

MINUTES FIR AGM 2021

Saturday 2nd April 2022, 14:00 – 17:30

Online ZOOM meeting

Chair: FIR Executive President Duncan Stahl

Minutes: FIR Vice-President Graham King

Final Agenda

- 1) Welcome note members
- 2) Confirmation of minutes of AGM 20th March 2021 (published on www.racketlon.net)
- 3) President Report, Duncan Stahl
- 4) Confirmation of final Financial and Auditor's Report 2021, Amke Fischer (Treasurer), Patrick Buergi/Joachim Gersdorf (Auditors)
- 5) Outlook and Budget for 2022, Duncan Stahl
- 6) Place and Date of next AGM
- 7) Any other business

21 Countries present or delegated their voting power with a total of 54 votes:

Member Country	Representative	Votes
Afghanistan	Mohammad Reza Mohammadi	1
Australia	Leigh Sands	1
Austria	Marcel Weigl	5
Belgium	Lieselot de Bleckere	2
Canada	delegated to USA	1
Czech Republic	Delegated to Switzerland	4
Denmark	Thomas Ostenfeld Larsen	2
Finland	Poku Salo	3
France	Mandin Mouchet	6
Germany	Amke Fischer	6
Great Britain	James Pope	6
Greece	delegated to Austria	1
India	KK Cheema	2
Malta	Duncan Stahl	1
Netherlands	Guus van de Burgt	2
Norway	Joel Durston	1
New Zealand	delegated to Australia	1
Romania	Radu Ionescu	1
Spain	Niall McCracken	1
Switzerland	Karim Hanna	6
USA	Patrick Moran	1
Total		54

53 out of 73 possible votes were present at the AGM, which is 73 % of the total number of votes and more than 37 needed for quorum. The AGM was thus able to take final decisions on all points on the Agenda. For the normal majority (50%) a minimum of 27 votes were needed. For the qualified majority (66.67%) a minimum of 36 votes were needed.

14 Countries not present with a total of 15 votes

Member Country	Votes
Croatia	1
Estonia	1
China/Hong Kong	1
Hungary	1
Israel	1
Latvia	2
Luxembourg	1
Poland	1
Russia	1
Slovakia	1
Slovenia	1
South Africa	1
Turkey	1
Thailand	1
Total	15

Non-voting attendees

1. Joachim Gersdorf (GER, Auditor)
2. Kirsten Kaptein (NED, FIR Council)
3. Graham King (SUI, FIR Council)

1) Welcome note, members (Duncan Stahl)

FIR President Duncan Stahl opened the AGM at 14:00, took over as chair and welcomed all representatives. He announced FIR Vice President Graham King as meeting secretary to take the minutes, who confirmed the attendees and declared that the 50% quorum necessary for the AGM to take decisions had been reached.

2) Confirmation of minutes of the last AGM

The minutes of the last AGM, held online on Saturday 20th March 2021, published on www.racketlon.net, were unanimously approved by the AGM.

3) President's Report (Duncan Stahl)

Duncan Stahl presented his President's Report, reminding the AGM that this report would be backward-looking, as he would cover the outlook for the future under point 5.

He pointed out that 2021 was a difficult year, with only one tournament being held in 2020 after the Covid lockdown started in late February, and that it initially looked likely that most of the tournaments in 2021 would be lost too.

As a result of the resulting loss of revenue, most of the FIR reserves had been used up, turning the focus to fundraising to ensure Racketlon could be kept alive. This turned out to be very successful, with 163 fund-raising T-shirts, produced in collaboration with Victor, being sold, and the creation of Racketlon Angels, who made a greater financial contribution. Despite the difficulties in delivering the T-shirts due to Covid-related supplier difficulties and Brexit restrictions, the generation of a nett EUR10k surplus (against a budgeted figure of EUR 4k) showed the strength of the Racketlon community, and of the FIR social marketing/communications skills.

In addition, FIR also attempted to reduce costs where possible, mainly on the marketing side, whilst retaining awareness that some social media marketing was also essential to keep the sport alive.

This fund-raising was only possible because of the efforts of paid positions, such as the FIR President and the FIR social media marketing specialist, which confirmed to him, that volunteers cannot be used to fill this gap.

2021 saw the cancellation of all tournaments up until August, including the World Championships scheduled for August in Austria. Despite this setback, the strength and flexibility of the Racketlon community still managed to enable last-minute World Championships Singles (Switzerland) and Doubles (Czech Republic) events, in addition to tournaments in Austria, Czech Republic, Dubai, Netherlands, Romania, Spain (Lanzarote), and Switzerland.

Duncan stated that he had invited two important guests to the World Championships in Switzerland, Lawrence Chew (World Badminton Federation) and Connor Cruz (with SquashWorld with 50k-60k followers, the largest online voice in squash), both of whom published statements that they were extremely impressed with FIR's Racketlon activities.

Duncan noted that FIR now provides free livestream to all Tournament Directors through SWISH, with only volunteers being necessary to operate it. Similarly, for larger events, such as World Championships and SWT's, an alternative product, Streamster, is being offered.

Duncan concluded with the information that 2022 had already started with difficulties, with the Finnish Open, Spanish Open and Russian Open already being cancelled. The French Open in March was, however, a big success, heralding the return to some form of normality.

4) Confirmation of Financial and Auditor's Report (Amke Fischer, Treasurer)

Amke presented the Financial Report for 2021, commenting on the major variances from budget, most of which (both income and expenses), were a result of a reduction in the number of tournaments. She pointed out that the nett surplus of approx. EUR 10k can be attributed almost entirely to the success of the fundraising campaign.

Income Statement (PnL) 2020:

• Income	EUR	17'702	Budget EUR	14'003
• Expenses	EUR	25'603	Budget EUR	26'835
• Deficit	EUR	7'901	Budget EUR	12'832

Balance Sheet 2020:

• Retained earnings	EUR	14'930
• Deficit	EUR	7'901
• Own Capital 31.12.2020	EUR	7'029

Amke invited Joachim Gersdorf, FIR Auditor, to comment on the 2021 financials. Joachim stated that 2021 had been a good year financially, and that his work, together with Patrick Bürgi had all been fine, with the 3 issues they raised being satisfactorily resolved, and ideas for improvement incorporated. He showed a copy of the Auditors' Report and thanked the FIR team, especially praising Amke Fischer and Graham King.

There were no questions raised on the FIR 2021 Financials, which were unanimously approved.

5) Outlook and Budget for (Duncan Stahl)

Duncan opened his belief that the fundamental question at present is to assess the impact of the previous two years disruption on players' appetite for international Racketlon despite travel restrictions, changes in motivation, increasing costs, inability to train normally, having grown accustomed to only playing domestic events etc. He cited the World Squash Federation's survey of participation levels and expected a general reduction in player numbers for the near future.

He stated his conviction that Racketlon well-being and growth needs more tournaments & Tournament Directors and new locations & venues. He backed this up with a slide showing statistics of details of tournaments, players, entries, nationalities etc. for the period 2014-2021, thanking Beni Gränicher and James Pope for the underlying work in preparing the data. Allowing for the recent dip in numbers, it is clear to him that there is a direct link between the number of tournaments and the number of players. Karim Hanna inquired into Duncan's reasoning why a 40% participation of domestic/national players is a good working basis for tournaments. The ensuing discussion established that the important points were for tournaments in new countries to build their core of local players, and for long-standing tournaments to offer local players the chance to compete with new, international players, rather than for a small group of international players to travel around the FIR World Tour and provide the bulk of the players in the smaller tournaments.

Duncan pointed out that the FIR World Tour is put together by the World Tour Committee (Dan Busby, Kirsten Kaptein, Graham King), with significant input from him, as he is very active in maintaining contact to FIR members, Tournament Directors, venues, international associations, players etc. The general uncertainty brought by Covid has resulted in increased flexibility and a much more short-term approach. It is no longer possible to publish the FIR World Tour for a whole calendar year at once, as it was in the past. He nevertheless intends to hold as many tournaments as possible and to boost their social-media reporting by building up a paid part-time team to support Sam Barker.

Duncan spoke of upcoming meetings with the President/CEO of the World Squash Federation and Badminton World Federation, both of whom have publicly stated their belief that cooperation with

the Racketlon world would be mutually beneficial, with a view to sign a partnership agreement with them. Similar meetings with ITF & ITTF are expected shortly.

Duncan related the recent “Good News” events, that he hopes to build on for the future:

- New Racketlon league starting up in Luxembourg
- Tournaments in New Zealand and the plans of NZ players to play in Europe later this year
- Tournaments in Norway
- Hong Kong city league
- USA activities in Chicago
- Various tournaments in India (even this current weekend)

Duncan added that he, together with Marcel Weigl, has plans to use the World Championships, to hold a Town Hall event, inviting the Racketlon community for a brainstorming event.

Duncan then handed over to Marcel to make a brief statement about the 2022 FIR World Championship. Marcel stated that entries are now open, and that many players had already entered to make the most of the early-bird discount being offered on both registration fees and hotel costs through collaboration with ERU & On Your Marks. Although the deadline for the maximum discount had now lapsed, he urged players to not delay their registration so that they could still get some reduction in their costs, and that the insurance package offered would fully cover the costs of registration fees and hotel costs should players be unable to play due to injury, illness or Covid issues. He added that the official balls to be used have now been defined and published, and that players can look forward to a high-quality event. Thomas Ostfeld Larsen inquired why some classes, such as +50 doubles, were missing. Marcel replied that the obligatory FIR classes had been offered, but that more could be offered, were there to be sufficient interest.

Duncan then concluded by going through his budget for 2022, pointing out that it was targeting break-even, despite both increased marketing revenue and corresponding marketing costs, including the re-introduction of the FIR World tour Race. No questions were raised

6) Next AGM

Duncan Stahl announced that an EGM for the election of a FIR President, Council, Auditor team and Board of Arbitration will be called to coincide with the World Championships, so that both physical person-to-person interaction and online participation will be possible. The exact date will be published shortly.

The date of the next FIR AGM is planned to be held early in the year, as soon as the FIR 2022 Financials can be completed and audited, provisionally Saturday 28th February 2023. Confirmation will be made at the FIR EGM in Austria.

7) Any other business

Radu expressed his dissatisfaction with Duncan’s outlook, saying that the goals were too low, representing nothing more than a recovery plan to get back to where we were. He said he was hoping for more aggressive, concrete objectives to be set for the period up until 2024, including attracting external funding, rather than always just drawing from within the Racketlon community.

Duncan basically agreed with Radu that the budget was a recovery plan and that external funding is necessary long-term, but stated it is mainly a question of timing, as in his opinion we first need to get Racketlon to a sufficient level before it is possible to go to successfully approach external sponsors –

and that we also needed more time to be able to effectively assess the longer term impacts of covid to participation levels, otherwise we would just be setting unrealistic and uninformed goals.

Radu added his disappointment that the Spanish Open had been rescheduled to the week before the Romanian Open without him even being consulted, adding that it is not rocket science to know that this means the death knell for both tournaments. He announced that as a result, he is cancelling the Romanian Open, expressing his scepticism that the World Tour Committee made this decision and blaming Duncan, as a prolific Tournament Director, for a conflict of interest in this and other decisions, which he uses for personal interests and to gain an unfair advantage. Duncan then explained the way how the tournament process worked; with him applying, like every other TD, to the WTC for his tournaments, which are always planned and coordinated with the national representatives of that country for the good of their national Racketlon scene. Kirsten Kaptein confirmed this is the case and that it was the WTC who unanimously made the decision to reschedule the Spanish Open by email on 31st January 2022. Guus van de Burgt (NL), confirmed this was the case in the example of the 2021 World Championships, originally planned for Netherlands, and the 2021 Rotterdam Open and was very happy that Duncan was able to organise a tournament in the Netherlands with their full approval. Duncan concluded that he still hoped that a way could be found to hold both tournaments, and of an alternative date for the Spanish Open was now available, and that the WTC would get back to Radu.

James Pope added his belief that FIR needs better access to tournament socio-economic data to better understand the needs of the Racketlon community.

Poku Salo and Thomas Ostfeld Larsen both thanked Duncan for his work before Duncan then closed the AGM at 15:50.

Minutes taken by Graham King and confirmed by Duncan Stahl

Duncan Stahl

(President)

Graham King

(Vice-President)