facebook south east fencing page (which updates to twitter and the twitter website widget automatically). She acknowledged the aid of Dan Kew (and Daisy Hutton, but in fact Daisy has been updating the MX page not the SE Page) and asked for more volunteers. JM and SB volunteered.

iv - mailing List

MSF asked if she should try to create a new mailing list for the SE region using the club contacts list, existing draft list and the old Hub list. This was agreed.

A.O.B – the meeting ended at 12:36 and attendees were thanked for coming. Banana bread was consumed.