

ENGLISH ICE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Minutes of meeting of EPIHL

Slough – 26 November, 2006

Present – *as per attendance record*

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

KT welcomed all to the meeting and apologised for the delay in getting the event under way. He explained that a number of issues had been raised by the Youth Working Group at its meeting this morning which needed his attention. He went on to announce that Mohammed Ashraff, Referee in Chief had resigned from that post with effect from the end of the season. At this early stage, it was too early to make any form of announcement about what action would be taken to fill that role.

2. APOLOGIES/CLUB ROLL CALL

Apologies of absence were submitted on behalf of League statistician, Malcolm Preen. The Isle of Wight was not represented at the meeting and the Chairman instructed a fine be levied.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD IN SOLIHULL ON 26 FEBRUARY, 2006

The minutes of the last meeting held in Nottingham on 11 June, 2006 were received as a true record (proposed by Swindon and seconded by Telford). There were no matters arising not covered by today's agenda.

4. LEAGUE REPORTS

- a) **Fixtures** – AF reported on the current situation, stating that EPIHL Cup semi-finals still needed to be sorted (the teams confirmed they would do so today) and that one League fixture remained outstanding. Other than these issues, AF was pleased with the current situation.
- b) **Discipline** – ST handed out up to date discipline records to each team at the start of the meeting, those records also including 10 minute penalties for team information.

H Howton asked about appealing against suspensions of 3 games or less. There were 2 possibilities here: first, where the team felt the referee's call could be questioned, they should submit video evidence to MA on Monday so he could review that along with officials' reports; second, where a suspension of more than one game was involved, then video evidence could be sent to ST who would review it as part of her deliberations in the disciplinary process,

M Thompson asked that officials' reports be made available to teams so they could consider the appeal but KT said this would not be allowed. Official reports would remain within the disciplinary system until such time as a formal appeal was made.

For the benefit of everyone present, ST explained the workings of the Disciplinary Panel. It was accepted by all present that an incident on Saturday evening could not be reviewed until Monday (and, as such, any games missed on Sunday evening would have to be accepted).

- c) **Registrations** – ST reminded all that the formal cut off point for registrations would again be 31st January, although the 20 game rule would in many cases mean that individual teams' cut off

points would be before that date. She announced that she would be unavailable on 7th/8th December due to a family commitment.

- d) **Statistician** – in MP’s absence, RL reminded everyone about the new postal system; to date MP had not received fines but should that start to occur then he would be passing on the cost of excess postage, his travelling expenses and a standard £10 league fine for each occasion a team did not meet the Post Office requirements on letters.

KT referred to the information being published in Powerplay about the League’s gates and suggested to all teams that they keep this accurate. Not only important in marketing terms, the interest of official bodies might be drawn by what they considered to be questionable figures. He referred to one team who apparently had had “0” supporters at games and asked that this be corrected in future.

M Thompson referred to instances where game sheets had been changed after the match by officials. Not properly done, this had led to questions from the statistician and subsequent answers from the team – more work for everyone which could have been avoided had the officials done the job right in the first place. MA thanked the team for bringing this to his attention and said he would investigate.

5. REFEREE IN CHIEF’S REPORT NEW STANDARDS OF OFFICIATING

KT opened the debate by asking all teams to visit cihra.org on which site three videos (American, Canadian and NHL) outlining the new standards were available at no cost. MA had no report as such, and awaited questions/comments from the floor.

Team owners and met prior to the meeting and developed a list of 6 points which they felt appropriate for discussion.

- a) **Variation of consistency between officials** – the teams were worried about the apparent major divergences between calls made by officials and wondered what help they could be in rectifying this situation. MA said that he was constantly evaluating officials’ performances. The EIHA recognised that there were not sufficient, adequately qualified and trained officials in the south for the EPIHL but steps were being taken to bridge this known gap. With regard to training officials, MA again repeated his request for copies of game DVDs so he could discuss issues with individual officials depending on what he saw in the DVD. He thanked Romford in particular for sending in copies of DVDs and suggested that if other teams did likewise they might expect to see an improvement in the situation.
- b) **Integration between EPIHL and Elite** – team owners asked whether experience at Elite level might improve the situation. KT said that his view was that EPIHL officials were following the new standards more closely than Elite officials. MA also pointed out that many officials currently working in the EPIHL had had past experience at Elite. A major impact would be available if more officials could be recruited and trained from those players leaving the game – it was known that some 3000 players had walked away from the game over the last 10 years and KT suggested that recruitment of just 200 of those ex-players would make a significant impact on the availability, as well as the standard, of official in EPIHL.
- c) **Team owner assessment** – it was asked whether a form could be developed through which team owners could assess the officials and report back to MA. In response, MA said he would always respect and accept an assessment from a coach but pointed out that not all team owners were suitably qualified to assess the technical performance of officials in managing a game. It was agreed that assessments could be sent to MA along with DVDs of the game.

- d) **Officials attending team training sessions** – the team owners said they would be prepared to offer expenses to officials who might be willing to attend team training sessions. It was felt that this would help develop a better rapport between players/coaches and officials and would also help players understand what was expected in terms of the new officiating standards. MA said he welcomed the offer and would monitor reaction from officials to any offers made.
- e) **Conference calls** – it was asked whether specific interpretations could be communicated to officials during weekly conference calls. MA said that this would prove very difficult as not all officials were able to take part in calls due to their family and work commitments. It was suggested that team owners would in some instances be prepared to pay more per game to have officials travel to them from a wider geographical area.
- f) **Physical contact interpretation** – there was felt to be some confusion in respect of players in control of the puck and those who did not have control. MA demonstrated his view and that being operated by the officials.

MA said that the officials accepted that they were at the sharp end of criticism by supporters and others but emphasised that much was being done to improve the situation. He thanked the EIHA for its continuing financial support of the development programme and explained the level of costs being borne by the association in supporting assessors (from inside and outside the EIHA).

To try and address some of the issues, and to try to maintain good checking hockey perceived to be the desired outcome of supporters, MA proposed he produce an “idiot proof” guide to what is a good check and what could be termed a bad call by an official. He felt that this could lead to increased respect between player and official. Following a further brief discussion, it was agreed this be done by 1 December.

6. EPIHL PLAY OFF WEEKEND

HH reported that a fair amount of preparatory work had been undertaken. Before convening the committee, he was waiting for draft posters, etc. from Powerplay. He had hoped to have had something for this weekend but it looked now as if the meeting wouldn't take place until the 1st week in January.

As for practical matters, hotels were provisionally booked for the event, some discussion had taken place with the venue management and tickets had been discussed.

In order to alleviate some auditing problems from the last finals, the committee had asked that AF be supplied with a bank paying in book so that all cheques and receipts could be seen by him and a check of ticket allocation/payment could be maintained. RL agreed to speak to Neville Moralee about this.

7. EPIHL COACHES MEETING

The notes of the meeting of EPIHL coaches held on 27th August had been circulated with the agenda for today. RL said that those notes contained a number of suggestions which should be considered by the EPIHL in time for adoption/implementation (if appropriate) next season.

It was agreed this be carried forward to the next meeting for debate.

8. YOUNG PLAYER DEVELOPMENT – JUNIORS

KT outlined the situation regarding developments in Essex and the local authority ruling there about children of school age playing sports in front of a paying audience. The local authority had declined

applications for licences from two junior players to play EPIHL in that County. The Board was, therefore, seeking the advice of the CCPR about the possible implications and impact on the whole sport (and other sports, such as rugby which involved physical aspects). Until such time as a measured response could be made by the EIHA, the status quo would remain.

9. FINES FOR EXCESSIVE PENALTY POINTS

P Wing had suggested the idea of introducing fines as penalty for a limited number of serious offences which were a concern to all team owners in the EPIHL. These included spearing, racist comments, head butting. His idea was that team owners would support the system to be operated by the EIHA.

After a debate, no agreed outcome was reached and so the idea was not taken forward, although some team owners pointed out that they already had an in-house system of fining players under certain circumstances.

10. REGISTER OF NI NUMBERS

P Wing suggested that a central list of NI numbers be retained so that the EIHA, and all EPIHL team owners, could be sure that all players were being properly employed and tax paid, etc.

KT said that he was attending a meeting with the Minister for Sport in December following the recent bad publicity over employee relations. Although an issue for Elite, it was still a concern that all EPIHL teams operate satisfactory systems within the requirements of the Inland Revenue. At this point, KT felt that the Sports Minister would not be too hard on the EIHA as we could show evidence of satisfactory insurance levels, etc. All teams confirmed that all players in the League were operating to the guidelines set out by the Inland Revenue.

It was agreed at this time there was no need for the EIHA to operate a central list of NI numbers.

11. BROADBAND TV

RL reported on his discussions this week with Ice Media Productions. He had hoped that their “strategy” document would have been available for teams but the production company had not circulated it as they had hoped. He briefly outlined the discussions, stating that IMP would be contacting all teams to discuss their individual positions.

12. SWINDON

a) Transfers of juniors from other clubs

In response to a question about procedure, RL stated that all forms were available from the EIHA website.

b) U19s playing up for development

KT reported that the Board had debated a strategy at its meeting yesterday and outlined what had been agreed. RL was to circulate all teams within the next couple of weeks.

c) League branding

It was asked whether the League logo could be circulated as previously discussed. RL said he would attend to this as soon as possible (new artwork had recently been sorted).

13. PETERBOROUGH

The issue of U18s not being allowed to take off helmets for national anthems and periods of respectful silence was proving problematical. Recently, U18s had been left on the bench so they could remove helmets during a one minute silence. KT said that the rule had been introduced to prevent possible accident in younger age groups; he recognised that it was probably not appropriate for EPIHL games and so instructed that all players involved with EPIHL matches could remove helmets for national anthem and for periods of respectful silence.

14. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would probably be held in early February.