



SSS Competitions Committee Meeting (90)

5th June 2023

1000-1300

MINUTES

Attendees:

1. Welcome and Apologies

- EL welcomed everyone to the call
- Committee pass along their congratulations to JA on his upcoming marriage

2. Standing Updates

a. SSS Development Committee

IL provided the Committee with an update on the current Development work areas:

- Conference planning and approximately 100 people attending each day
- Playwaze data analysis will be undertaken over summer to better understand our participants
- Sportscotland have asked all SGB's to have a full background on all members which SSS have pushed back on as it would be difficult to manage this for all 40,000+ members in the network
- SAMH conversation discussion is underway to see how we can utilise key stages of the student calendar to promote the 5 Ways of Wellbeing e.g. staying active during exams
- Active Campus Coordinator roles have been advertised and will continue to gather pace to get those people in to position
 - Aim to have everyone in by August
 - Sportscotland discussions taking place regarding monitoring and tracking progress within this project
- Development Committee changes underway as per the Governance Review led by Executive Committee
- Improvements to the Sports Health Check which we currently use to analyse each of the SSS sports to include other sports in the sector, especially enabling the sports we may never have a competition in but could support re. development, e.g. Mountain Safety workshop for Snowsports
- Recruited a new SSS Sport and Active Health Coordinator – Ben Rowlings (former SDS Branch Manager and Paralympian). Brings a wealth of experience in his personal life, elite level performance and time as a University of Stirling scholar to the role. Positive to receive 87 applications for the position

b. SSS Fixtures Forum

PP updated the Committee to say the Final Forum has been hosted for the year and the SSS updates were appreciated. Cricket fixtures still to take place but largely the 22-23 season is over and everyone was in good spirits. PP was also voted in again as the Fixtures Forum Representative

BUCS closed 23-24 entries a month ago and released Provisional Leagues on Friday. Feedback window open until 23rd June so this will be the majority of work for Fixture Administrators in the coming weeks

Certain changes to the leagues were spotted by PP and raised:

- Men's Squash and Men's Table Tennis have had their 1A and 2A leagues merged (possibly due to promotion) and this may impact on Centralised Fixtures
- American Football will now have a Scottish 1A League only which is the conclusion of research undertaken by BUCS Competitions Committee. CP advised that the majority of Scottish institutions were for this proposal due to the minimisation of travel for the sport

Action: CP will investigate the BUCS Provisional Fixtures and how they may affect 23-24 Centralised Fixtures

Fixture Administration in 23-24 was not fully discussed at the Forum due recent to conversations with BUCS indicating a difference in understanding on where responsibilities lie

- Asif Nasser is the new member of staff recruited by BUCS whom may be more involved in the Scottish fixture administration
- CP will be meeting with BUCS alongside Stew Fowlie (SSS Chief Operating Officer) soon to establish the roles in this area of work

GM joins the call

c. SSS Chairs

- End of the season has led to things quietening down with the Sports Chairs and Development Groups
- Many Chairs are attending the SSS Awards Dinner (7) as part of the SSS Conference on Wednesday
- We are recruiting for various roles to sit on the Development Groups now but getting Chairs in place is critical to enable planning for 23-24, so the Committee area asked to help identify anyone who would be a good fit for each role
 - SSS are reviewing the staff looking after each of the Sports Development Groups and will be finalised in the next few weeks

d. Sabbatical Forum

- Competition is over so the Forum has quietened down
- Final Sabb Forum of 22-23 has taken place and we have welcomed the new Sabbs
- 3 Sabbs are returning: Louise Ford (QMU), Nicole Gray (UWS) plus Murray Bushell (Stirling)
- Most will be at Conference which will be a nice way to see off the year
- Very thankful to SSS for the help they've provided to the Sabbs this year

3. SSS Competitions Overview

a. 22-23 Finance

- CP thanked everyone for their help over the season
- Sustainability in finance was critical this year and Competitions were also tasked to reach a £25k surplus
- £25k was not met in full, however the final figures identify where we've been able to add value to programmes and there are good news stories within this e.g. the fact that there were fewer fines assigned in Football indicating that discipline has been improving

CP identified certain sports programmes which require further attention in 23-24 to help them to balance:

- Cheer – Cheer is a sport we have struggled to bring off the ground this season with challenging volunteers, so the negative balance is from a cancelled event. Significant work will be put in to this sport for 23-24
- Golf – Although the programme made a small surplus and therefore not obviously underperforming, the sport did not make the amount of money expected in 2022-23 which has impacted the overall totals. This could be attributed to lower entry numbers in the SSS Championships (multiple events in the calendar are forcing students to choose) and good-value entry fees which may need to increase
- Trampoline – Most significantly overspent this season, largely due to removals company required to move equipment between venues for the programme, but also due to the Development Group agreeing to donate money to charity without full approval from SSS
- Karate and Netball made small losses which could be balanced in 23-24 with a few more entries, now the competitions in question are back up and running
- BUCS Conference Finals delivery was also noted on the spreadsheet to ensure the Committee were aware of what SSS shoulders to provide a service to the members

CP advised that SSS will re-evaluate the targeted budget and forecast for 23-24 from £25k to a realistic target with the 22-23 season's figures

b. 22-23 League Completion

CP shared a document to identify completion rates for the season

- SSS Leagues saw overall high completion rates (73%) but 85% completion would have been preferred
- Handball struggled in the season due to withdrawal of a team during the year
- Shinty also had some difficulties in administration which are being worked on over the summer
- There is work to be done to improve all Rules and Regulations for sports with SSS Leagues in the coming months
- BUCS Cricket Leagues are still running, however issues have been identified with student availability therefore completion rates are expected to be lower than the goal of 90%
 - BUCS Staff identified that there is a higher rate of completion in Scotland than other areas of BUCS Membership and SSS would like to ensure this continues, no matter the conclusion of the BUCS Fixture Administration conversation
 - These high figures are largely down to the work of the Fixture Administrators in the sector. Their work has been gratefully received and CP once again reiterates thanks on behalf of SSS
- BUCS Fast 4 Tennis
 - Only 3 Women's teams entered in to 23-24 which is fewer than entered in 22-23, which may be due to the issues encountered by the Fixture Administrators in hosting those fixtures (low completion rates identified by season)
 - Women's Tennis noted to be struggling for numbers therefore SC mentioned that Stirling preferred the Fast 4 format
 - Sean Berthelsen (SSS Competitions Assistant) will be the Staff Lead for Tennis in 23-24 and will be best placed to investigate the impact of a 3-team league in Women's Fast 4

Action: CP to ensure the current Cricket Fixtures are included in a final analysis of League Completion for 22-23 then share with the Committee

Action: Sean Berthelsen and CP to investigate Fast 4 Tennis league structure before BUCS feedback window closes

c. BUCS Competitions Committee

- Papers have been released to review certain areas and CP has been feeding back the Scottish opinion
- Main area of work currently is ensuring the members look over the released Provisional Leagues and feedback before the window closes. SSS will ensure members are aware of this date and will be on hand to support
- Mailing List review – SSS have asked institutions to identify the best people to receive BUCS Papers to ensure there is a full Scottish perspective provided. All members represented on the Committee are asked to contact CP with that information

d. 23-24 Fixture Administration

- As previously discussed in this meeting, future meetings will be had with BUCS to ensure there is clarity provide around the administration of fixtures in 23-24
- No matter the decision, CP and Sean Berthelsen will still be on hand to support the members during the upcoming season, so members should have comfort in that

4. Events

a. Participation Numbers

JB presented key figures and statistics relating to participation in SSS competition activity this year:

- The numbers factored in participation across 109 (of 118 planned) Events, 42 days of Centralised Fixtures and 11 National Squad programmes
- Some participants may have been counted more than once if they participated in multiple events, e.g. 5 times if they participated in all 5 Archery League Match days
- 10639 participants were recorded (with one competition yet to take place)
- Men – 55%, Women - 44% and Other – 1%. The new 'Other' category to this analysis covers those who consider themselves outside the binary or who chose not to declare a gender – accuracy only achievable through Playwaze
- We either broke or set record event attendance in 41 events
- On the understanding that we are missing some data from certain events (mostly Tier 3 or piggyback options), a full overview of participation data for all institutions has been recorded and will be made accessible to the members

b. Event Feedback

JB presented key figures and statistics to provide an overview of SSS competition activity this year:

- 393 responses were received (with one event still to take place), equating to 3.8% of all participation
- Trampoline was the sport with the highest number of responses total, however Tennis managed to achieve the highest number of responses compared to their participation numbers
- Team sports are largely underrepresented due to Captains often completing the form on behalf of a team, rather than asking each player to submit individually
- Qualitative analysis of the optional comment section regarding 'Best Memory' at the event identified that students largely enjoy the social element of competition and simply the opportunity to perform
- Generally, negative experiences were influenced by general organisation of the event (e.g. if the timetable falls behind) and issues at the venue (e.g. toilet cleanliness)

- The target of achieving an average of 4 out of 5 for all key event areas has been achieved – the first time since the inception of the survey

The committee agreed with the suggested recommendations for using this data:

1. Analyse Events, Centralised Fixtures and National Squads independently of each other
2. Take steps to improve planning discussions with venues so event staff and venue staff work collaboratively
3. Continue to utilise the incentive or prizes for filling in the feedback survey and the reiterate importance of feedback responses to the key sports volunteers and sabbatical officers

The Committee also suggested:

- Extra effort to request responses on event days via the QR code
- Editing the questions available to teams in the earlier stages of knockout tournaments to be able to capture more opinions than just the finalists
- Reiterate that atmosphere can be controlled by the organisers. As the volume of music was a common answer, that is a quick fix for each event day

c. Medal Tracker

JB pulled together the Medal Tracker so far (pre-recent Downhill Cycling Championships) and the final version will be released on the SSS website today. It was noted that BUCS Conference medals were recorded on this too, as this was an event organised by SSS, but all others were purely SSS medal wins

5. National Squads Applications 23-24

Sports who had a National Squad in 22-23 were asked to contact SSS with an idea of their plans for the 23-24 season which will be evaluated by SSS staff internally. The sports below are sports which have applied to host a National Squad for the season ahead that wasn't in place for 22-23.

a. Football

SSS generally happy with it as there is strong support from SGB and a well-considered plan from the Development Group.

The Committee provided the following comments to be fed back to the Development Group:

- Training Days - Will need to programme some training days in to bond the team
- Eligibility – Stating that only 1st team players are eligible to trial would miss out on very strong players from other teams. For example, Stirling have brilliant 2nd team who is playing 1st teams but current eligibility states that only 1st team players could be selected
- Costs – Venues will be very important to the programme and costs will need to be outlined clearly to ascertain impact on players
- Dates – Should consider proposed dates of competitions as they hit a few exam periods or fall in the summer months when students may go on summer holiday
- Trials – Should be open rather than down to the club to nominate people
- Opposition – Need to have a nailed down opposition to get buy-in from players and National Squad support staff – plus provide a clearer perspective on overall targets of the programme

CP provided more context:

- Development Group is undergoing a transformation therefore the deadline for submissions came quite quickly
- SSS training for National Squad support staff will be provided to ensure clarity of expectations regarding eligibility, trial and selection criteria etc.

- Opposition will likely involve English Universities via a Triangular Tournament, should Home Nations not take place (discussions continuing)
- SFA may be majorly/fully supporting the programme so costs are uncertain as funding will need to be confirmed and Development Group were being polite
- The initial eligibility criteria was proposed to ensure the process is more manageable. The Development Group could learn from the Netball work done in 22-23 which opened eligibility to 2nd team players within certain criteria and provided a second tier of filtering to manage numbers

b. Shinty

SSS are happy that they have improved upon their application from last year and the general consensus from SSS is that it would be feasible for 23-24

The Committee provided the following comments to be fed back to the Development Group:

- There is a Mixed Sport element to this application (as the programme would include Hurling) so it isn't a full Shinty application. While this mutually beneficial relationship with clubs in Ireland/Northern Ireland ensures sustainability for the programme, some institutions may be unwilling to cover some costs for players travelling over
- League completion rate for the SSS Leagues this year may indicate an issue with full commitment to the programme, however there is a possibility that a National Squad would be a big push to attract students to join clubs to improve League stability

c. Badminton

SSS of the opinion that this application was provided by the Chair with limited discussion with the Development Group and therefore there are a number of areas to work on.

The Committee provided the following comments to be fed back to the Development Group:

- Host consultation with the clubs to establish full support and buy-in
- Clarify plans for opposition
- Selection process of just the Chair and Vice-Chair was open to bias issues therefore re-design to include more expertise and SGB support
- Eligibility to trial should consider players who are not involved in the leagues
- 'Add value to the student offer' was mentioned but not evidenced so it is advised this area is expanded on

Actions: CP to feedback to the sports which applied for a new National Squad to tweak the proposals to enable the sports to have a more solid application for the Sub-Group by 30th June

6. New Event Applications 23-24

- a. Judo - Proposed a league which fits in to the training sessions of clubs and the Committee provided comments to be fed back to the group:
 - Fixture administration to be considered – what is the impact on the institution's IA and also Sean Berthelsen (who supports SSS Leagues as a whole)
 - Rules and Regulations need to be solid ahead of opening entries to ensure all bases are covered
 - Entry fees are to be set in order to enable fairness across all SSS Leagues and cover any travel incurred
 - Currently the leagues require the Chair and Vice-Chair to be at each event which creates a single point of failure should those volunteers be unavailable. It may be worth laying the foundation for clubs to develop the number of qualified officials during 23-24 to then bring in the League for 24-25

- Has consultation been put to the clubs in order to ascertain the current level of qualifications within the club and how much additional support is needed – could friendlies come first?

Actions: JB to feedback to Judo Development Group on League proposal

- b. Rowing – proposed a piggyback application which would utilise a new BUCS Qualifier hosted in Scotland
- Would be a BUCS-run event via a host institution, so SSS would not be involved in the delivery
- Medals are to be considered a SSS try to cover the cost of medals awarded, especially to piggyback events, so host club's agreement for covering this would need to be in place
- Last year's Dundee qualifier had 40 entries across all institutions in Scotland (across 10 machines) – Edinburgh often send athletes to the British Trials version
- Edinburgh have questions regarding the host responsibilities and the finance around it (BUCS take 20% of the overall costs in order to ensure the club can cover their costs)
- Will require the clubs to identify themselves as interested and suitable hosts – however BUCS haven't specified the number of machines needed as its proportional to the numbers expected

Action: JB to feedback to Rowing Development Group that the proposal has been accepted in principle, pending a suitable host being found

7. Operational Plan 23/24

CP provided an overview of the final position of the 2022-23 season with most areas being completed in full and any areas incomplete for the year being taken in to 23-24.

CP reflected on a brilliant season and thanked JB and Sean Berthelsen for their support of the work done.

Draft Operational Plan for the Competitions Staff team for 23-24 is being worked on and CP will share with the Committee in due course

Action: CP to share 2023-24 Operational Plan with the Committee over Basecamp

8. Future Governance Structure and Next Steps

- a) BUCS - Stew Fowlie joined the call and explained to the Committee about the current standings with BUCS Fixture Administration. It is expected that Asif Nasser will take on more work, but conversations are continuing
- b) SSS Governance
 - Executive Committee have been reviewing the structure of SSS Governance to ensure work is able to move swiftly and retain ability to touch base with members, which will likely involve restructuring the current committees
 - The split will instead focus on SSS work areas rather than asking too much of a singular committee. For example, areas of work done within Competitions Committee such as Events, National Squads and Fixtures would be split off in to working groups. There may not be a need for everyone sitting on each of those groups to return together for the overarching Committee in its current format. A 'Sports Development Group' Committee may be created to discuss general points relating to that area of work

- Formal elections on to the groups (as done at AGM in the past), would likely stop however 'Leads' will be in place to ensure members get an opportunity to feed in to all areas
- Work has been done to ensure the groups accurately cover the membership and speed work along by reducing the number of meetings needed
- Stew intends to ensure there is a shareable version of this plan to be released to the members – but may not be ready by Conference

9. AOB and Close

EL thanked the Committee for all their help this year and hoped to see many in person at the SSS Conference.

Actions:

- CP will investigate the BUCS Provisional Fixtures and how they may affect 23-24 Centralised Fixtures
- CP to ensure the current Cricket Fixtures are included in a final analysis of League Completion for 22-23 then share with the Committee
- Sean Berthelsen and CP to investigate Fast 4 Tennis league structure before BUCS feedback window closes
- CP to feedback to the sports which applied for a new National Squad to tweak the proposals to enable the sports to have a more solid application for the Sub-Group by 30th June
- JB to feedback to Judo Development Group on League proposal
- JB to feedback to Rowing Development Group that the proposal has been accepted in principle, pending a suitable host being found
- CP to share 2023-24 Operational Plan with the Committee over Basecamp