



Federation of International Racketlon

City & Country Club – Wienerberg
Gutheil-Schoder-Gasse 7

A-1100 Vienna
Austria/Europe

FIR Council Meeting at Marsa Sports Club, Malta

Sunday 14th October 2018

12.00 – 13.00

Council Members Present:

Hans Van Daele (HVD), Graham King (GK), Kresten Hougaard (KH), Amke Fischer (AF),
Duncan Stahl (DS), Dan Busby (DB)

Agenda:

1. Intro from DS
2. Update on the FIR Seat & Bank Account
3. Update on social media and marketing plan
4. VOTE on “Olympic Draws Nationality” proposal by HVD (see attached)
5. VOTE on the Team format for the World Championships (see attached)
6. Rankings
7. Prize Money for 2019

1. Intro

DS opened the meeting and explained that he wanted Council Meetings, where possible, to be much shorter (1 hour) and hopefully more effective and that he hoped being able to hold more Council Meetings online throughout the year (using Google Hangouts) will help with this.

2. Update on the FIR Seat & Bank Account

AF explained that the current FIR bank account (Oberbank in Vienna) would have to be closed and funds transferred to a new account by the end of November. AF explained that all the paperwork and preparation to open a new FIR bank account with Transferwise.com have now been completed, the new account has been confirmed and we are now in the process of making sure all the details around the new account are in line with our compliance rules.

GK explained that we have informed (as we are required to do) the Austrian authorities about the recent changes to the Statutes, President and Council after the Zurich AGM. This resulted in the Authorities to question our Council set up and ask if there are still any Austrians officially on the Council. GK explained that he has now been back in contact with the Austrian Authorities to explain that we do indeed still have an Austrian on the Council and that his previous communication was only to point out the change of President. We are now awaiting a response from the Austrian Authorities.

DS explained that a lot of research has been done by AF into changing the FIR Seat from Austria to Germany, including some legal advice. This showed that there were considerable differences between Austrian and German law which would mean the FIR Statutes would have to be re-written which would involve a significant expense and a lot of time.

DS said that as changing the FIR Seat would clearly be a major and expensive undertaking, it was important that wherever the FIR Seat was changed to, it needed to be to a country whose laws would allow the seat to remain there for a long period of time and should not be dependent on the nationality or residency of the FIR's main Officers or Council members (which could change every 3 years). It was vital that we tried to find a long-term solution.

It was agreed that we should wait until we received another response from the Austrian Authorities before deciding on the next best step.

3. Update on social media and marketing plan

DS explained that he was approaching different companies so that he could present to the Council some options of who the FIR could engage to get professional online marketing advice from. They would be companies that had extensive experience of working with international and national sports federations.

DS said that he had spoken to Anna-Klara Ahlmer from the Council and now had 6 people from within the Racketlon community that would create a social media team which would be able to help generate lots of different content.

DS outlined a plan to target 3 or 4 tournaments in 2019 where the FIR would send an individual or team of people to do extensive reporting from the tournament, across all social media channels including player interviews, live videos, pics, live blogging etc. It was something that was done by UK Racketlon at the Zurich World Championships with huge success, creating a lot of content and extensive interest online.

4. VOTE on "Olympic Draws Nationality" proposal by HVD (see attached)

HVD presented a proposal (Appendix 1) to abolish the rule, for Olympic Draws only, that you cannot play against a player from your own country in the first round.

GK pointed out that "own country" needs to be more precisely defined, especially as TournamentSoftware uses nationality, residence and the country to which a player licence is bonded, differently.

HVD explained that no other international sport had such a rule and that it potentially made Racketlon look more unprofessional. It also made Live Draws far more complicated and harder for those watching to follow.

DB said that he thought the existing rule was essentially a way of tampering with draws which was not a good thing and that he thought it was important draws were completely random.

HVD proposal was voted on with 5 of those present in favour and one against. With no votes received by email, the proposal was passed.

5. VOTE on the Team format for the World Championships (see attached)

DS presented a proposal to change the current format of the Team World Championships (Appendix 2).

DS explained that he wished the vote to be on the basic principle and format laid out in the proposal and that some of the smaller details could be decided at a later date.

All those present voted in favour. With no votes received by email, the proposal was passed.

6. Rankings

DS said that it was important the Council reviewed the current ranking system as there had been a lot of feedback from players about flaws in the current system.

DB agreed there were clearly problems with the current system but that it was very difficult to find a system that had no problems.

KH added that a lack of data meant that any system which was based around “head to head” records would always be difficult to implement successfully, particularly with new players coming into the sport regularly. He also pointed out that completely new ranking systems could be very expensive to integrate with Tournament Software.

DS pointed out that the nature of Racketlon, with 4 sports, meant that the different profile strengths of players meant that an accurate ranking system was always likely to be complex. He also said that it was important that the FIR needed to understand exactly what it wanted from its ranking system – do we only strive to accurately reflect playing strength, even if that system did not encourage (or even discourages) players to regularly enter tournaments?

GK suggested that first of all a short document should be written and discussed which outlined what the FIR’s objectives and priorities should be from a ranking system.

AF suggested a working group should be formed to take this forward and it was decided that HVD (Rules Officer), DB (Player Representative) and Poku Salu (Rankings Officer) would form this group and report back to the Council with a short document outlining FIR’s priorities.

It was agreed that this group would also consult closely with GK who would be best placed to advise about how any proposed changes to the ranking system may effect tournament software.

7. Prize Money for 2019

DS presented the research and work he had done around making prize money optional for all tournaments in 2019, including consulting with elite players (through the player representatives DB and Natalie Paul).

DS made the point that over the last 12 months the FIR’s biggest, single source of income had been from player license fees at 15,000 euros and that over the same period 17,500 euros had been paid out by tournament directors as prize money.

DS said it would be impossible for FIR to make any major improvements to the way Racketlon was marketed and promoted without extra funds, which is why this proposal of collecting 50% of prize money to go into a FIR marketing fund was necessary. The other 50% of prize money would be a saving made by the tournament directors but it would be suggested that at least part of that saving be invested in new ways to market their tournaments at a local level.

DS emphasised there would be transparency with how this new FIR marketing fund would be spent and that its primary aim would be to fund a professionally run marketing campaign that would promote Racketlon and the Tour and ultimately to increase player numbers.

DS said the proposal had wide support from the players who understood the necessity for this change.

DS said he still needed to work out the best and most effective mechanism to collect the money saved (by not having to pay prize money) from Tournament Directors and that this may involve a simplification of the Tournament Status Fee calculation. Once this was done he would present the full, new proposal to the Council to vote on.

Duncan Stahl / FIR Executive President

Appendix 1

Proposal By Hans Van Daele

To allow players from the same country to play each other in the first round of Olympic Draws (for other non-Olympic Draws, this country restriction would remain).

No other sports have such restrictions so would bring Racketlon in line with them. Would create a more professional feel.

It would make the Draws and Live Draw process simpler and easier for people to understand.

Original text

3.5. Nationalities in the Draw

When the draws are made no players of the same country shall meet in the first round except players from the hosting country, if more than half of the participants are from the hosting country. In doubles, provided that all four players are from the same country, the same principle applies.

This counts for all draws including Olympic draws. The only exceptions are if an alternate player comes in after the draws have been made instead of another player, then the country of the opponent is not taken into account.

Proposal text

3.5. Nationalities in the Draw

When the draws for all Olympic draws (singles and doubles) are made players of the same country can meet in the first round.

Regarding all other draws : When the draws are made no players of the same country shall meet in the first round except players from the hosting country, if more than half of the participants are from the hosting country. In doubles, provided that all four players are from the same country, the same principle applies. The only exceptions are if an alternate player comes in after the draws have been made instead of another player, then the country of the opponent is not taken into account.

Appendix 2

Format Change for the Open Teams at the World Championships

Proposed by Duncan Stahl

I feel there is a genuine need to simplify the format of the Team competition at the World Championships. The current 3 division structure with promotion / relegation between the divisions is causing too many problems. Countries who might have a very strong team one year might only be able to send a very weak team the next year (or may not even be able to send a team at all).

I propose that we completely re-write the current text *B. FIR NATIONAL TEAM COMPETITIONS (WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS AND CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIPS)* in Tournament Regulations (which

can be found on p.25 at this link: <https://www.racketlon.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FIR-Tournament-Regulations-31.7.2018.pdf>)

I propose that we create 3 separate Open Team competitions, each with different names and each with their own trophy (re-used every year)...and with no promotion / relegation.

There's no need to decide now on the names of each of the 3 team competitions – I think this is something we can do separately once we have voted for this change.

(My suggestion of something like the **Kärkkänen Cup** for one of the competitions was simply to follow a long tradition that many other sports have of naming some of their biggest competitions after particularly important people within their sport. EG Davis Cup (Tennis), Thomas Cup (which is the World Team Championships for badminton), Ryder Cup (Golf) etc. I think it would be a nice way to honour and celebrate someone within Racketlon).

For now let's just call them:

"A" Cup : for the strongest teams available that year. Only country's first teams allowed.

"B" Cup : open to all teams (1st, 2nd 3rd teams etc)

"C" Cup : open to all teams (1st, 2nd 3rd teams etc) – but designed as a way for new countries with less experienced players or for countries to bring new players and be able to compete at a world championships.

They are not Divisions as there is no promotion / relegation. They are 3 separate competitions.

Then each year there is an entry process – similar to how a player enters an A, B or C class at a world tour tournament, countries would now apply for their teams to play in one of the 3 competitions above – and would have to declare their squads 1 month in advance. The FIR then decides whether any teams, based on their player's rankings and ability, need to be moved up or down into a different Cup. Only 1st Teams to be allowed in the "A" Cup. (This FIR decision would be made by the Delegate team for that World Championships)

The "A" Cup should always have a number of teams which guarantees a format where no team has to play more than 4 matches as a maximum.

The format (monrad, round robin etc) of the "B" and "C" Cups will depend on the numbers of Teams that enter each year.

The prize is winning your competition's Cup that year – and getting your country's name on the trophy.

The system should allow each country to be able to get into the team competition they want – as long as their squads are viewed by the FIR as strong enough to play in the "A" Cup (or not too strong to play in either the "B" or "C" Cups).

But it means that if countries (eg France or Finland) really want to make an effort to play in the "A" Cup, then they know that by getting their best players together they could do this...and at the same time we are still able to have a Team Cup aimed at weaker teams so that countries like Turkey, Hong Kong, USA, India etc are still all able to be involved in a World Championships – which is vital for the growth of the global game.

I think this would be a simpler system. A system which encourages new countries and a system which gives countries a real incentive to try and bring their best players.

All age group Team competitions would remain as they are now.