

Softball AGM

24/01/2024

Attendees: Dave McCarthy, Emma White, Mike Searing, Sarah Barnes, Matt Andrews, Stephanie Gillard, Lauren Williams, Christine Kelly, Zack Williams, Rhiannon Davies, Alex Morgan, Whitney Barber, Linda James, Chris Hoare, Becci Jones & Vicky Hayley.

Apologies: Darren Hodge, Sian McCarthy, Rob Davies & Jamie Dennis

1. CSL COMMITTEE POSITIONS:

League Head: Dave McCarthy

Secretary: Emma White

Fixtures Officer: Sarah Barnes

Treasurer: Mike Searing

Umpire in Chief: Matthew Andrews

Media Officer: Darren Hodges

Tournament Team Coordinators: Rob Davies and Sian McCarthy

Social Secretary: Stephanie Gillard and Janie Dennis

Cardiff Tournaments Officer: Dave McCarthy and Matthew Andrews

All positions were unopposed and filled, except Cardiff tournaments officer, this position had no applicant and so Dave and Matt will fulfil these duties. In accordance with the constitution CSA positions can be filled at any time throughout the year.

2. SEASON DATES, USE OF FIELDS AND COSTS:

The council have yet to give date as to availability pitches and are proposing an increase to sports pitch hire by 30%. Dave has been trying to correspond with the council regarding this and argue the case for a caller increase, especially considering the standard of our pitches last year and given that of all the sport hiring pitches in the summer, we require the least amount of preparation and maintenance. Dave would encourage all members of the Cardiff Softball Association (CSA) to please fill out the council feedback form linked (<https://c3sc.org.uk/cardiff-council-budget-consultation-2/>) and challenge the proposed increase in pitch fees by 4th February.

3. GROWING THE LEAGUE; TEAMS AND PITCHES:

Discussion was had about growing the league, which people are in support of, however this comes with considerations: There are currently 10 teams in the league, if a new team(s) is added to the league there will need to be more pitches or availability of pitches than the current 4 on one evening to accommodate this.

Other options:

- **More pitches:** Dave has been trying to discuss the addition of a 5th pitch on Pontcanna fields with Cardiff Council, but they have been less than helpful. The other solution for more pitches could be to have 1 or 2 additional pitches on Llandaff fields.
- **Change venue:** Move location to a bigger sports ground, although none were coming to mind. Historically this idea has not been received well. Or have a second site for league games.
- **Split league nights:** Hold the league across two evenings. This would accommodate for an expanding league and provide flexibility. If this were to be the case, it would be done at random and no set night for any team. Concerns that a different day of the week would not suit everyone due to their commitments. There is a concern that we would lose a sense of cohesion and integration among players and teams as we are a social league.
- **A playoff format to the league:** It was raised that even with the addition of new pitches as it stands there would not be enough weeks in the season to accommodate more teams. The change to a playoff format would allow for more teams in the league to play. If the league stuck at 10 teams, all team would have 14 games (1 more than current format). If the league did increase to 12 team and we were able to accommodate with a playoff format and extra pitches the season would still need to be extended.
- **Timed games:** Timed games could allow for two games a night.
- **Season start date:** Consider starting the season earlier.
- **Strengthen the current league teams:** It was felt that there are still existing teams within the league that do not have a full roster and there are weeks were some teams struggle to field a whole team.
- At present there are no concert dates or cricket matches planned in the stadium on Wednesday league nights.

After discussion it was agreed new players would be allocated to existing teams to fill spaces. Encourage growth of the league and accommodate this with:

- **1st choice:** Add an extra pitch
- **2nd choice:** Change playoff format
- **3rd choice:** Split league over two nights.

Age cap for new players is age 16 years. Players under 18 years old are required to wear helmets and the team needs to provide a welfare officer.

Dave will inform the committee of the pitch update as the council have responded to him.

4. OPEN DAY DATES / ORGANISATION / ROLES:

Date: Sunday 7th April 2024

Outfield training session: Stephanie Gillard and Lauren Williams

Infield training session: Rob Davies

Batting session: Jennifer Iris Allen

Captains to inform the secretary if requiring players for their teams for the upcoming season by 16th March.

A call out to all captains to encourage as many players as possible to the open day, to help with the training session, mash-up game at the end and just generally be available to support and chat with new players. If attending could they please wear their uniforms.

5. TOURNAMENTS:

FIRSTBALL:

Date: 20th April 2024

Venue: Harlequin rugby club

Entry forms coming out soon. Cardiff teams will have priority for first entry and then entry will be opened out to all teams from 1st March.

DIFFODIL:

Committee happy with move from Pontcanna fields to Rumney playing fields. Positives of bar on site, toilets close by and camping available.

Saturday evening entertainment discussed as low attendance for bar/disco in 2023. Likely reasons for this are no Cardiff teams camp, Bristol teams return home overnight, Swindon teams don't camp, and Jersey teams book a hotel. Depending on entry numbers, it may be economical not to hire a DJ and instead play our own music / pub music quiz.

Camping last year was paid for by the league as a good will gesture. Due to low numbers of people camping, agreed for the camping to be charged for by the club.

BSUK have changed dates of the other tournament that has for the last few years been held on the same date as Diffodil and so this year we aim to fill the tournament with 16 teams.

Issues with spectator pitch invaders on one of the pitches, due to proximity of girl's rugby pitch. The committee were unaware prior to Diffodil there would be other sports

being played. Dave / Matt will raise the issue with the club as a matter of safety and disruption of game play.

Committee agreed for the council to mark the pitches at a cost of approx. £400, rather than marking themselves.

Grading of the tournament discussed and agreed to keep as D/C grade level. Agreed important that D grade should be D grade level teams only, to encourage less experienced player and development teams.

Fees have been £240 for the last few years; other tournaments are average £300. Agreed to increase the fee in line with other tournaments, but not significantly to encourage team entries and fill the tournament. Fee will be £275.

Rhiannon Davies and Mike Searing will investigate a more substantial / fancy trophy. Agreed to bring back MVP awards and medals for finalist teams and players.

6. SPONSORSHIP:

Opportunities for sponsorship, there have been discussions in the past with Brains and Admiral. Mike made the point that sponsorship is taxable, and perhaps could be as a donation. If the sponsorship is big enough the tax may be negligible. Steph proposed there are a lot of local independent food and drink businesses that could be interested. Whitney has a letter template that can be edited for the use of approaching businesses for sponsorship. Committee members will communicate with the league secretary of businesses they plan to or have approached, so there are no duplicates.

7. UMPIRING:

Last season paying of umpires was trialled as an incentive to encourage more people to undertake the umpiring course as historically the league has struggled to do formal or informal umpire training and it is a requirement that all teams provide umpires. This trial run was paid for by the league, at an approximate cost of

Concerns of people umpiring without having attended the training, this can lead to the risk of an inexperienced umpire having a bad experience but can also affect the game. Discussion around minimum requirement for someone to umpire games e.g., at least attending the course to standardise the level of umpiring, some felt that this would not be fair to force people to attend the course; it would also rule out a cohort of experienced players who are comfortable umpiring. Some teams struggle more than others to provide umpires as it is. An example was raised where a team foresaw that they potentially would not be able to provide a more experienced umpire and so in the run up to game spent time with some players practicing umpiring, this could be an alternative.

Last season there was a two-tier fee between BASU and non-BASU umpires. Dependent on the BASU AGM, there is the possibility of BASU rates increasing. The point was made that prior to the season with split fees it is challenging to budget for and

if rates are increasing this is an even more added expense. The reasoning behind the split fee was to encourage people to attend the course, to improve the standard of umpiring and give people the knowledge and confidence to umpire the game. Despite the differing standards among umpires whether BASU or not, one thing they have in common is umpires are giving up their own time and a fee means they are compensated for this.

It was noted that umpiring for many can be a daunting task and for players to be mindful of being respectful, kind and patient with all umpires, particularly those who are inexperienced.

On a positive note, the matter of umpires for CSA is improving year on year, with more people attending the course now than ever before.

After long discussion it was agreed by the GCM that:

- That we would continue to pay umpires
- There would be a flat fee of £10 for all plate umpires
- There would be no requirement of training for umpires

8. TREASURERS REPORT:

- No balls were purchased for 2023 season, as there was surplus stock from 2022.
- Firstball profits - £250
- Outdoor league profits - £110
- Diffodil tournament continues to benefit the league coffers and a change allowed for an additional 4 teams to enter. Lost balls remain a challenge as a greater than predicted numbers were required. Profits- £1155.
- Indoor softball has returned expanding to 6 teams, profits to be updated when the season has completed.
- Softball awards night profits - £370
- Umpire fees were made for by the league coffers for the trial season and came to £860 of which only £600 has been claimed.

Looking ahead to 2024:

- Umpire fee £10 can be paid at pitch side in cash. If the umpire chooses to, they can give to their team. This umpire fee is captured with the annual league fee.
- Current price for balls has increased to £100 per dozen. There should be enough stock to cover balls for Firstball.
- Mike would like to keep league fees the same as 2022. £650 for established teams, £550 for newer teams, but this is subject to confirmation of costs from BSF affiliation fees, pitches required, numbers of teams and team members.
- Profit from last season is available to be used for this season to cover any possible losses. The CSA is not a for-profit organisation.
- Consideration for annual incremental increased league fees.

9. CONSTITUTION

Matt Andrews has drafted an updated constitution from the existing one, this had been sent out to team captains for feedback, with only a small response.

The use of line up cards has been in the constitution since 2011, but never been utilised. It has been agreed that this season, line up cards will be introduced and used for each game as per the constitution.

Proposed addition of declaration of principles or code of conduct to be added to the constitution, for players to be held accountable to the CSA.

The entirety of the Constitution and Standing Orders was reviewed and updates to these agreed by majority of the GCM.

Key changes to the Constitution:

4.0. Formal matters must be made in writing to the League Head or League secretary.

5.2. All members registered to an affiliated **CSA** team will need their details to be submitted to the **CSA** via the online registration platform (Teaming) within 24 hours

7.3. The Executive committee will consist of all members of the CSA:

- League Head
- Secretary
- Fixtures Officer
- Treasurer
- Umpire in Chief
- Media Officer
- Development Officer
- Tournament Team Coordinator (s)
- Cardiff Tournaments Officer
- Social Secretary.

7.12. The League Head will convene meetings of the General Committee minimally twice a year.

Key changes to the Standing Orders:

4.2. Players must be registered to their team on the CSA online registration platform (Teamlinkt) within 24 hours of their first league match played for that team.

5.1. Ringers must play either pitcher, catcher, or right field, and must bat in the bottom-most positions in the line-up suitable to their gender.

5.2. Teams may nominate a female player to take the place of a male player in a line-up once per game.

6.1. All requests for postponements/rearrangements must be made through the fixtures officer.

9.3. In the event of a tie after 7 innings, extra innings will not be played. If the fixture is a playoff game, extra innings may be played in line with Section 6.2. If extra innings is not possible, the score will revert to the previous inning where the result is not a tie.

9.9. It is the responsibility of team captains to provide suitable game scorers and to ensure results of games are correctly reported to the Fixtures Officer using the league scorecard and Teamlinkt platform.

9.10. Team captains and plate umpires must complete the CSA Scorecard before the score is submitted to the CSA Teamlinkt Platform.

11.8. All Plate umpires officiating a CSA league fixture will be paid £10 per fixture.

Agreement from the committee that all teams, captains, and players abide by the rules of the Constitution and Standing Orders, to maintain standardisation among the league. Hopefully, to avoid captains finding themselves in the position of making difficult / awkward decisions that could alter results in the league.

AOB:

LASTBALL:

Discussion about an end of season tournament "Lastball". Lack of pitches / grounds in Cardiff as football season returns. Suggestion of a date in September. Suggested location Tredegar Park. Matt Andrews will investigate this.

CARDIFF TOURNAMENT TEAMS:

Due to unavailability of pitches at Farnham BSF have not been able to move forward with the format of an NSL 4. Instead, they have amended the NSL 3 into two divisions of 8 teams. At the end of the season the bottom 2 teams from each division will be relegated and the top team in each division will be promoted to NSL 2. This year NSL 3 will be accepting the first 4 teams that applied for entry. As of 2025 season Cardiff Co-ed team will be entered into NSL 3.

With high numbers of attendance to Cardiff ladies training and availability for tournaments, dependent on this year's numbers, the aim is to have two ladies' teams for the Chicks with Sticks tournaments and possibly two co-ed teams in one co-ed tournament depending on availability of places. The second team is likely to be a development feeder team.

Website:

The suggestion was made of a CSA website, only to find there is one in existence:
<https://leagues.teamlinkt.com/cardiffsoftball/Home>

Members agreed the use of the website as a primary destination for information and updates would be beneficial. Currently Facebook is where most updates and information is shared, however not all CSA members are on Facebook. This means captains are responsible for information sharing as another task to their list. The point was made about how players would receive updates about new information on the website. A **WhatsApp community** has been created, this community already houses a few group chats related to CSA, there is a group chat named announcements where players can be alerted to team updates.

If there are any willing volunteers to update the website to be more pretty and user friendly, please get in touch with the secretary.`

Media Officer update:

A Media Consent Form or addendum to the constitution may be a good idea. Something along the lines of:

“Those playing in matches may be subject to recording in line with the duties of the media officer. If a player does not consent to their likeness being uploaded, they should inform the media officer so that they can ensure their image is not included in any final media product.”

Second point: an official association calendar would be very useful. At the moment, it seems as though people just know what is and isn't going on, as someone who is very much in the league but not 200% softball, it can get a bit confusing and overwhelming. A shared calendar, e.g. How about, whereby upcoming events could be populated would allow me to better plan posts.

Social Media Report:

This 1st year has very much been a learning curve and testing what mediums are and aren't feasible for the league.

In turn, one of the first activities was mapping out the league's social media platforms, which are as follows: Instagram, Twitter/X, FaceBook, YouTube and now TikTok. From my experience so far, the league should focus on a finite number of platforms, with X (Twitter) and YouTube being areas to defocus on as their reach is limited with the targeted audience. However, FaceBook and Instagram are the priorities and TikTok has some potential.

This brings me on to point number 2, which is that of the introduction of a new platform for the league. In only 20 videos, this account amassed over 500 likes and over 11,000 views (averages out at 650 views per video). This account has real potential to grow and get bigger. Furthermore, this was achieved under some strong limitations, i.e., we had no real recording equipment besides that of the Hurricanes and the Wet Socks. We have since remedied this by purchasing cheap communal equipment (tripods and phone holders) which can be used by anyone in the league and will help increase the amount of game coverage for media purposes.

Therefore, in a short period we have seen some growth but there is still a lot of room to grow. The areas of focus for this upcoming calendar year would be:

- Continuing to grow the TikTok account
- Increasing the usage of FaceBook and Instagram to boost reach on these platforms
- Working with the league's teams to help everyone embrace the media potential and ensure that every team can use the shared equipment and get sufficient coverage on league accounts