

FIR Council Meeting, Zoom, 26th September 2023, 20.00 – 22.00

Council Members present:

Anna-Klara Ahlmer (AKA), Amke Fischer (AF), Kresten Hougaard (KH), Graham King (GK),
Jean Michot (JM), James Pope (JP), Poku Salo (PS), Adarsh Vikram (AV),

Council Members excused:

Myriam Enmer (ME), Kirsten Kaptein (KK), Duncan Stahl (DS), Marcel Weigl (MW),

The meeting commenced at 20:00 CET

Meeting Agenda was sent in advance to all the FIR Council Members.

1. Introduction of new FIR Council working groups (see further info below Agenda)
 - Regulations
 - Youth Development
 - Sponsorship

Other non-council working group

- Tournament Directors' / delegate group
2. FIR Development Fund
 3. UN's Sport for Climate Action Pledge (James Pope)
 4. Racketlon Sprint (introduction)

Graham King moderated the meeting.

1. Introduction of new FIR Council working group (Presented by Graham)

Graham explained that the sheer amount of work outstanding for FIR requires drawing on our key resources, i.e. the FIR Council members, to complete it in a useful timeframe. A number of working groups have been discussed and three prioritised for presentation to this Council meeting, with the others following later.

It was suggested to have about 3 people in a working group to perform the tasks. Each working group would have a person who is in charge of the working group.

1.1 Regulations:

- Working group would be headed by Graham King - James, Kresten, Adarsh and Myriam would be part of this working group.

- This working group would deal with diverse topics which have been accumulating, mainly from experience at various tournaments (e.g: Juniors rules, prize money, entry fees, requirements for referees, line-judges, live-scoring and live-streaming, simplification of tournament fees, gummi arm playoffs, Satellite tournaments, anti-doping rules, etc.).
- Some of the important tasks for this working group:
 - Review the many change requests still pending (many arising from tournaments).
 - Formulate the change into text for regulation revision.
 - Propose the change to the rest of the Council for a vote.
 - Publish approved changes to the Racketlon community.
 - Update the FIR Regulations documentation and release to the public domain.

1.2 Youth Development:

- This working group would be headed by Marcel Weigl – Jean and Graham would be part of this working group.
- Some of the important tasks:
 - Look at initiatives and ideas to get more junior players across all categories
 - Review the existing ERU Youth Concept, FIR regulations and concepts used by other FIR member federations (what age categories / review of rules for u10/u11 etc, court, racket and ball sizes, inclusion of squash etc)
 - Harmonisation of all the different models into a single common concept
 - Proposal of the concept to the FIR Council to vote
 - Publish the revised concept to the Racketlon community

1.3 Sponsorship:

- This working group would be headed by Kresten.
- Kresten initially stated that this is not really a working group, so any other members remain open. However, after suggestion from Amke and further discussion it was agreed that it would indeed be important to have a working group dedicated to exploring all sponsorship opportunities as this is a high priority for the FIR
- Kresten pointed out the importance of obtaining sponsorship and for what it could be used. He noted that very little was received in the last few years, but now we are better placed to initiate this.
- Possible different ways of gaining sponsorship deals were discussed, whether cash or tournament materials such as balls and shuttles, as were the processes which need to be built around it, such as how to decide what to spend it on, and how the sponsors should be handled
- One important idea was to request all players to acquire some kind of micro-sponsorship (either from friends, family or through corporates) for FIR, and in return be rewarded with some incentives for doing so.

1.4 Tournament Director / FIR Delegate group:

- New tournament directors require extensive support before and during their first tournament.
- Some very experienced tournament directors require only a few key decisions for their tournament.
- Discussions of assigning a very experienced TD and a very junior one need following up.

- Graham felt that FIR should provide more tournament support to new TD's as to how they should plan, launch and execute their tournaments, whether this was awareness and interpretation of the rules, advice on the number of courts and balls/shuttles needed, assistance with scheduling etc.
- Kresten observed that there is an existing Delegate group which should be enough to support the few new tournaments each year.
- James advised that UK Racketlon is currently preparing handbooks which would guide the new TD's on various aspects (e.g: Number of courts; shuttles needed, etc.). He will pass these documents to the group.

Amke noted that other FIR Council members (who could not join the meeting on Tuesday, or who had not yet been assigned to a working group), can still request to join one after the meeting; please write an email to Graham.

2. FIR Development Fund

The fund has been set up by FIR to help promote the expansion and growth of Racketlon, be it by new or less wealthy regions, or by major nations who have a new idea how to expand Racketlon within their own country.

- Initial documents defining the goals, processes and criteria have been completed.
- A "FIR Development Fund" committee (Dan Busby, Patrick Laplante Jr., Anna-Klara Ahlmer) has been agreed to administer it
- This committee bears the responsibility to analyse and approve the proposals for funding and it would be started soon.
- Graham noted that objectivity is of utmost importance, to avoid any challenges of favouritism. Anna-Klara stated that if a proposal comes from one of the committee member's country (UK/Canada/Sweden), the respective person would not take part in the decision making process.
- Rough timeline is to open for applications for the first round of funding asap, with November 15th as the deadline by when application forms need to be received by the Development Fund Committee. Successful applications will then receive their funding by the end of 2023. The second round of funding who then open in the first quarter of 2024.
- More information regarding the concept would follow in the coming weeks.

3. UN's Sport for Climate Action Pledge

- James explained that Racketlon could be part of UN's sport for climate action pledge.
- Major advantages such as sponsorship possibilities and fostering a good image (especially with the youth) were pointed out.
- Many sport associations are part of the pledge already.
- Possible negative consequences such as reduced sponsoring and less travel possibilities of players were also discussed briefly.
- Graham supported the initiative, but expressed concern about committing to anything before the responsibilities on FIR were clear.
- Everyone in the meeting agreed upon James preparing a document dealing about the carbon footprint, analysing the pledge further, costs and obligations etc.

- Once the document is ready, it would be presented to the next council meetings to discuss next steps and approve signature.

4. Racketlon Sprint (Introduction)

- Kresten explained about the shorter version of Racketlon briefly.
- It is similar to shorter, faster-moving versions as in Rugby, Cricket, etc. and played up to 11, instead of 21.
- Feedback was given to Duncan by several members over the last few weeks.
- All council members present in the meeting expressed interest about the format.
- It remains to be established how it would be worked into the World Rankings.
- It was pointed out by Kresten that having both formats (normal and sprint Racketlon) in a same tournament could be difficult
- Graham pointed out that both the juniors and seniors category players might prefer the sprint version, albeit for different reasons (reduced attention span needed / less physically demanding)
- Anna-Klara expressed the interest of fellow women players to have more matches over the tournament weekend and sprint Racketlon would pave way for it.
- 2 to 3 dedicated tournaments per year having sprint Racketlon are deemed to be ideal
- All the committee members were against the idea of making it too complex (such as with the introduction of a “power play” as introduced into Squash by Ramy Ashour).
- Without any test trials, currently it is not clear how shorter are the matches really compared to the normal version.
- James suggested he discuss with UK Racketlon to try a pilot tournament and one of the UK Racketlon Tour domestic events
- Jean said he would discuss with the Racketlon France Council to see if it could be trialled in France too

GK thanked everyone for their time and closed the meeting at 22.00 CET.