

## **FIR Council Meeting, 25. August 2019, 20:30-22:00**

Council Members present:

Anna-Klara Ahlmer (AK), Dan Busby (DB), Amke Fischer (AF), Kresten Hougaard (KH),  
Kirsten Kaptein (KK), Graham King (GK), Frank Kleiber (FK), Poku Salo (PS), Duncan Stahl (DS),  
Marcel Weigl (MW)

### **Agenda:**

1. World Champs in Stockholm – vote.
2. Financial Report
3. Proposed measures to re-build the FIR financial reserves (in response to the financial loss due to covid)
4. New FIR Committees (FIR Asia, FIR North America etc)
5. Remaining World Tour tournaments
6. Agreed commitments as FIR Council members
7. Proposed Agenda for AGM on 12th Sept

DS opened the meeting at 20:30 and welcomed all present, noting the change in order of the agenda items for more efficiency.

GK took over the role as meeting secretary, to take notes for the minutes.

### **1. World Champs in Stockholm**

DS summarised the responses from the national federations survey of how many teams they were likely to send. Only two (CH, FR) were very likely to send teams, and two (DK, US) were 50/50. DS stated that the venue, Enskede, had informed him they had set a maximum of 50 players in the hall at any one time, and that there is little indication this will be revised upwards in the near future. AK added, this number had since been reduced to 30 for a pending badminton tournament. Enskede had since stated they cannot hold the the 2020 Racketlon World Championships.

**Vote:** The Council agreed unanimously to acknowledge this and publicly announce the cancellation.

### **2. Finance Report**

#### **2019**

AF presented an Excel of the 2019 financial results, formally approved by both auditors, noting that the main differences to 2018 were:

- the introduction of the Marketing Contribution Fund fees charged to TD's in lieu of prize money
- the cost of funding the extensive social media marketing throughout the year
- the FIR President's salary
- the very high financial costs of using PayPal

The bottom line shows a surplus of just over EUR 1'000 and financial reserves of nearly EUR 15'000.

MW asked how the results compared to the budget.

**Action:** AF to add the budget to the slides to be presented at the AGM.

## 2020

DS went on to present the forecast for 2020, using different scenarios of how many of the remaining tournaments will be played. All scenarios show a loss, varying from ca. EUR 1'000 to EUR 10'000, albeit it with a very large degree of uncertainty. GK pointed out that the available financial reserves are sufficient to cover all scenarios, but could run out in early 2021 unless action is taken.

## 2021

DS pointed out that FIR needs to rebuild their financial reserves and presented a 2021 forecast based on the assumption that 60% of tournaments would be held, showing a loss of ca. EUR 5'000. GK pointed out that the AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> September will only (belatedly) approve the 2020 budget. The 2021 budget will be approved at the following AGM, hopefully held in early 2021.

DS presented various ideas on raising income and reducing costs:

1. player licence fee / tournament entry fees

increasing these fees (with the increase being paid over to FIR) for a limited period (duration TBD, but at least until the end of 2021) can raise several thousand EUR, and would be funded by those benefitting most from FIR's activities, the players

- various player licence fee options were discussed, including introducing a single-tournament licence (as opposed to a yearly one), introducing a scheme to make player licences optional, but once paid result in reduced tournament entry fees, or simply increasing the current licence fee

- various aspects were considered, including any additional financial barrier to new or infrequent players, the amount of admin and automation (through TournamentSoftware "TS") possible, the simplicity of the new arrangement, and its clear presentation to the players

**Vote:** in an initial vote, the Council decided to increase either player licences or tournament registration fees, but not both (9 for either/or, 1 for both)

**Vote:** the Council then voted in favour of increased player licence fees (8 for licence fees, 1 for tournament entry fees, 1 abstention)

**Action:** GK to analyse in more detail with MW and TS and present specific options, with a recommendation, to the Council in the next few days

2. Fund-raising appeal

- DS described plans to quantify the cost of specific marketing activities and seek optional donations to fund them

- KH related his football club's issue of a high-quality, special shirt with an appropriate logo which raised EUR 2 million

- MW related RFA's issue of a custom-made Racketlon hoodie which raised EUR 3'000

**Action:** DS to present a concrete plan to the Council at a later date

3. FIR World Tour Race, temporary suspension

- The World Tour Race costs ca EUR 2'000 per year (TS fees and trophies)

- The 2020 World Tour Race has already been cancelled, due to the very small number of tournaments which can be played, though the TS fees cannot be reclaimed as no advance notice was given

- The status of the 2021 World Tour Race is in any case uncertain, due to the unknown number of tournaments which will be held

**Vote:** The Council voted to suspend the World Tour Race for 2021 and review a prolongation

of the suspension, or its reinstatement, during the course of 2021 (6 for cancellation, 3 against, 1 abstention)

**Action:** GK to inform TS

4. Council member tournament participation, suspension of entry fee refund
  - the subsidy of Council members tournament entry fees costs FIR ca. EUR 4'000 per year
  - DS presented two options for change
    - a) Council members are treated the same as all other players and pay the full tournament entry fees
    - b) Council members to pay 50% of the entrance fee, thereby relieving FIR of the rebate FIR gives to the TD's
  - DS pointed out the difficulty in compensating Council members for their efforts to support FIR fairly, given the number of tournaments played per year varies from zero to almost all of them and the large differences in the amount of work put in by different Council members. In addition, he stated he is also aware of very their very different financial situations
  - DS stated the cost to FIR is relatively large and could well be used for other actions, but he definitely does not want to remove this refund if it results in tangible Council member demotivation, at a time when he is needing more support from them than ever before.
  - after much discussion, the Council unanimously agreed in principle to contribute to cost reductions, but decided to delay this until a later Council Meeting, once the effect of the other measures has been analysed

DS went through the areas where he felt no change was possible. The Council agreed with each of them:

1. Country Membership Fees. Most country members are suffering from increased financial pressure and have no reserves to pay more
2. Tournament Status Fees / Marketing Contribution Fees. TD's must already deal with significant risk, uncertainty, and additional challenges to hold a tournament. Increasing their financial load as well would result in fewer tournaments being held
3. Tournament Software is FIR's second-biggest cost, but earlier extensive analysis had shown, that there are currently no viable alternatives. TS has agreed to allow FIR to pay the annual bill in instalments, thereby taking a lot of pressure off the FIR liquidity and cashflow at the start of 2021
4. President's remuneration is FIR's biggest cost, but DS stated that he is not able to cope with less, especially as he currently works significantly more than the 2 days per week originally agreed.

GK added, that the agreement to engage DS as a paid President, with have enough time to focus purely on FIR issues, has resulted in significant improvements in the quality, general development, and marketing of Racketlon, and that this should be maintained and even extended whenever finances would allow it

MW inquired as to the relatively high marketing costs, at a time of financial austerity. After much discussion, the Council agreed that the enormously improved FIR marketing had brought significant benefits to Racketlon, allowing it to continue to flourish at a time when all tournaments and other activities have been cancelled, and should only be materially reduced as a last resort.

DS explained he had already had discussions to reduce marketing costs by 30% for a 3-month trial period to analyse the impact. The Council unanimously agreed to continue with this plan and review the situation after the 3-month trial period is over.

### 3. FIR World Tour tournaments

In view of the advanced time, DS stated it would not be possible to cover all the points on the agenda, and so focussed on the most critical one, the FIR World Tour.

The FIR committees and Council Member commitment will be rescheduled to a future Council meeting. The AGM Agenda will be circulated and approved via email.

DS noted the clearly tangible impact of the Coronavirus on the FIR World Tour, with all tournaments since February having been cancelled.

DS presented his assessment of how best to deal with the planning of the remainder of the 2020 World Tour, as well as for future years, in the light of the Coronavirus.

Most TD's will need to comply with multiple Covid-19 protection concepts – from their government, their sports associations and that of the venue itself, each of which will vary greatly from country to country. With few exceptions, the TD is best placed to understand these differing requirements and take appropriate measures. FIR has already asked the TD of the remaining tournaments on the 2020 World Tour to complete a risk assessment, listing the protection measures required and the plans to implement and control them. FIR will review the TD's risk assessment one month ahead of the planned start date, and once satisfied that the protection measures are sufficient to offer the players as safe a tournament as possible, will approve the tournament to go ahead.

There followed considerable discussion of the different responsibilities of the players, the TD's and FIR, when making decisions to hold, or play in, FIR Racketlon tournaments. After extensive debate, it was agreed FIR should be fully transparent about the risks involved and continue with DS's plan to perform a risk assessment for each tournament. In addition, FIR will supply some basic minimal guidelines which might help TD's in planning and carrying out their tournaments.

**Action:** GK, MW, and one other (TBD) to produce a FIR Covid-19 Protection Concept

Further discussions questioning whether the planned World Championships, Doubles event should be awarded World Championship status, given so many nations have difficulties travelling to the Czech Republic, was put to a vote:

- Keep World Championship status: 4 votes
- Cancel/downgrade event: 1 vote
- Abstentions: 2 votes
- No vote (needed to leave meeting before this vote): 3 votes

As a last point, DS stated that the 2021 World Tour will not be announced as usual in a single action, but in phases, as more certainty of the planned tournaments was available.

The first half-year of 2021 will be announced early September 2020.

The second half-year will be announced in early 2021.

The Council Meeting was closed at 23:30

*Minutes by GK and approved by DS*