

Sussex R.F.U. Youth Management Group West Sussex Clubs' Forum

MINUTES of the Meeting held on 19th November 2009.

PRESENT: Ben Bulpett (Chichester); David Kay (Chichester); Martyn Boxall (Chichester); Mike Fisher (Pulborough); Kevin Blakiston (County Minis); John Riley (Horsham); Bob Gates (Horsham); David Beglan (Chairman).

The Chairman opened the Meeting by welcoming those present and in particular David Kay, Martyn Boxall and Mike Fisher, who were attending their first Forum meeting. This welcome extends to John Riley and Bob Gates, to whom the same applies and who joined the meeting late, owing to other requirements at Horsham that evening.

1). APOLOGIES had been received from Duncan Bennett (Chichester); Mike Richardson (Colts Leagues Organiser); Gary Ansell (Shoreham); Adam Tunesi (Hove); Mick Black (Crawley); Mark Jenkins (Haywards Heath); Sharon Hodgetts (Bognor); Darren Lee (Horsham); Steve Searle (Under 13/14 Leagues Organiser); Steve Briscoe (Under 15/16 Leagues Organiser); Gary Howorth (Chairman of Community Rugby).

2). The Minutes of the Meeting of 17th September had been circulated and there were no corrections.

3). There were no matters arising from those Minutes, which did not form part of the Agenda.

4). Correspondence.

There was no correspondence that referred to any items not on the Agenda.

5). Matters referred from the Constituent Body Rugby Development Partnership (CBRDP) Executive Meeting of 19th October.

a). Plan for Youth Leagues for four years from Season 2010-11.

The current arrangements for the Youth Leagues had been fixed for three years (to the end of this Season) and the CBRDP Executive Committee had requested the East and West Forums to submit proposals for any amendments to the current system for consideration at the Executive Meeting on 1st February 2010. The Chairman explained that there had been considerable disquiet about the distances to be travelled, owing to the running of A and B Leagues. He suggested that, although a similar structure should be kept in place, to avoid one-sided matches as far as possible, he thought it should be possible to rearrange the Leagues to avoid the time and expense involved in travelling from Midhurst to Rye (for example) for an hour's rugby. He recommended that the A Leagues be divided into East and West and the B Leagues be treated in similar fashion, at Under 13, Under 14, Under 15 and Under 16 age groups. It should prove possible to have an East A League and a West A League, at each age group, of six teams, with provision for larger Clubs entering second teams into the appropriate B Leagues, which would have 6 teams each. Matches would be played on a Home and Away basis, with the top two teams in each Regional League going through to a Semi Final, if there is space in the Structured Season. In other words; the Winner of the West League plays the Runner-up in the East League and vice versa. If the Structured Season cannot accommodate twelve league matches, we would have to settle for the Winners of East and West meeting in the Final. The members present agreed that this plan was the most suitable and would encourage the playing of rugby, which is what we are trying to achieve.

The West Forum recommends that the arrangements for Colts remain as at present. Ben Bulpett made the point that, if Colts needed to travel to away games, their Club ought to provide the transport. There must be no suggestion of Colts, having newly passed their driving tests, having the responsibility of ferrying colleagues to away matches. It is recommended that the County might consider helping with the financial implications of Clubs running their own minibuses for this purpose.

b). Clubs' requirements regarding arrangements at County level.

There had been several comments made at Club and Partnership Meetings about the lack of communication between the Managers and Coaches of the Youth County Squads and the Clubs. The Forum deplored the current situation, whereby very little information has been forthcoming about this Season's County Youth arrangements, particularly at Under 14 and Under 15 level. /continued.

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5) (b). (continued). Ben Bulpett pointed out that, if we wish to run a County Youth set up, this has to be managed properly. David Kay and Martyn Boxall agreed and said that there is widespread frustration among the Clubs about the lack of communication from the County on this matter. There seems to be a lack of feedback after County Squad Sessions/Matches. Communication is necessary, but this appears to be sadly lacking. Ben expressed surprise that, as Rugby Development Officer, Mal Chumbley was apparently not responsible for rugby development for the County. Kevin Blakiston explained that this was not in Mal's job description. His job is to develop rugby in Clubs and Schools. The Forum recommends that the problems with County Under 14 and Under 15 age groups this Season be addressed as a matter of urgency. It was suggested that there must be communication from the Head Coaches/Managers at County level to the Clubs and that some midweek training sessions be arranged for County/District Squads, to avoid Sundays. Mike Fisher said that the Managers and Head Coaches of the County Youth teams should have a job specification. Like it or not, we are in the Business of promoting Rugby. David Kay and Ben Bulpett agreed that the County is providing a product and John Riley said that players must be encouraged to fulfil their potential. Martyn Boxall said that Under 16 players at Chichester, who had played for the County, were helping with training sessions at the Club, by making use of what they had learnt at County. There is perceived to be considerable kudos for Club players who get to County standard. This makes it all the more important that the County gets it right.

c). The Structured Season and how it works from the Clubs' perspective.

Despite the Structured Season (SS), it appears that some players are being overplayed. School commitments and, sometimes, County commitments contribute to this and it is not a new problem. Ben said that, as Clubs, we have a duty to protect the young players. Kevin suggested that, to avoid the pressure, B League matches could be played on the same day as County matches, as it is highly improbable that a player in such a match would be representing the County. A request was made that the Under 13 and Under 14 League results be posted on the County Website more quickly. At the least, it would be of interest to Club Coaches, Managers and Players to receive an email showing how their rivals' results had gone. Please would Steve Searle look into this?

d). Mini Festivals.

Haywards Heath did a good job last Season and they appreciated the assistance they had been offered by Chichester. Ben's expertise helped with Mark Jenkins' planning. It was hoped that Crawley are taking advantage of the offers of help from Haywards Heath and Chichester, as they prepare for this Season's Regional Mini Festival. Kevin stated that the most important aspects are Pitch Marshals, who line up the next match and keep things moving and consistent Referees, who have an understanding of the Mini Continuum. Mike Fisher said that Pulborough are looking forward to hosting the Finals and Kevin suggested that they used one pitch and presented the awards after each match. Kevin pointed out that a Plate Competition would be played in this Season's Regional Festivals.

e). Hospitality after League Matches.

Arrangements seemed to vary from Club to Club but none of those present had any complaints about the level of hospitality offered by Clubs after League matches.

6) Youth Leagues update.

a) Under 13/14. Steve Searle had apologised for absence and stated that he was satisfied with the progress of these Leagues.

b). Under 15/16. Steve Briscoe had emailed an update, as he was prevented by illness from attending. Under 15 and Under 16 games were generally going to plan with no demerits being issued for late advice of results. There had been some, permitted, postponements during the half-term holiday and the weather at the weekend before the meeting had caused the postponement of four Under 15 games. Steve had mentioned that Rye Youth has disbanded and that their Under 15s and Under 16s had withdrawn from the League. (Steve subsequently emailed to say that, in fact, only Rye Under 16s had disbanded and that their Under 15s remain in the C League).

The initial draft Structured Season is with Roger Edmondson. County dates are the first to be added, then League dates. The SS should be in a state for circulation to the Clubs before Christmas, ahead of the January fixtures meetings.

We have asked Hampshire, Surrey and Kent to support youth league age group date alignment.

Steve intends to avoid both Autumn half-term weekends with the Under 15 and Under 16 draws.

c). Mike Richardson had emailed his apology and reported that the Colts' arrangements were progressing well. He has been sending regular emails with scores and league tables.

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7). Mini matters.

Kevin outlined the arrangements for the Regional Festivals. The West Festival would be at Crawley on 14th March 2010, with the East Festival at Eastbourne on the same day. The Finals, at Pulborough, would be on 11th April. There would be a Plate Competition at the Regional Festivals. Times are to be given for the commencement of each match and it is the responsibility of teams to arrive in good time for their matches.

Any Club that is touring abroad must get permission from the Constituent Body. Anyone going to the French Tournament near Toulon over Easter should be aware of the local Rules of the Tournament and the different age group cut off point in France. (Details from Kevin Blakiston: Kevin.Blakiston@bopenworld.com)

8). Other business.

Regarding the Under 19 Law Variations, there has been a new IRB ruling where a player is (or players are) sent off the field (temporarily or permanently). Please refer to the appropriate website for the precise wording but be aware that it is no longer necessary to reduce the numbers in the scrum, as stated in the current Law Book. If, however, one team chooses to drop a forward from the scrum, the opponents must follow suit (and pack down 3:4; i.e. no number eight).

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 9-40 p.m., with thanks to Horsham for their hospitality.

Remaining meetings for this Season:

Thursday, 7th January 2010

Thursday, 25th March 2010.

Both these meetings are to be held at Horsham RFC at 8-00 p.m.

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