

USA Field Hockey Club Task Force

Meeting Minutes

June 14th, 2011

I. Call to order

Laura Darling called to order the regular meeting of the USA Field Hockey Club Task Force at 8:30 PM EDT on June 14, 2011.

II. Roll call

Laura Darling conducted a roll call. The following members were present: Brian Bernatchez, Karen Collins, Lauren Cornthwaite, Laura Darling, Tony Gulotta, Simon Hoskins, Richard Kentwell, Kathi Liszewski, Steve Locke, Andy Muir, Nigel Traverso and Larry Zappone. The following members were not present: Karen Klassner and Tina Reinprecht.

III. Items Discussed

1. **Indoor Qualifiers and the National Indoor Tournament** – I have attached the comments provided on the questionnaire regarding this topic. I have also attached the results from the most recent survey we completed.
 - A. **Tournament Format (qualifiers)** – There seems to be no consistent format as to how pools are decided, how crossovers are determined and how to ensure teams have a fair chance at qualifying. Every site seems to use a different format. The group discussed this and agreed there should be a consistent format. KC said this is something USAFH could come up with and put in place going forward. The group also discussed how pools are determined at NITs. The group voted 6-2 in favor of leaving the structure as is and creating pools based on how a team finishes at qualifiers.
 - B. **Qualification Process/Lottery (qualifiers)** – Many clubs feel that rather than teams gaining entry into NITs via the lottery the remaining spots should be filled with the teams that just missed qualifying, i.e. 5th place teams at a 16 team qualifier, 6th place team at a 20 team qualifier, etc.... USAFH responded to this prior to the meeting. Their response is as follows, “2012 contracts in place with Richmond (for U16/U14) and Virginia Beach for (U19). 2013 onwards will be via RFP and bids. The challenge was this is, 1. Growing demand suggests need to move to two sites, 2. However three age groups and two sites led to one age group being on own, 3. Combined with lower demand for hosting U19 NITQ, 4. Result was high proportion of lottery qualified teams, These teams placed geographically into pools J – O. Potential solutions, 1. Focus more marketing to attract more U19 NITQ bids, 2. Reduce the number of spots for U19 NIT from 120 to 108 and add Women’s NIT to event, 3. Change qualification so that top 50% receive automatic berth at NIT, 4. Change qualification so that top 25% receive automatic berth at NIT and that lottery eligible teams are those that finish in 25-75% percentile.” The group discussed this and agreed unanimously that the remaining spots should not be selected via a lottery. All agreed that more teams should be selected from the qualifiers. The group also agreed there should be a small number of “At Large” spots held for areas that do not have enough indoor teams to hold a qualifier or are too far to travel to a qualifier. The group discussed discussed having a smaller event to ensure quality teams. This group voted 6-2 in favor of more teams, sticking with the current format.

USA Field Hockey Club Task Force

Meeting Minutes

June 14th, 2011

- C. **NIT Location/Date** – Many clubs prefer the VA Beach location. The parking situation is much better. The hotels are much closer to the tournament location. In addition, many clubs prefer a one weekend event. The additional cost incurred by multiple trips is a hardship for clubs and families who have children in multiple age divisions. USAFH responded to this prior to the meeting. Their response is as follows, “While we acknowledge the time and financial impact of attending two events is challenging only a small percentage of participants attend both, this is weighed against the benefits of doubling the opportunities participants have to play in a national event. 8.5% of respondents answered “both” to the question “Which event(s) did you attend?” *NIT Survey, USAFH, March 2011*. 4.5% of parents responded “both”, umpires and coaches are the groups that this affects most. Re parking, Richmond Sportsbackers accept this is big negative, KC has met with them and they are looking at solutions (multi event pass?)” The group discussed this further and voted on whether NIT should be held over 1 weekend or 2. The group voted 5-3 in favor of 2 weekends to allow more teams to be able to participate. There was a suggestion to change which groups are together for those weekends. It was suggested that U16 and U19s are together and U12, U14, Women’s and Boy’s are the other weekend. There was also a suggestion that the event be stretched over 4-5 days to get all groups in the same weekend. Players would still only miss one day of school because their age group would be at the beginning or the end of the event.
- D. **U14/U12 Divisions** – Some teams feel that a U12 division should be added to the NIT and that the U14 division should allow for 2 spots per club. The group discussed the possibility of clubs being allowed more than 1 U14 spot. It was discussed that there were teams there that were not prepared for the event and some of the larger clubs could have brought a very good 2nd team. Due to the current space constraints this was not feasible at this time. The group voted on the addition of a U12 division. The vote was unanimously in favor of adding this group. The group also voted on if this division should be added to the U14 weekend or the Women’s event. The group voted 4-4 on this question. The group also voted if the U12 division should be co-ed or girls only. The group voted 6-2 in favor of allowing a U12 division to be co-ed.
- E. **Umpires**- All too often umpires change the outcome of games. In a situation where the outcome of a game determines if a team advances to the NIT can be very frustrating and upsetting. There needs to be more accountability for umpires putting their best foot forward. USAFH needs to ensure only the most experienced officials are working these events. The group discussed the quality of umpires and how the larger the event the more less experienced umpires must be used. The group discussed the possibility of offering incentives to the umpires for their experience level. It was also suggested that coaches should be allowed to complete an evaluation form for each umpire, good or bad. Several would try harder if they knew their efforts would be evaluated by the coaches. USAFH said they would bring these concerns and suggestions to Steve Horgan.
- F. **National Team Give Back** – Some teams feel that both the National Team coaching staff and players should be present, when possible, at USAFH events offering clinics and participating in exhibition matches to assist with promoting the sport. Simon addressed this topic and said starting with the next event there will be more of a presence from the National Team Members and Staff. It was acknowledged that clinics during these events may be difficult due to available space and scheduling.

USA Field Hockey Club Task Force

Meeting Minutes

June 14th, 2011

G. **Playing Conditions** – Several teams feel that the playing conditions at both qualifiers and the NIT are unsafe and not acceptable for the level of the event. In regards to NITs the group feels USAFH has made a great effort in correcting these problems but that there are still issues at Qualifiers. KC brought to our attention that there are limited sites interested in hosting and if there is a problem with a site it must be reported. Steve Locke also advised the group that USAFH is looking into replacing the current boards with more modern, higher quality boards but due to the cost this may occur over a period of time.

- i. **Court Size** – At both qualifiers and NITs court sizes should be at least the minimum dimensions as indicated by the rules of the game. Several courts at qualifies are not even close and some qualifiers have multiple size courts. We are recommending a the court be no smaller than 40 meters long and 22 meters wide.
- ii. **Condition of Courts** – Courts must be cleaned to prevent slipping. Defective tiles must be replaced to prevent ramping of the ball and tripping.
- iii. **Boards** – Warped boards must be replaced, they can propel the ball back at players in an unsafe manner. They also must be secured, there were several occasion during last year's NIT where the ball was stuck between the tiles and boards because the boards shifted away from the tiles leaving a gap where the bare floor was exposed.

H. **Miscellaneous Topics** – There were a few miscellaneous topics on the questionnaire covering penalty for dropping out of event, coach behavior and restricting teams from attending out of region qualifiers. If time permits we can review the comments. The group felt these topics have been brought to the attention of USAFH already and did not need any further discussion.

IV. Outstanding Business

1. Submit final USAFH Task Force recommendations.

V. Next Meeting

No further meetings schedule

VI. Adjournment

Laura Darling and Richard Kentwell adjourned the meeting at 9:50PM EDT.

Minutes submitted by: Kathi Liszewski

Minutes approved by: *Laura Darling and Richard Kentwell*