

**FIR Council Meeting, Zoom, 17. January 2023, 20:00 - 21.30**

**Council Members present:**

Anna-Klara Ahlmer (AKA), Myriam Enmer (ME), Amke Fischer (AF), Kresten Hougaard (KH), Kirsten Kaptein (KK), Graham King (GK), Jean Michot (JM), James Pope (JP), Duncan Stahl (DS), Adarsh Vikram (AV), Marcel Weigl (MW),

**Council Members excused:**

Poku Salo (PS)

The meeting commenced at 20:02 CET, with DS noting that JP had volunteered to take the minutes.

**1. Introduction: latest news on FIR Media Team & FIR Development Fund**

DS confirmed that Sam Barker has now stood down as media officer, (having given Duncan a 1-year notice), which has allowed for a good transition to his replacement, Sanne Veldkamp. Sanne is a PSA pro squash player, based in Nottingham UK (but is Dutch, the daughter of Marc Veldkamp!). She has lots of experience in social media, sports marketing and has worked with sports clubs to help them before. Her skill set is particularly strong on video and video editing. Sam is confident that she will do a great job. She will be in the main role, along with a pool of content contributors which will be ever expanding, including initially: Joel Durston, Leigh Sands, and Kieran Shelley amongst others. An early aim is looking to set up a TikTok channel, aimed at the younger end of the Racketlon community. TikTok is currently the biggest social media form now bigger than Facebook and Instagram. DS has spoken to younger players and the aim is to allow them to run it organically with almost free reign to drive the Racketlon's TikTok presence. The group involved are already generating content with a plan to launch in March after French Open. All being well, DS expects a smooth transition from Sam to Sanne.

The next item was introduced by DS as an "early view" for the Council, with an aim to present it more formally in the future. The new FIR Development Fund, but as a little introduction (as mentioned at EGM in Graz). The fund will be a minimum 5000 euro per annum, with applications from national federations will be invited to help them establish programmes to promote and develop Racketlon in their country. A committee will be set up 3-5 people, and the committee will set up the criteria for the funding, with different pots of different sizes and for criteria to be published in advance. The project is still a work in progress, but hopefully will allow federations to set up really good programmes to develop Racketlon.

DS has also had good conversations with ME about female participation, and she is trying to get the ideas out into the community with an aim to drive increased ladies. Lausanne event

is in there, but other ideas are being considered and will be reported on the next Council meeting. DS has also conversations with JP about sustainability strategy, with reports to the Council to follow around incentives for tournaments and players.

DS also announced a plan to set up an open online meeting soon, to talk about player experience at tournaments. Open to all players to find out what is important to them, what they like and any ideas they have for the future, plus the FIR will report on the player surveys and future changes we are planning. The planned date is February 7th with the date to be announced shortly. It will be hosted by DS with Jack Bishop (an experienced tournament delegate), AKA and ME as player reps. All Tournament Directors will be explicitly invited as well. Announcement on this in the next couple of days.

At the end of this meeting, DS is hopeful that we can set an AGM date in 1st quarter of this year. Before then a budget will be published after being passed in front of the Council before the AGM.

## **2. Rules of Racketlon change (to be put forward for AGM approval): as per Graham's mail re server/receiver sequence & change of sides for BA, TE**

This item continues on from the previous Council meeting and also a series of e-mail conversations, as this is a change in the rules, so it has to go to the AGM as a proposal.

GK opens the section by highlighting that as we didn't finalise this in the e-mail chain, this is being done here. Summarising that this is for doubles only in badminton and tennis.

Firstly, regarding the rule that you can swap FH/BH receiving side of players at the change of ends in tennis; then secondly the scoring sequence at 20-20.

Changing sides - This was initially put into the rules of Racketlon keep it as close as possible to the tennis rules. The difficulty we currently have is that referees do not know what to do, and that many players don't know the rule exists or how to apply it, which results in confusion for all parties. Peter Robic has fed back that it is an issue for the live scoring app also. The GK proposal is that we scrap this rule and remove it from the rules of Racketlon at the next AGM.

MW clarified that the rule was implemented to make it similar to the rules in the other sports, because in TT you have to swap the receiver at 11, and that you should see Racketlon doubles as , so you see doubles Racketlon as 2 sets of 11 (per se) and not as 1 set of 21. KH was unsure why this was an issue for the app, as the server order remains the same in tennis and that is what the app shows. KH points out that it is really simple in tennis; the issue is in badminton because it changes the order of server, which could cause issues. KH feels we should scrap the ability to swap sides at the change of end in badminton and keep in tennis.

DS asked MW would he keep it? MW agrees with KH on tennis and had never seen it in badminton. KH clarified that he didn't know it was a rule in badminton until this year and

believes it would be chaos in a World Championships. DS highlighted could there also be a tactical advantage in badminton, JP added that someone could serve four points, DS finishing to highlight that a stronger player could gain some advantage.

GK wanted to ensure that this shouldn't be a change driven by a software change, that a programming solution can be found. KH reiterated that in tennis, the software is fine as server order is consistent. All that changes is the receiver side. DS stated that he felt the Council were veering towards a proposal to ban in badminton and keep in tennis. KH and MW agreed.

*The KH & MW modification to the original GK proposal was put to a vote. A majority of the Council approved the change, with 1 person (JM) not agreeing with it.*

JM sought clarification during the vote if we voted on banning it in both sports? Or only in badminton? GK confirmed that it was only in badminton in this vote, but if this proposal wasn't approved we would vote on his original proposal.

GK now moved onto the next change, regarding server-receiver orders at deuce (20-20 and all points beyond), GK started with badminton, clarifying that there are four services from the right (A1 to B1, B1 to A2, A2 to B2 and B2 to A1). If it reaches 22-22, then left hand side has four serves following the same order. *This was put to the Council as a vote and was approved unanimously.*

GK now took us to tennis, again for the order of play at deuce. He clarified the current rule: A1 to B1, B1 to A1 (right to right), then A2 to B2 and B2 to A2 (left to left). It was instantly pointed out from other members of the Council that this was not correct, as in tennis the forehand receiver would not necessarily be the next to serve (unlike in badminton, where receiver placement determines the next to serve)

KH postulated that the clarification needs to be that the serves go right, right, left, left. However MW disagreed stating that it is four serves right, then four serves left. KH highlighted that this could cut out the backhand receiver. JM asked of we are changing the receiving side at 20-20. DS pointed out that we are not, that it was about the serving order and serving side at 20-20.

GK suggested that the question seems to be what happens after the first pair of servers. MW reiterated that it must be four right, then four left or it gets confusing. AV felt it should be uniform and that this would be easier for players to understand. KH highlighted that badminton follows the rotation, but in tennis there is no rotation of receiver. We should therefore stick with four right and four left. DS agreed.

*The vote was taken on the proposal of four serves from right, then four from left with the receiver and server order already decided during play. It was passed with a majority.*

**ACTION** - GK will write up the proposal for the AGM and send around with the minutes for the final check by the Council.

### 3. Removal of retired players from World Rankings

DS proposes that keep us in line with other sports (and probably only Elite players, in the top of the rankings) we should removed retired players from the rankings. To DS it seems strange that when a player announces their retirement publicly, they stay on the rankings for up to 2 years. DS wants us to remove a player quicker from the rankings for the events (singles and/or doubles) they have said they are retiring from. DS thinks the procedure should be that an FIR representative would firstly confirm the retirement and if so then remove them from the rankings. GK asked would they retain ranking points, but be removed from the active list of players? DS responded that yes, if they had a change of heart, they would return with the points they have (less any dropped points as per the usual rankings system).

JP highlighted that this could cause issues with the ranking of a player with regards to team events? DS suggested that a player could say they wish to remain on the rankings for the purposes of team rankings. We could also retain a known ranking they would have behind the scenes for using in teams as an alternative. GK queried how would teams know? For example MW planning for using Lukas? DS admitted we would have to work with it, but it would only have the issue on seeding, not on who is in which division, it wouldn't stop a team being in the World Cup. AV wished for clarification about if this also affected who plays MS1 etc? DS confirmed that it would, and that maybe we would publish a protected rankings of these players before the World Championships. MW queried if any other sports do this so quickly? JP provided the Ash Barty example from tennis in 2022. DS added that he thinks this is cleaner and would look better.

ME added that it is not easy to see the best (historic) ranking of players on tournament software, we should have a section on this (this is a tangent which DS closed off, and GK said he would check in with ME about this offline). GK asked who is responsible for applying this change? DS suggested that it would be the ranking officer, which led to GK pointing out that he (PS) is not on the call (and maybe should be for this discussion), and asked of he would be the person who had to contact the players directly. DS thinks that Sanne Veldkamp (as media officer) would do the contact and then let PS know. KH felt that for now the process doesn't matter now, just the application of it.

DS asked for an in principle approval of the idea?

GK jumped in to ask if first could we quickly discuss whether we remove a player from a ranking they don't want to be in e.g. a player who wishes to be in the Open rankings but not Senior rankings. MW felt strongly that we can't fulfil everyone's wishes, with ME in agreement adding that it could be a lot of work. DS wondered if it does mean a lot of work? GK felt that probably not, we just create blacklists for rankings lists. This could then be applied through tournament software. DS suggested an alternative that we can of course just not make a fuss about these players being in the rankings (i.e when articles on the website promote people reaching a new high for example), but leave them in the rankings. GK conceded that we should put this to one side for tonight.

*DS again asked for an indicative vote on whether we feel it should be done? The response*

*was mixed with 7 approvals in principle, and AV disagreeing with the idea, and several abstentions from people who were indifferent to the idea or unsure.*

#### **4. Tournament Regulations changes:**

##### **4a - draw-size restrictions to stop 5-, 7-, 9-draw etc (particularly at World Championships)**

DS is keen that we avoid the poor draw sizes, particularly in junior and senior events, because unlike the FIR World Tour, a tournament director can't combine draws because people are going for a world title. (e.g. combining O40 and O45 to become a O40 mixed age group class). DS highlighted that you can turn off category entry and create waiting lists, but asked a series of questions for it including when do we draw the line (do we do it a week before entry closes, for example?) How do we communicate this to the community? But crucially how do we make sure that we get better schedules and draws? MW added that the learning from this in 2022 is that Seniors should only play in 1 senior event (but say an open category also). MW feels this is the proposal that should go forwards. DS countered that even if you restrict entry to one category, you still can get badly shaped draws. KH suggested that he thinks we should just go with the flow, it is the world championship, and badly shaped draws are unlucky, but you have to let people enter. KK added that she was in agreement with KH. DS offered the thought about stating a maximum draw size in advance? KH agrees with this for the regular FIR World Tour, but not the World Championships.

DS mentioned that he spoke to Ray Jordan (who is doing the Rotterdam schedule), who feels the schedule is fine as, long as players enter neighbouring age categories, e.g. O40 and O45, not O45 and O55. MW pointed out that there will be a mix and it will create a mess, that there are plenty of matches for people to play (singles, doubles, teams, open age categories also), they don't need two categories. DS asked GK for his thoughts as someone who could be affected? GK responded that he will only ever enter one category at a World Championships. KH felt that the tournament director and delegate should have the decision, they know their match situation, schedule and financial implications. MW added an additional point, about what about when players give walkovers in other categories? Players can also miss out on matches, so we should regulate the (multi-category) entry. KH was in agreement, but still feels it should be the tournament director and delegate who decide. DS added that as a World Championships tournament director, he was leaning towards imposing the one category rule.

DS then asked MW if this would also apply to Juniors? MW responded that it isn't as much of a problem, so he wouldn't worry about it.

*DS then sought an indicative vote on the idea, would the Council approve restricting entry of Seniors to one category. There was general approval with one against (KK) and a couple of abstentions at this time.*

##### **4b - World Championship MB/WB winners to automatically qualify for MA/WA following year (as an additional wildcard).**

DS is of the opinion that the Men's B 2022 World Championships winner would be offered a Rotterdam wild card (WC) into the Men's A, as an additional WC to those we can already

give, to avoid the situation where the 2021 Men's B winner was not awarded the WC, which was a tough and difficult situation. MW asked if it should not be a WC but an automatic entry in the Men's A? DS feels that it was just in case it was a weaker MB and the player wasn't keen, hence being a WC? GK asked what were the feelings about the winner of the Women's B, should it be automatic? ME feels that it should be automatic in Men's and an offer in the Women's. DS felt that this would be a good solution. GK queried if this could be construed as gender bias? DS felt that it wasn't, because the WC is being offered. KK pointed out that not all women want to play A, but that all Men want to play A. This viewpoint was supported by AF in the chat. KH sought clarification if this would also apply in the Men's C to Men's B? He felt it should apply to all the classes? ME agrees that it should apply to all. DS asked do we apply the women's rule down the categories? GK also asked if it would apply to the doubles if the pairings remain the same? ME, DS and KH agreed that if the pairing doesn't change it should be mandatory in all doubles (including Mixed Doubles).

*A Vote on this proposal with the clarification of mandatory for all men's singles, men's doubles and mixed doubles, and optional for women's singles and women's doubles (if same pairing) as an additional WC was approved by all.*

#### **4c - World Championships to issue paper certificates to top-8 finishers**

DS noted that we have had requests for certificates for top 8 finishers for prestige. GK added that it was not just about prestige, it can result in grants and scholarships etc in some countries. DS asked to clarify if this would be a certificate to top 8 in all categories in a World Championships? We should generate a template certificate (with GK including that we could use watermarked paper). DS feels it is something we (FIR not tournament director) would do, with GK agreeing with this. JP went back to the awarding, suggesting it should be for the "World Championship" categories, i.e. not B, C, D, but include Juniors and Seniors). ME added in asking if it was both singles and doubles? DS answered that in principle yes. GK clarified that the player(s) would have to win at least one match e.g. in an 8 draw it would be the top 4 getting certificates.

GK feels that we need to fully cost it first, and then bring it back to Council. AV also asked about the team event? DS answered that again he agreed, but we need to see the costs involved. JP highlighted a comment from MW in the chat about it being digital, adding that we could include a QR code to a repository of awardees on the website for validity checks by international bodies.

*Again, voting in principle, there were no disagreements*

#### **5. Plans for 2023 AGM**

GK reminded the Council that we need to first check on auditors and financial reporting readiness before setting a date, but that as a minimum we need to provide 30 days notice, with 60 days as a recommendation to alert people and then allowing 30 days for proposals to come in so the formal invitation can be issued. DS postulated that mid-March is possible, if the financials can be done and that a Saturday is best because of time zones.

## 6. AOB

KK asked KH if the delegates for the 2023 FIR World Tour have already been decided? KH added that not quite yet, but also announced plans to get additional delegates into the pool of

delegates. DS highlighted we need to be careful who we choose, because it is an important role, but we should look to get good applicants (it will be application-based, confirmed KH)

DS closed, mentioning that there are some things we can package now and do votes by e-mail because they are discussed here.

21:35 CET close.