

**East of Scotland Squash Association - Minutes of 35<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (page 1 of 3)  
at Grange Sports Club, Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

**Present :** Eric Donohoe (Chairman & Royal Bank of Scotland), Dave Ireson (Treasurer & Tyne), Ron Pearman (League Secretary & Tyne), David Ferguson (Secretary & Waverley), John Bain (Junior Convener & Edinburgh Sports Club), Yvonne Ferguson (Committee member & Waverley), Richard McIntosh (Committee member & Watsonians), George Mieras, Archie McCue, Richard MacBride, (Colinton Castle), Harald Nesse, Robin Carse (Inveresk), Simon Boughton, Ian Williams, (Edinburgh Sports Club), Ian Forshaw, Derek Graham (Linlithgow), Stuart Tennant, Henry Pearce, Peter Brierley (Edinburgh University), Christy Looby, Bill Marshall, Alasdair Gordon, Robert Pfab, Dougie Brown, Andy Whitelaw (Grange), Charlie Patrick (Agilent), David Legge (Dunbar), John Burnet, Robin Nisbet (Bank of Scotland), Dave King, Keith Robertson (Abercorn), Fred Ainslie (Hatton), Colin Boswell (Dalgety Bay), Chris Weare (Watsonians), Ross Anderson (Dean), Michael Read (Waverley), Gillian Graham, Elaine Inglis, Joseph Ghaemi (David Lloyd), Pernille Thomson (David Lloyd Newhaven), Claire Kidd (Heriot-Watt University), Paul Frank, Kim Atkinson (Scottish Squash).

**Apologies :** George Purves (Inveresk), Donald Shearer, Chris Jeffrey (Waverley), Morag Johnston (Dalgety Bay).

**1. A.G.M. Minutes and matters arising**

The Minutes of the 34<sup>th</sup> AGM (held at Colinton Castle Sports Club on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2008) were approved.

**2. Scottish Squash membership update**

Dave I briefly summarised what SS had been doing in the last year (I think I can safely use the abbreviation “SS” without causing confusion now that the somewhat discredited original organisation’s been disbanded for over 60 years) – they had formed “Sub-Groups” approximately 2 years ago, and these groups had been working hard to deliver in key areas. The Tournament Sub-Group had been working to deliver an enhanced series of events based on a fair applications process, in addition to supporting events at regional and European level. Further information for the forthcoming season would be available to Tournament Organisers shortly. The Refereeing Sub-Group had completed overhauling the Refereeing Pathway and Grading Structure, and had assessed numerous candidates. The Child Protection Sub-Group had been working to ensure that SS is in compliance with various pieces of legislation, and was working on a roll-out to regions and clubs to ensure that they are compliant with current practices. They had also formed two ad-hoc working groups – Corporate Governance and Membership. The former had been looking at a variety of things such as the systems and processes SS has in place, and the way the Management Board manages SS to ensure that its governance is fit for purpose. Ron (SS Vice President) would outline the work of the latter. The staff at SS had been working extremely hard over the past season. The Performance Team had achieved some fantastic results of late; we were qualifying more coaches all of the time, and hopefully this would result in a material difference on the ground in the near future. In the background they had been working on a number of initiatives to assist clubs at grass routes level, which should be landing in the near future. Ron expanded on the efforts over the last 10 years to entice West Squash and some other regional associations “back to the fold”, i.e. make SS affiliation a requirement for their clubs again, like East and Grampian. Despite a great many changes in recent times and the removal of most of reasons they’d given for splitting, these regions remain outside. So at the AGM (20th July, 7.00, McDiarmid Park, Perth) it will be proposed that “a rule is introduced to distinguish regions/leagues into accredited and non-accredited groups. To become accredited the league/region will have to meet Scottish Squash’s “accreditation requirements”. Once a region/league is accredited it will be able to (continue to) access the benefits of SS. Those which do not meet the requirements will not be able to access the benefits. Individual members and clubs can continue to join in their own right if they so choose. Any member (of SS) who participates in a non-accredited region/league in any given season will be in breach of SS’s Membership Rules, and as such would then render themselves ineligible to receive any further benefits from SS in that season. One of the accreditation requirements would be a compulsory region/league membership clause. The rule would be progressively phased in and at first only an agreement in principle would be required, and a promise from the region/league committee to take the proposal to their next AGM. SS during this period (between SS AGM and region/league AGM) will conduct a complete membership review in consultation with the membership/regions/leagues to ensure that the membership benefits package and fee structure are the best they can be.” Archie asked if, for example, an individual SS member playing in the West League would be disbarred and was shocked to hear the answer “yes”. In reply to a question on how much SS receive from all Scottish clubs, Ron said it was around £35,000 this year, which went into the general “pot” (not into the Performance Programme) and the Sportscotland funding was around £300,000. The previous affiliation fee system had been grossly unfair and the current one was far more equitable, although not perfect because some clubs seem to come off relatively worse. Fred said his club had only 12 regular and 12 occasional players, with no juniors, felt they had to pay far too much and “get nothing for their money”. Bill shared this opinion. Kim explained some of the benefits they could have if they chose to. Ron reminded us that 10 years ago SS had only a Chief Executive and a Secretary, but now it’s a vastly improved set-up which of course costs money. In the last 2 years East had received from SS £3,882, £1,991 and £4,387 to put our people through UK Coaching Courses Levels 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Dave I confirmed the whole subject of affiliation fees was being reviewed by a membership working party, with any aspect of it up for change.

**3. Presentation of League trophies/League Secretary's report**

Ron gave out trophies to representatives of all the winners : (Ladies) d3 : Dalgety Bay, d2 : Kirkcaldy, d1 : CLASS 88 ; (Open) d6 : David Lloyd 2, d5 : Inveresk, d4 : David Lloyd 1, d3 : Edinburgh University 2, d2 : Waverley 1, d1 : Edinburgh University 1. He congratulated University 1 on their second consecutive championship, Waverley 1 on being the Open League's only unbeaten team and Inveresk on their first ever title (their captain, George Purves, had wished it to be known that he had won the 3 points by which his team had won division 5). Ron confirmed that he would not be standing for re-election, for no other reason than he needed a break after all these years. He thanked all those who had co-operated so well and made the job easier. George P had also sent his written thanks to Ron for all his work in 15 years as League Secretary, praising his "integrity, absolutely consistent pursuit of fair play and helpful attention to any enquiries". Dave F read this out, adding his agreement to all of that. A vote of thanks was enthusiastically endorsed by everyone at the meeting as Eric presented Ron with an engraved quich from the committee.

**4. Chairman's Report**

Eric handed out copies of his Report, which had been sent to the clubs. Christy asked about the status of the amendment passed at last year's AGM – "from season 2008/09 the League Secretary will deduct 10 points from a club's teams, for each scheduled fixture after 31st October where their League fees remain unpaid". Eric confirmed that while this hadn't been incorporated into the rules, it had been made clear to clubs early on in the season. Eric also advised that we would be trying out an online results system in the new season for in Ladies' League Division 1 and Open League Divisions 1 and 2, in tandem with the existing match card system. Christy suggested clubs could no longer blame Royal Mail for late results and that the penalties for late results could be tightened up.

**5. Treasurer's Report**

Dave I handed out copies of his report and the accounts. He reported a surplus of £328 and received the meeting's approval to keep the League fees at £40 per team. Again there was no discussion.

**6. Proposal 1 – Accounts auditing – from Dave Ireson, Treasurer**

Dave I explained that the proposal brought our Constitution up to date with the reality that we are not legally required to have our accounts audited. Instead they will continue to be independently examined. Archie had once again performed this task and was thanked. This proposal was carried unopposed.

**7. Proposal 2 – Scottish Squash affiliation clause – from Grange Squash Club**

Christy outlined the reasoning behind the proposal – the clause had been brought in a generation ago and was due to be reviewed, then either continued or changed. SS's affiliation income was now about 10% of its Sportscotland income. Value for money was important and the number of clubs and teams was dwindling. Only East and Grampian of the 6 regions still had the clause. The bill was going up every year and the benefits were going down. Removing the clause wouldn't stop clubs affiliating. Forcing them seemed unfair. George M asked if Sportscotland funding was still directly related to what SS raised – Ron replied that it wasn't and went on to describe our senior and junior national teams' successes in the recent European Championships. Bill and Fred reiterated their views that their clubs got nothing for their money, Bill saying it was ridiculous to be forced to pay affiliation fees. Ron disputed this, saying that several Grange members had enjoyed free or heavily subsidised refereeing and coaching courses, which could be used to the benefit of other Grange members. Dave L said Dunbar weren't going to support the proposal, but it had been a close call. The right way to approach it was that it's a small amount of money, let SS get on with it and if they're perceived to do a bad job they're accountable. He had no problem with paying a few quid a year to support the sport without necessarily getting something personally back. He urged everybody to vote against the proposal. George M said we'd had this same arguments so many times over the years. Nobody in any sport ever feels they get their money's worth from their governing bodies and member countries of the WSF made the same complaints. It seemed clear that some of the amounts charged were wrong, but the membership group was looking into the whole thing. It would be a disaster if we and Grampian chose to disaffiliate. Dave K said that Abercorn got nothing for their juniors, while they used to have squad sessions run by former Regional Development Officer Alex Arbuckle. Dave I said that the RDO's job was to set such things up and the clubs should take it on from there. Simon suggested any club could tap into the large pool of Level 1 coaches we now had in the East to run coaching sessions. Dave I stressed that SS staff were working very hard and not sitting around twiddling their thumbs. They had a very tight budget and were striving to concentrate on grass-roots development. They needed professional structures in place – this took time, but they were working on it. He suggested to Fred that he contacts SS to see if there's anything they can do to help his club. Christy criticised SS for delays in getting things done and included in his criticism the fact that the new SS website had only been launched on the day of the meeting. Dave F commented "You can't win !" Keith R feared that Abercorn's squash section could die out, even though they currently ran 5 teams. Archie asked if SS could urgently look into the money asked of smaller clubs – Dave I agreed they would do this. Ron explained that in 6 of the last 8 years East had had an RDO (the last one was a Grange member) funded entirely by SS. We didn't have one now because Sportscotland withdrew their funding to SS. Colin asked why non-competitive "supporter" members had to pay at all. Should they not have free membership, like the juniors ? Dave I replied that this was one of the things being considered. Simon asked where we'd all be if we didn't support our national body. Dave F asked if anybody had considered the consequences if the proposal were passed – Grampian would follow, clubs would stop paying purely to save money, our national body and our sport would lose credibility, as would our 2016

Olympic bid. John B agreed, but said it was unfair that East paid when other regions didn't. The total number of votes in the room – including proxies – was 82 (of a maximum possible 92), so proposals would need 58 votes (70%) to go through. This proposal was defeated with 57 votes against, so there was no need to count votes for or abstentions.

8. **Proposal 3 – Scottish Squash membership fees – from Dave Ireson, Treasurer**

There being no support for this proposal – even Dave I declared himself “indifferent” ! – it was withdrawn.

9. **Proposal 4 – National League player rule – from Eric Donohoe, Chairman**

This proposal was carried overwhelmingly, with no need for a count.

10. **Proposal 5 – League win bonus points – from Ross Anderson, Dean Squash Club**

Ross said this proposal would mean we couldn't have a draw (unless both teams had only 4 players). Dave F thought it wasn't a problem to have a draw and 5 bonus points instead of 3 would widen the difference between a team narrowly winning every week and one narrowly losing. Eric said if you had 3 top players you could walk away with the league with 5 bonus points every match. The proposal was overwhelmingly defeated.

11. **Proposal 6 – Percentage votes needed to carry a proposal – from Eric Donohoe, Chairman**

Eric felt it was too hard to make changes if a few large clubs disagreed with a proposal and you needed 70%. George M said most bodies in squash had a two-thirds majority rule. He agreed 70% was too high but thought 60% was too low. He suggested the committee could review the whole constitution, which had been drafted a long time ago, with a view to refreshing it. The proposal was defeated with 46 votes against.

12. **Election of Office-Bearers and Committee Members**

Eric announced that Dougie Brown (Grange) was willing to stand as Ron's successor as League Secretary. Dougie and the rest of the committee were then elected en bloc in what seemed indecent haste. Eric as usual invited any other people, preferably from clubs not already represented, to join the committee. *The next day, to Eric's joy, Henry Pearce (Edinburgh University) and Claire Kidd (Heriot-Watt) volunteered their services, drastically reducing the average age and, along with Dougie, introducing the very real danger of fresh ideas.* The new committee is therefore : Chairman – Eric Donohoe, Treasurer – Dave Ireson, Secretary – Dave Ferguson, League Secretary – Dougie Brown, Junior Convener – John Bain, Committee Members – Yvonne Ferguson, Richard McIntosh, Henry Pearce, Claire Kidd.

13. **Any other business**

Ross asked when the (Hugely Enjoyable) East Championships would be, Dave F replying that they'd be in late September. George Mieras spoke briefly on the “Squash for 2016” Olympic bid, in which he is heavily involved as Bid Co-ordinator. In the last 4 months he and his World Squash Federation colleagues have co-opted a professional media company and created a dedicated website, which can be accessed via the WSF one [www.worldsquash.org.uk](http://www.worldsquash.org.uk). Two sports out of 7 candidates would be going in and squash was probably third in line, at the moment. Our very strong case would be presented to the IOC executive board in Lausanne on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June – then they consider it and we lobby for support. A decision should be made by mid-August. If successful, squash will receive substantial money and, of course, positive publicity. George urged everyone to go out and tell people and, if possible, donate (or get their clubs to donate) to the bid via the website.

On this most encouraging note, this very well attended meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the chair and its occupant, Eric.