

FIR Council Meeting, Zoom, 21st January 2024, 15.00 – 16.30

Council Members present:

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

Council Members excused:

Myriam Enmer (ME), Kirsten Kaptein (KK), Marcel Weigl (MW), Jean Michot (JM),

The meeting commenced at 15:00 CET

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

DS Welcomed the Council and thanked them for their time.

1. Proposed changes to Rules of Racketlon for Gummi-Arm (Doubles) and rules around Round Robin Play and Gummi-Arm Play Offs

GK explained the discussions that the Regulations group have had re the rules for gummi-arms in doubles matches and whether things should remain as they are now (but with much clearer wording) with the “receiving pair” who decide which player should receive the serve on a gummi-arm point OR should there be a change so that it is the “loser of the toss” who should always choose who should receive the serve.

After a long discussion with various different viewpoints and considerations presented by AV, KH, DS, AH, GS and JP, it was decided that the Council would need to present to the AGM both the above options for the AGM to consider and to then vote on.

However, a vote was taken where the council approved (3 votes for, 2 votes against and 2 abstained) to keep the existing rule (but with better wording) that the receiving pair should continue to decide which person receives the serve. This will then be the Council’s recommendation to the AGM (being a modification to the Rules of Racketlon)...but ultimately it will be the AGM which will decide (in what is ultimately a difficult decision with pros and cons with each option).

A similarly long discussion about the existing rule of using a Gummi-Arm Play off (GAP) to decide round robin group placing (to avoid all RR matches having to play out a full set of tennis and then using a points count back). GK explained that the regulations working group recommended that TD’s should be given the option to either continue with the GAP or, if they felt they had enough tennis courts to avoid queues and scheduling problems, then they could choose to play out full sets of tennis in round robin groups. DS said he was strongly against this as it would cause confusion from tournament to tournament with the lack of consistency of the rule + that even if a venue had lots of

tennis courts to avoid queuing problems, the other big problem of having to play full sets of tennis is that it would cause players (playing full sets of tennis) to then become late for their next matches – which would cause huge problems for schedules and tournaments. DS suggested the Council should instead be thinking of ways to make GAP's fairer and less of a lottery.

The main suggestion to make GAP's fairer was that 4 points of each sport should be played.

Another option was discussed as used in France where all tennis sets were played to 11 points and the scores doubled up. But the council felt this would be a big disadvantage to tennis players and too complicated a system to enforce.

The Council voted unanimously, with one abstaining vote, to keep the GAP for all round robin groups (for singles and doubles) but that the GAP should now involve playing 4 points of each sport (instead of one point).

Lastly GK opened up the discussion about whether GAP's should continue for round robin groups for Teams. The Council quickly decided that having one person of each team playing the GAP should not continue as it is now and various other suggestions were discussed including each team nominating one player per sport and also adopting a new GAP rule of playing 4 points per sport.

However, the option of simply saying that for Teams only, GAP's should not continue (and that Team matches should play out the tennis), was felt to be the simplest and fairest way forward. AK and AF also both pointed out that organizing Team GAP's are themselves very difficult and time consuming to organize.

This option of not having GAP's for Team Round Robins (and playing full tennis) was approved by the council, with only one vote against and one abstaining.

2. Financials

AF said that there was still some final work to be done on finalizing the Actuals for 2023 and these would be distributed shortly (but included a "preliminary actuals for 2023" so that the Budget for 2024 could be compared to them. AF then presented the proposed Budget for 2024.

PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT, in EUR	Preliminary		Difference	Budget 2024	Difference
	Budget 2023	Actuals 2023			
Tournament Status Fees	9.928	9.937	9	11.440	1.503
Players licences	18.090	23.255	5.165	25.581	2.326
Country Membership Fees	5.720	5.670	-50	5.690	20
Tournament Planner licences	1.080	1.113	33	1.350	237
Marketing Fund	9.450	9.658	208	12.000	2.342
Additional Revenue	3.500	78	-3.422	2.000	1.922
Income	47.768	50.711	2.943	58.061	7.350
Marketing	-10.000	-13.043	-3.043	-14.044	-1.000
Web site	-225	-2.225	-2.000	-1.000	1.225
Climat Change Initiative	-770	0	770	0	0
Merchandise	-1.000	0	1.000	-300	-300
Tournament Software	-9.372	-9.129	242	-12.612	-3.483
World Tour Race trophies	0	0	0	-500	-500
Services President	-12.000	-12.000	0	-15.000	-3.000
Travel expenses, President	-1.000	-400	600	-1.500	-1.100
Travel expenses, other	-300	-561	-261	-561	0
Tournament entry fees, Council members	-2.050	-3.450	-1.400	-3.450	0
Other costs	-1.129	-2.236	-1.107	-2.035	201
Bank charges, paypal costs	-1.386	-1.818	-432	-2.000	-182
Exchange rate loss	-1.056	-1.056	0	-1.200	-144
FIR Project & Development Fund	-5.000	-5.000	0	-5.000	0
Perennial Trophies and engravings	-610	-556	54	-200	356
Cameras and video software	0	-1.000	-1.000	0	1.000
Expenses	-45.897	-52.475	-6.578	-58.901	-6.427
Profit / (Loss)	1.871	-1.764	-3.634	-841	923

Main changes compared to 2023 are:

- Now 3 SWT instead of 1
- Players licences growth by 10%
- 2nd person to engage in the media team, with extra costs involved
- Web Site ranking automatization and maintenance
- Introduction of World Tour Race, leading to more expenses on Tournament software and trophies
- Introduction of Satellite tournaments, leading to more tournament software expenses
- More workload (hours) and travel for president dealing with new development fund projects, more tournaments (satellites, world tour finals etc) and much more associated admin and planning (0.5 days more per week)

DS said that he had an important planned meeting in one week with a sports marketing company in Switzerland during which sponsorship opportunities for FIR would be fully explored...and that only after that meeting could a realistic picture of the sponsorship opportunities be understood.

DS also said that he was currently exploring a possibility for a FIR merchandise deal with a provider and hopes to have more news on this in the coming weeks – as such we will have a more realistic idea of potential merchandise income after that.

The proposed Budget for 2024 was unanimously approved by the Council.

It was explained that the Budget would now be sent to all member countries as part of the AGM invite for 2024 (due in March), so that any particular questions can be answered in advance...and then a consultative vote on the Budget would be made at the AGM itself.

3. Proposed New Junior Age Categories

GK explained that one meeting of the junior working group had been convened consisting of himself, Marcel Weigl, Jean Michot, Jonny Bispham, Michael Horacek (CZ) and Simon Waddicor (Germany) during which various topics had been discussed. GK will try and distribute some of the group's findings soon but for now there was a need to vote on the official junior age group categories.

The proposal is that the official junior age groups shall be u12, u14, u16, u18 and u21 for singles and doubles...with unofficial categories for u10 and u8.

KH made the point that it was vital to get this decided as soon as possible as entries to the world doubles was already open with the previous junior categories. GK agreed and said various changes also had to be done with tournament software with these new age categories. The Council approved the proposal unanimously.

For the team competition, we had last year 5 different junior categories at the WCs and DS explained that we can have the same amount this year with the new agreed ages: u12, u14, u16, u18 and u21... but players cannot play in multiple teams.

The Council agreed that those age categories as stated above shall also be implemented for teams at WCs.

U12 shall use a single yellow dot ball in squash and with green tennis balls. The council approved this change.

4. Proposed Additions to the World Tour 2024:

DS stated that there are some additions to the FIR World Tour 2024 which need to be approved by Council – most notably the World Tour Finals at Sihl sports in Switzerland on 13/14 December – which would be open to the top 8 men and women who have qualified through the FIR Race in 2024.

Also the new SWT in India at the end of November and IWT La Santa Open in mid-December.

The World Tour Committee had worked hard to establish with the TD that the World Tour Finals could take place on an appropriate date at the end of the season and would have everything we should expect of a showpiece tournament including: free accommodation and full hospitality for the players, prize money, live streaming and excellent media coverage. Similar work by the World Tour Committee to establish the appropriate conditions would be in place for the new SWT in India at the Willingdon Sports Club.

The Council unanimously agreed to these additions.

GK also mentioned that the World Tour Committee were also in the process of approving new satellite tournaments on the Tour, but that it would not be realistic or necessary (due to

their lower status) to get Council approval for all of these on an individual basis going forward.

DS then closed the meeting stating that he would mail around information about the remaining agenda items (none of which had required a vote) that were not able to be discussed in the time allocated at this meeting.

Minutes by Duncan Stahl and approved by Graham King