

ENGLISH ICE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION COMPANY LIMITED
MEETING OF DIRECTORS 8TH JUNE 2007

Minutes of meeting of EIHA Board on 8th June 2007 at the Buckatree Hall Hotel, Telford at 12 noon

Present: Ken Taggart, Tony Oliver, Bob Wilkinson, Irene Jones, Geoff Hemmerman, Rob Laidler, Neville Moralee, Val Wilkinson (Junior Section Secretary and Junior & U19 Registrations), Rita MacKriel (Midlands Conference Chairperson) from Women's England Squad on.

In attendance: Liz Moralee (minutes).

Apologies: None.

OPENING REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

KT said in the last few weeks there have been a great many emails and phone calls, but people are now calming down. He thanked everyone for coming, and congratulated **IJ** on finding such a good venue.

PROPOSAL TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE LAST BOARD MEETING
5TH MAY 2007

The minutes of the Board meeting on 5th May were read and approved, proposed **BW**, seconded **RL**.

MATTERS ARISING

The IIHF have said limited ITCs may be converted to unlimited mid-season. However when clubs tried to do this, the IIHF office refused the applications and told them they should have applied within three days. IHUK are writing to the IIHF about this.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MR TAGGART

KT said much of the furore over U16s no longer being allowed to play senior hockey was caused by people failing to read the press release properly. While the decision was taken only recently, all junior clubs were aware of the issues. There is far more aggravation over the change from U19s to U18s, where clubs are concerned about not only the players but also loss of income. The biggest problem is with the ENIHL, as some teams have many over-25s. They have been told the Board want to move towards an U25 league, but the matter is up for discussion and alternative suggestions are welcome. Since then Gary Dent has sent a very sarcastic email to the Board and all ENIHL teams. Some of the Board were concerned that a move to U25s would be very damaging to ENIHL teams with no EPIHL team at their rink. **BW** considers it would have been better to have set the league up as one for British-trained players only, because it is now dominated by teams who would like EPIHL-standard hockey and do not appear to want to be part of a development league. **GH** said protests over any of the recent decisions have nearly always been about the person's own club, child or finances. **KT** said his presentation at the AGM will explain why the changes were brought in at such short notice. It is designed to help people see the big picture.

IJ asked if he could do the presentation at the Rec Section annual meeting. It was agreed that he should come to the UK in September for this. The next Board meeting will be on 8th September. **IJ** will arrange a venue and accommodation in Sheffield. **BW** said Board meetings would benefit from more people's input. For the next one VW, RM, Mohammed

Ashraff and the Head of Coaching will be invited. The Board need a meeting with the new Head of Coaching as soon as possible.

COMPANY MATTERS – MISS JONES

Mohammed Ashraff was under doctor's orders to rest and so was unable to attend any of the weekend's meetings. The Board wished him a speedy recovery.

IJ is planning the 2008 AGM weekend. She does not think it possible to arrange all the meetings for one weekend without overlap. She would like to hold the AGM on the Friday night, but the clubs are unlikely to agree to this. The main problem this year is that the ENIHL meeting is likely to take far longer than originally planned. **RL** said also the room booked for it is not big enough, as there are likely to be 80 people there.

IJ has replied to a letter from Roberta Blackman-Woods MP about the Women.

The Rec Committee have asked **IJ** to propose a mandatory system of bank transfer payments for rec teams. **NM** has told Tony Wood that this can be done, but it will only work if there is a foolproof method of tracing payments. At the moment there are many personal cheques. When these bounce it can be difficult to work out which team they came from. **IJ** said the Rec Committee want a second Rec Section account, with income to be transferred to the EIHA account every month. She presumes the Rec Committee would monitor it. She gave the email about it to **NM**, who will consider it.

KT will ask Tony Boynton about arrangements for rec registrations for 2007/8. The Rec Section are worried that no one is checking licence cards. **GH** said usually the off-ice officials check licences. The Rec Section's online rosters are working well in place of licences. However there are still many photos missing from the rosters, which must make checking player eligibility difficult.

All Directors are invited to the Recreational Tournament on 7 – 8 July at Sheffield. **IJ** said it is an excellent weekend with enjoyable hockey. The Rec Section emailed her because they were surprised to be informed that the officials are to use a four-man system, with two referee supervisors attending. They are concerned about the expense; in previous years they used two officials per game, at minimal cost. They also do not consider the tournament suitable for trialling the four-man system, since the games are only 15 minutes long. **BW** said the IIHF are still waiting for feedback on the four-man system and are not even sure they will use it in the World Championships. It was felt that the Rec Section should not need to pay for additional officials using the tournament for training purposes. **KT** will ask the OCM about it.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR AGM – MR MORALEE

NM said there is nothing very controversial in his report. He is proposing to increase registration charges by the inflation rate of 3%. There have been accusations that changes to the leagues are a ploy to make money: while money could be made from players who would have been U19s now having to register as seniors, far more is likely to be lost through U25 rules. He would consider allowing players who would have been final year U19s to be registered at the U18 rate.

IJ said on the auditors' report the date **GH** was appointed as a Director should be the date he was elected at the AGM. The Board were pleased with the accounts. **NM** was thanked for doing such a good job; they think finding anyone else to manage the finances so successfully would cost a lot.

IHUK UPDATE – MR WILKINSON

BW went to the IIHF Congress in Moscow, but **NM** was unable to go as his visa did not arrive in time. The GB teams' World Championship venues have been announced. There have been no bids yet for Women Div III. Unless Women Divisions II – IV all find venues, none of these tournaments will take place. **BW** said IHUK are not prepared to host the tournament

again next year. This year's event was very costly. They were also understaffed, and could not afford extra hotel bills without additional outside finance. He was pleased the tournament had funding from UK Sport and the EIHL, which meant IHUK did not need to ask the EIHA for extra money. If GB Seniors finish above 27th in the world rankings they will not need to play in the Olympic first qualifying round. Canada are hosting the Senior, U20 and U18 World Championships. In return they will forgo their expenses from the IIHF, and give money to developing hockey nations. **NM** is going to the IIHF General Secretaries' Conference in September.

BW would like IHUK to work more closely with the Irish IHA. He thinks it would be suitable to have an arrangement where players may move between GB and Eire without needing ITCs, similar to Belgium and the Netherlands. The IIHA are planning a 4-nation tournament. Hockey Canada have given them 4m Can \$ for equipment, and Nike have agreed to supply uniforms.

BW is still very concerned at the changes in ITC arrangements. If nothing is done to make up the shortfall of c. £20k, IHUK will be insolvent.

Newcastle Vipers are asking **KT** to sign a funding application. Other applications will come in shortly.

UPDATE OF INSURANCE FOR 2007/8 – MR OLIVER

The Board had seen the report from **TO**'s meeting with Lockton. There were questions about the directors' liability cover. It is for the Directors but not for the company itself. There is a new proposal from AIG which would cover the company itself. They still have some questions, and are asking for the last two sets of accounts.

TO distributed the report for the AGM. He will carry on dealing with insurance for the next few months, to deal with the renewals and the new proposal. He has the claims history. It is not overly high, and has been fairly static over the last few years. He is handing over responsibility for travel insurance, as next year he will be away for five weeks during the peak time for applications. He was congratulated for sorting out this policy. **VW** agreed to take over dealing with travel insurance applications. Lockton are providing sponsorship, and **TO** is also asking AIG.

TO distributed the minutes of the last CCPR meeting. The next one is the AGM on 24th July in London. **RL** said he is happy to continue going to the meetings, but will not be able to attend all of them. He was also concerned about the cost of travel, since he lives so far from where most of the meetings are. The Board thought it worth paying the expenses for whoever wants to go. **NM** attends many of the meetings for IHUK. It was agreed that he and **RL** should decide between them who should go to each meeting. **NM** said while some meetings are more relevant than others, it is worth being there to remind influential people of hockey's existence. The CCPR will be sent **RL**'s contact details.

The EIHA have brought up with the CCPR the issue of U16s needing licences from councils to play senior hockey. **KT** said it was not possible to announce plans to change the rules a year in advance, as the Essex problems have forced the issue as a matter of risk assessment and child protection. **IJ** suggested asking clubs to send in risk assessments. Part of the Chelmsford issue however is perceived rather than actual risk. The father of a girl player wrote to North East Lincolnshire Council and were told she does not need a licence. However the letter was from the Education Welfare Services, who were interested mainly in whether the player would need to miss school. When **GH** rang North East Lincolnshire Council they said she would need a licence. If council regulations are followed strictly then U16 players do need licences to play senior hockey, but it is not known whether players outside Essex would have their applications refused. Terry Drury is the chair of the National Network for Children in Employment & Entertainment, which is why the issue is being publicised to other councils. It was thought best not to allow U16s to play senior hockey even if their council gives them a licence.

TO is now handing over his paperwork about child protection suspensions. He also has templates for suspension letters.

TO thanked everyone for their efforts and support over 17 happy years as a Director.

WOMEN'S ENGLAND SQUAD – MR WILKINSON

The squad is not affected by the rule about U16s not playing senior hockey, as they are continuing with the old rules until August.

AGE RESTRICTIONS – MR LAIDLER

The proposed changes to the ENIHL came as a surprise to many because they were discussed over the Conference Tournament weekend but not at the Board meeting. **RL** said while some ENIHL teams are extremely unhappy about the age restrictions, others are strongly in support. There has been little feedback from junior clubs, and some of them are pleased about it. There have been many suggestions of age group changes from U10 upwards. Those involving an extra age group cannot be considered due to lack of ice time. The Board think merging the U10s and U12s (in effect abolishing the U10s) in order to fit in more senior teams would be a major step backwards. There were some of the same considerations when the U20 league was disbanded due to lack of ice time, and the U18s changed to U19s to keep more players in. Health and safety is now playing a major part in sport, and the Christopher White case in rugby has caused a number of sports to change their rules.

Suggestions regarding ENIHL age restrictions include

- Exempting players who coach from over-25 total
- Exempting goalkeepers from over-25 total
- Always retaining a limited number of over-25s
- Dividing ENIHL into two leagues, one U25 and one with limits on over-25s

RL is considering how a two-tier system could work. He thinks the top tier should not be regionalised. **KT** said it would make sense to have three regions. **VW** pointed out that the ENIHL age restrictions were precipitated by the change from U19 to U18, but this affects only c. 130 players. The better players are already playing at least ENIHL level by the time they reach final year U19. Also this is the final year in which players are still taking part in youth hockey from the years when there was a boom in U10s. Now in the U10s it is not only lack of numbers that are a worry but also too few fixtures being played, often because parents will not travel. **IJ** asked if 21-year-old players now have only four years left in senior hockey. Most thought a move to U25 would not mean losing many players. The EIHA are not in a position to give endless choice. Anyone who wants to play hockey can, but it is impossible to ensure that everyone is where they want to be. Also choices are dictated as much by the clubs as by the rules; if there are more players than places on the team the weaker players must move clubs if they want to play. The ENIHL should be for players aiming to move up, which is unlikely to apply to players who are still in that league at 25, or to players coming down from the EPIHL. **BW** said ice time for young players is vital: the GB U20s won bronze in Div I because the players were getting plenty of experience in the EPIHL, while the U18s were relegated because they were not getting enough ice time. EPIHL teams do not seem to be looking sufficiently at ENIHL players. U19 players also miss out if the U19 team operates separately from all the others.

RL said it is a very complicated issue and could not be dealt with at one section meeting. It is not on the agenda for the AGM, and there is no need to say any more than that the EIHA are following IIHF guidelines and their own risk assessment. He thought it would be best to ask the ENIHL teams which would like to be in each tier, and then ask for further suggestions. It was agreed to wait until the ENIHL meeting and find out what the majority of teams want before making any decision.

PRESENTATION FOR LADIES U16 – MR HEMMERMAN

GH went through the presentation he intends to make at the Women's meeting after the items about the past year's business. He explained the reasons for U16s not being allowed to play senior hockey. Essex County Council do not consider the women's game any different from the EPIHL. While women's hockey is non-checking, he believes it would be difficult to argue with their position when there have been major disciplinary problems in the Women's leagues this year. He showed numbers of players per Women's team, and of U16 girls at each rink. Although 78 U16 girls were playing in the Women's leagues last year, the figures suggest that even without U16s there should be no league team with less than 12 registered players. A major problem for girls is that from U14 upwards they find it much harder to be selected by junior teams, partly because few start playing younger than U12. For these reasons he is proposing an U16 development competition. There are not enough U16 girls for a team at each rink, so players should have dispensation to play U16 at a different rink from their junior club where appropriate. Having regional rather than club teams would be an option. The structure is to be decided when he knows how many teams want to enter. He will ask people to work together for the benefit of hockey.

Others pointed out that while this might be the right thing to do for the girls, the EIHA might be opening themselves up to discrimination claims if boys do not have the same concessions. Having a women's league causes no discrimination problems, even though there are no leagues for males only, so a league for U16 girls should not be seen as any different. **GH** does not think anyone will be opposed to the U16 girls' competition, but junior teams are likely to ask if there are similar plans for boys, because it is not only girls but also many boys who find themselves stuck on the bench and people want them to have the same opportunities. However as there are so few girls playing junior hockey above U14, he considers they need other alternatives. The U16 girls' competition also avoids the girls having to play checking. **VW** said the EIHA need to be very careful about changing rules and structures in order to deal with long-term aims. The U16 girls' competition has similarities to the U10s, where teams have been allowed to merge. This was supposed to give clubs a chance to build up numbers, but the situation is not improving, and the team consisting of players from the largest number of clubs have played no games. **GH** acknowledged there were a lot of potential problems over the U16 girls' competition, but no one has been able to find any other solution. Another difficulty is finding ice time for the U16 competition. Also if there is only a small number of teams the league will not be viable unless it is a national league, and the teams might not be prepared to travel such distances. Clubs are to be told that the U16 girls' competition is intended as preparation for the Women's leagues.

U16 girls will still be able to train with senior women. **GH** is concerned that in the Women's leagues, training is often lower quality even than U10s, and many of the players should be in rec. **BW** said there are good players coming up who should greatly improve the fortunes of GB Women. However the Women's leagues suffer from a lack of good coaches, and he would like to see more development in this area.

ANY MATTERS FOR THE AGM

There was nothing that had not already been covered.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

KT asked about numbers of university teams. They now have more than 30 teams in a three-tier competition. The membership list includes only 11 university teams, because most universities register as one club but might then decide to ice more than one team. **IJ** said they should fill in membership forms for all their teams. **BW** said the IIHF have asked about university leagues, saying that if they have a league they need ITCs. It was agreed that the BUIHA Committee should be invited to the next Board meeting to give their presentation at 2 p.m. **NM** explained that they were keen to have the whole committee at the presentation

because they wanted the Board to meet them all, as most have not yet done so. At the moment university players who are also playing league hockey are being asked to register twice. **NM** said it might be simplest to insure the university players under the league player scheme (they would still have two registrations if they were also playing league). The insurance is different, with rec insurance having person-to-person cover. **GH** said the issue is similar to that of league teams playing against rec teams. If the game is approved by the EIHA the players are covered.

VW would like junior players to have licences that would not need renewing until their 18th birthday. Mohammed Ashraff was going to look into costings. A credit card machine costs c. £1,800.

The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.

Signed..... Date.....