



## **SSS Competitions Committee Meeting (81)**

**26<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

**1400-1700**

### **MINUTES**

#### **Present**

Chris Sellar (CS)  
Eamonn Laird (EL)  
Ollie Cruickshank (OC)  
Iain Christie (IC)  
Johnathan MacLeod (JM)  
Emily Divine (ED)  
Aaron Johnson (AJ)  
Chris Purdie – SSS (CP)  
Jess Barrows – SSS (JB)  
Ian Lowe – SSS (IL) – for first half only

#### **Apologies**

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

CS welcomed the group and expressed that the meeting will contain a lot of interesting discussion.

#### **2. Standing Item – SSS Groups Update**

##### **a. SSS Development Committee**

- Strategy - IL updated the group on the work to transition the former Regional Staff to National Project-Lead roles instead. The new roles, as agreed in the new SSS Strategy will be: 'Learning and People', 'Equality and Inclusion' and 'Active Health'. These roles are pending the approval of funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
- Operational Plan – The Development Team are working on an operational plan to suit the new staffing structure, which will be taken to the Development Committee to approve
- 21-22 Season – All work areas have started strongly, with a successful launch of the Coaching Network and with plans underway for Reffin' Brilliant, Webinars, Festive Gathering and Conference. Equality work is also underway, with plans to be more intersectional in our approach. Active Health is almost entirely new to SSS so more work is required to scope out that role and area of work
- Membership and Data – The team will be keeping track of the members involved with different areas of work to provide useful data to review at the end of the year

##### **b. SSS Fixtures Forum**

- The Forum met on 11<sup>th</sup> August and had useful discussions including:
  - Restrictions on facilities and impacts on sport overall
  - Track and Trace - Intel for Visiting Teams so all protocols are followed
  - Transport options e.g. bus-sharing protocols

- COVID testing – Edinburgh are recommending all players to test twice a week using lateral flow tests
  - SSS Playwaze – training was provided and a few questions raised for SSS to take away and work on but overall feeling was positive
  - BUCS Fixtures – Question regarding the extension of the season in case of COVID-related delays was asked and fed back to BUCS
  - BUCS Play Reminder – How to administrate fixtures e.g. changing kit colours and institution logos
- c. SSS Chairs
- AJ updated the group that there is a mixture of returning and new Chairs this year and they met at the recent Chair Development Session
  - The condensed Chair Development Session (2 hours) was appreciated by all and was beneficial to share concerns for the year, e.g. indoor sports who have been limited for so long, getting back to competition
  - JB told the group that SSS are missing 7 Chairs so far, but plans are underway for recruitment. Where Chairs aren't in place, SSS will work to ensure there is little detriment to the delivery of competition
  - SSS will be rotating the staff around the Sports Chairs to provide some with a different 'Sports Chair Lead' – the main point of contact for the overall Chair workload. The plan is to limit as much interruption to the daily workload as possible
- d. BUCS Competitions
- CP updated the group that Fraser Kennedy (Sports Performance Manager at Newcastle University) is the new Chair of the BUCS Competitions Committee, replacing Ross Simpson (University of Edinburgh). CP expressed gratitude for all of Ross's work as the Chair, on behalf of Scotland.
  - The next BUCS Competitions Committee is yet to be finalised
  - SSS are hosting two webinars to help train and remind the sector of the key elements of the system, in a year where turnover will have left a knowledge gap. These have been capped at 100 attendees due to the cost associated with upgrading Zoom to handle 500 participants, but the recording will be sent around so all can benefit

### 3. Actions Check from Last Meeting

Most actions were completed. The following are either ongoing or required a brief summary to the group:

- BUCS Sport Review Criteria – CP stated that BUCS look to review the performance of new sports and their competitions based on participation numbers and general uptake. There aren't any specific KPIs set which SSS can emulate for our own reviews. To support BUCS in the embedding of these new sports, Scottish institutions can help by simply advertising the sports and looking to boost our own numbers
- SSS Membership – SSS are offering an 85% discount to members this year and Stew Fowlie (SSS COO) plus other Senior Staff are speaking to any institutions in particular difficulty with fees
- Netball Consultation – The consultation to the members regarding the possibility of moving Tier 1A netball fixtures to Wednesdays in order to accommodate Netball Scotland pathway sessions was voted down with reasons including (but not limited to):
  - Facility space availability
  - Coach appointments made on basis of Saturday fixtures
  - Barrier to participation in other Wednesday sports

CP proposed the next steps should be:

- Netball Scotland have agreed to navigate away from as many fixture weekends as possible to give students the chance to be involved with both

- Institutions are able to change their matches to Wednesdays if both parties approve
- Comps Committee approved the proposal

**Decision: Committee approve the Netball Proposal to keep 1A fixtures on Saturdays and work with Netball Scotland to limit clashes with pathway sessions**

#### **4. SSS Comps Update**

##### a. Budget

CP stated that the pending announcement from SFC Council is putting a question mark on many areas, but SSS are managing risk as far as possible by taking a 'breakeven' approach to competitions this year

##### b. Operational Plan

CP thanked the Committee for their feedback on the Operational Plan and stated the following changes had been made accordingly:

- Feedback Percentage Goal for National Squads – Now set to 25% of participants
- Feedback Percentage Goal for Events – Now set to 30%
- Female Participation Number Goal – Set to 50% in response to ongoing SSS development goal for SSS
- Event Feedback Goal – 4/5 stars on each area as an average

**Action: JB to report on Event Feedback statistics at each Committee Meeting**

#### **5. Risk Register for Events, Leagues and National Squads**

CP stated the biggest risks to SSS at the moment are:

- Member Affiliation - this impacts our overall model
- SFC – Although the current feeling is positive, the delays may cause SSS issues
- Staffing – The SFC funding is essential to keep the current staff and therefore capacity to do the planned work
- Student Interest and Experience – We are aware that the break in the usual student sport calendar will have impacted the usual community spirit plus there may be students who are more concerned about COVID than others

From a more specific Competitions perspective, CP and SSS are working on the following risk areas:

- Event Costs – There is a general increase in costs, e.g. First Aid and facility hire, which SSS be balancing entry costs against. SSS don't want to increase entry costs by too much with the awareness of the impact COVID has had on Sports Union budgets
- COVID-19 – Protocols will be continued using the best practice at the first in-person event held in 20-21, to manage risk at SSS events
  - Leagues could be impacted by regional lockdowns if those are deployed by the government once more, so it is best to be prepared for that
  - Travel is impacted in general and institutions will have their own regulations to follow

SSS have been working to generate a 'Health Check' document to generate a snapshot of all SSS sports including features like:

- Does the Sport have a Chair?
- Does the Sport have a Recreational Competition Offer?
- Does the Sport have a partnership agreement in place with the SGB?

Formatting is still to be finalised, but the premise is that the document will be updated regularly so the SSS Committees can review it. The Comps Committee were happy with the progress made on this and how much was already 'green'.

**Action: JB to report at end of Semester 2 (April or May meeting) on participation numbers, budget, feedback etc.**

## **6. National Squads**

CP has been in promising discussions with the Home Nations about the return of a 'Home Nations' competition on a cyclical basis. This is being proposed to BUCS to ask for funding support in September.

CP stimulated a conversation regarding the criteria SSS should use to determine if a National Squad is feasible and should be delivered. Ideally these criteria would not need to be reviewed every two years, as there is a lot of time spent on this.

Discussion followed around the following areas:

- SGB/NGB Engagement – Some SGBs are so large that they aren't interested in seeking to combine with a pathway for SSS National Squad students to enter their own systems, however SGB support for smaller sports can be vital to give students the option of both. Should a percentage of support be sought from each SGB in order to help the sport happen?
- BUCS Representation – Should players only be eligible to be in the National Squad if they have represented their institution in BUCS competition?
- Opposition Quality – A standard should be agreed of the level National Squads are being asked to play against e.g. U21 Scottish National Teams or Home Nation Squads
- Quality of Player – Ideally the National Squads would include the best performing students in that sport, but the Committee are aware of the amount of competition those players can be involved with
  - Sports Union funding is in place for certain National Squad players and they want to be funding a strong player
  - Team Manager and Coaches should be given a clear idea of the student they are looking for as decisions are sport-specific

**Action: CP to add 'Quality of Player' to National Squad criteria**

**Action: ALL to step forward if interested in joining the National Squad sub-group to evaluate criteria and support planning**

## **7. Centralised Fixtures**

CP explained that the current model of delivering BUCS Fixtures in a centralised manner for Fencing, Futsal, Squash and Table Tennis has the backing of the members. This model helps host sports which struggle to find venue space and saves on travel costs for members in sports which have short match durations.

This year the costs required to host these centralised fixtures have increased considerably, but as SSS doesn't want to put too much on to the teams has set the team contributions at a rate which covers only 85% of the costs. This model may not be sustainable for SSS in the long term, therefore a sub-group will be created to discuss ways to adapt this model to be sustainable for all. Data collection is the most important project for this sub-group, to assist long-term decision-making.

Table Tennis costs have increased most significantly since the pandemic due to the need to transport tables and barriers. OC suggested investigating the borrowing of Edinburgh's own tables to reduce costs. JM suggested hosting all matches in Perth where the equipment is being sourced from. AJ suggested ASV as a venue option. All suggestions are appreciated and will be fed in to planning.

**Action: ALL to step forward if interested in joining the Centralised Fixture sub-group to evaluate data and support planning**

#### **8. Playwaze Update**

JB updated the Committee to say the system is nearly ready to be launched, so training the various parties who will be using the system has begun. The Captains will be offered specific training for the SSS Playwaze system (separate to the BUCSPlay webinars already planned) – date TBC.

Ideally league entries will be launched first to give time for fixtures to be confirmed and events will be advertised (the system can host 'empty' fields) which is suitable for piggyback events.

#### **9. New Sports/Event Policy**

##### **a. Update**

JB updated the Policy to include a more relaxed deadline for new events which will be piggybacked on others. This is due to the reduced effort needed at the SSS side of things re. logistics and set-up. The Committee approved those changes

**Decision: The Committee approved the new 'New Sport and New Events' Policy**

##### **b. New Event Proposals**

##### **i. Cycling Road Race**

This event would look to piggyback on an existing event in order to increase the range of cycling competition available to students in Scotland. The BUCS Road Race is an extremely prestigious event which can be a leap for some students, this event would therefore bridge the gap and provide training in advance of BUCS.

Scottish Cycling are supportive of this plan and will help AJ and the Cycling Development Group find suitable events to piggyback on – which is the biggest challenge faced due to the category system used in Road Racing.

The Committee approved this event and support AJ and the Cycling Development Group in their search for a suitable event (or two) to use for this purpose.

**Decision: The Committee Approved the 'SS Cycling Road Race Championships' proposal**

##### **ii. Futsal - Women's Tournament**

Futsal Development Group are working hard to distinguish their sport from Football in order to aid the development of the sport specifically. This goal is applicable across all those involved in futsal, especially in Scotland, therefore there is an appetite for SSS to aid this development by hosting a Women's Futsal Tournament as the women's side of the game needs the most attention at this time.

The tournament would avoid the centralised fixture weekends to ensure the students won't need to choose and would be used as a promotional opportunity for the sport as a whole, inviting non-student women's teams to enter to boost numbers and the level of competition. The SFA have committed to providing funding for this.

The Committee discussed the following areas of the proposal:

- Date – Would holding the event in January clash with FA matches and make it difficult to source referees? Could the event be held before Christmas?

- Venue – Finding the right venue is important to the essence of the competition proposal (spectators, promotion etc.), but would the group consider using a smaller venue just to help the event happen?
- Media Costs – The Committee were concerned that a majority of the income is being planned for media costs, but the budget may struggle to breakeven if the entry numbers are low. They therefore suggest reducing the costs associated with the media/promotion aspect and focusing on finding a suitable venue and making the event happen
- Entry Cost – The event must breakeven so the entry fees must be set at a rate which covers this, though the Committee are aware that the fee must not put students off of entering
- Referee Numbers – Recommend seeking more referees to ensure the wellbeing of the referees present
- Non-student Teams – When allowing non-student teams to enter, it must be apparent that they are guests at the event and not to the detriment of the student participants

**Action: JB to feedback Committee thoughts to the Futsal Development Group on the event proposal**

#### **10. Working Calendar Update**

CP expressed his gratitude to JB for her work in pulling together the provisional working calendar. It is an ongoing project which has been condensed in available timeframe due to the timing of restriction relaxation, so we are making good progress.

CP also thanked the membership for their support on the facility MOU's as this has helped massively. Glasgow and Aberdeen are unable to support an MOU this year, for separate reasons, but SSS are working with them on what next year could look like instead.

#### **11. Next Meeting and Topics**

- a. 4<sup>th</sup> November

#### **12. AOB**

##### **Actions:**

- JB to report on Event Feedback statistics at each Committee Meeting
- JB to report at end of Semester 2 (April or May meeting) on participation numbers, budget, feedback etc.
- CP to add 'Quality of Player' to National Squad criteria
- ALL to step forward if interested in joining the National Squad sub-group to evaluate criteria and support planning
- ALL to step forward if interested in joining the Centralised Fixture sub-group to evaluate data and support planning
- JB to feedback Committee thoughts to the Futsal Development Group on the event proposal