

ENGLISH ICE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Minutes of meeting of EPIHL

Telford – 10 June, 2007

Present – *as per attendance record*

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

Ken Taggart welcomed everyone to the meeting and hoped that all had found the new venue without too much difficulty. Traffic problems on the M54 this morning had caused one or two problems but all teams were expected to be in attendance soon.

2. APOLOGIES/CLUB ROLL CALL

Apologies for absence were recorded from Malcolm Preen (attending Womens Section Meeting), Sue Tomalin (on holiday) and Mohammed Ashraff. Team representatives from Milton Keynes and Chelmsford had rang in to say they had been caught up in traffic and would be a few minutes late (both teams arrived during the early part of the meeting).

KT referred to the situation with Mohammed Ashraff. Having been ordered bed rest for 14 days earlier in the week, Ash was on the road to recovery after a problem but would obviously not be attending today. The teams agreed unanimously to record their best wishes for a speedy and full recovery for Ash.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2006 IN NOTTINGHAM AND ON 26 NOVEMBER 2006 IN SLOUGH

The minutes of the two meetings had been circulated prior to this meeting and were accepted as a true record (proposed by Romford and seconded by Swindon).

There were no issues arising from the minutes which were not covered on today's agenda.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

KT outlined very briefly the report he had given to yesterday's EIHA Ltd AGM.

Specifically referring to the EPIHL, he felt that the league had once again proved to be of excellent standard this past season and the national finals had proved to be a showcase for EIHA senior hockey. He hoped the improvements would continue with the support of all involved.

Referring to a press release issued recently about age group changes, he outlined the changes implemented by the Board which effectively meant that, following a risk assessment and based on comments/decisions made within local authorities, players were no longer allowed to play competitive hockey in senior leagues until they reached their 16th birthday. Younger players could train with senior teams at the discretion of the team coach. Issues affecting younger lady players were being discussed at this time within the Ladies Section meeting.

Also, at the ENIHL meeting yesterday, teams had taken it upon themselves to demonstrate their ability to ice younger players within the true meaning of a development league and so the Board agreement to implement a phased introduction of an Under 25 age limit for that league had been put on hold. The situation was to be closely monitored over the course of the coming season.

All in all KT was very pleased with how the season had run and thanked his League Management Committee for their support and effort.

5. FIXTURES

Andy French submitted his written report (previously circulated) which indicated that the season had seen only 16 fixture changes which he considered to be good as compared to the averages some other sections were suffering. Two games had not been played due to shortage of ice time.

He asked for teams to let him have 30 dates for the coming season. Of these 25 should be the teams' "normal night" and he asked that the other 5 be given for the alternative weekend day so he could manage the fixtures scheduling. He asked that the dates be emailed to himself by 30 June as he intended to work on them immediately after that. As had previously been agreed, there would be no fixture meeting and each team had agreed to contribute (from their Final weekend share) the sum of £50 towards AF's expenses in doing the fixtures.

The teams thanked AF for his support and the report was accepted.

6. DISCIPLINE

Sue Tomalin's report was submitted in her absence. Explaining the workings of the Disciplinary Panel, ST outlined those areas of concern, including the issues raised by the Referee in Chief.

A further area for change next season related to the 10 minute misconduct. Players would continue not to be allocated 1 penalty point but any such penalty will, for the coming season, count as 1 point towards the teams totals for fines, etc. This, of course, could have an effect on coaches whose suspension for 50 and 100 penalty points could be more quickly reached if the team proves unruly and gathers a number of 10 minute misconduct penalties.

The report was accepted.

7. STATISTICIANS REPORT

Malcolm Preen's written report (previously circulated) was considered. In it, MP outlined the problem he faced with regard to statistics and the quality of information passed to him.

The new rules implemented last season regarding the quality of statistics had seen some success and MP had worked on this to produce a more complete guidance note for scorers. He also outlined the new process for signing game sheets which would hopefully reduce the element of mistakes which continued to be made.

The report was accepted and the changes for next season noted.

8. REFEREE IN CHIEF'S REPORT

In Ash's absence, KT presented the Referee-in-Chief's written report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. The report covered the issues faced by the Referee's section this past season with the introduction of the new standards of officiating. The coming season would see the continuation of the "low" tolerance standard of officiating (as had been implemented since mid-season 2006-7) and the onus was on team coaches to work with officials in order to maintain "competitive advantage" as outlined in Ash's report.

As well as the issues covered in the written report, KT referred to the major issue facing the Referee's section with the problem of U16 officials and their role within senior hockey matches. The situation brought back focus to the need for all clubs and teams to help generate more officials for the good of the game.

One area of great concern was that of verbal abuse of officials and MA intended to amend the In-House Rules to allow a referee to immediately eject from the game any player or official going down this route. Also, a very unsavoury element had arisen this past season regarding physical abuse of officials; in the event of any reoccurrence next season, MA reported that the game would be immediately terminated and the police called. The Referee's section would seek prosecution in all instances as there was simply no place for this in the sport.

One issue raised by Swindon was the apparent uneven standards of linesmen at EPIHL games. KT said that this was being reviewed and hopefully the teams would see a change in the coming season.

The report was accepted.

9. COACHING PROGRAMME REPORT

The report from the Coaching Programme had been previously circulated and covered the workings of the Programme throughout all sections of the EIHA. Alan Moutrey was standing down as head of the programme after the major symposium planned for the summer and the section recorded its thanks for the work he had put into developing the programme in recent years.

10. FINANCIAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Neville Moralee confirmed that the limited company accounts had been agreed at the EIHA Ltd AGM yesterday and that the report today (as had been circulated with the agenda papers) referred to the specific financial issues of the EPIHL.

The teams raised no questions and accepted the report.

11. LEAGUE STRUCTURE AND FORMAT

Alternative possible formats were put forward to the meeting and a keen discussion took place on how best to schedule the 11 team league as no applications for entry had been received following the announcement by Solihull that they would be dropping down to the ENIHL next season.

The scheduling for the 11 team league inevitably meant that some teams would have to "sit out" league competition every Saturday and Sunday. In order to overcome this, AF suggested a Knock Out Cup for EPIHL teams (to take up those "spare dates" in the League schedules) along with the usual EPIHL Cup. This would, in effect, mean that all teams would be guaranteed the following home fixtures: 20 in the EPIHL; 2 in the Knockout Cup; 4 in the EPIHL Cup.

In order to round off the groups in the EPIHL Cup, the Invicta ENIHL team were invited to participate and immediately accepted the invitation. The team had taken part in the EPIHL Cup in past seasons and had expressed an interest in taking part once again if a place existed. The Groups for the EPIHL Cup were agreed as follows:

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Milton Keynes	Romford	Isle of Wight	Sheffield
Guildford	Slough	Bracknell	Telford
Chelmsford	Invicta	Swindon	Peterborough

League and Play Offs – games to be played two home and two away with the top eight teams going forward into two play off groups and the top two from each play off group going forward to the EPIHL Finals Weekend to be held at Coventry Skydome on 12/13 April, 2007.

Knock Out Cup – AF outlined the manner in which this competition would work. He undertook to circulate the initial Knock Out Cup schedule as part of the fixtures to be released early July.

EPIHL Cup Competition – round robin groups play two home and away; in the semi-final stage, the winner of Group A plays winner of Group C (one home and away) while the winner of Group B plays the winner of Group D (one home and away). The winners of the two semi finals play one another in the final one home and one away for the title of EPIHL Cup Champions 2007-2008.

This format was agreed and the relevant amendment to be made to Rules of Competition for the coming season.

12. BRACKNELL SITUATION

KT raised the issue of the Bracknell Bees, whose owners had been having discussions with the Planet Ice about the team playing from the Basingstoke Arena from next season. The team representatives confirmed that they had held discussions as outlined and asked the teams in EPIHL to accept their move from Bracknell to Basingstoke. The teams agreed to the move, with some reservations. The new team would be a Basingstoke team and would inform the League of their new name in the near future.

The Secretary raised the issue of the effect of this move on other teams at both venues and it was the feeling of the EPIHL that it was up to rink managements to review their positions and allocate ice time accordingly.

The direct link between the Basingstoke Elite team and the new Basingstoke EPIHL team caused some teams a deal of unease and the team representatives from Basingstoke confirmed that they would not be looking to fill up their EPIHL bench with Elite players. Apart from anything else, they did not feel that the players would be able to do this through their commitment to the Elite playing schedule.

The move obviously meant that, with immediate effect, there was no EPIHL team in Bracknell. It was suggested that the Bracknell rink management might want to get an EPIHL team together (although time was very much against this). Should that situation arise, it was agreed the EIHA support any such move and that team be accepted into the EPIHL. If it did occur, the new Bracknell team would not be entered into the Cup as Invicta's place in that competition was already confirmed.

The move was approved.

13. RULES OF COPMPETITION

Based on the agreements reached earlier in the meeting, it was agreed the Rules of Competition be amended to take account of the issues debated.

The Secretary also reported that the Rules referred to a 10 minute overtime period when, in fact, the agreed overtime period duration was 5 minutes (under 4 on 4 playing rules with at least 3 British trained players on the ice at all times). Agreed this be amended. It was further requested that MA inform officials accordingly so there was no misunderstanding at the beginning of the season.

The eligibility criteria for player participation in the EPIHL Play Offs was set at 20 games (this to be restarted at 0 for any player returning from a stint in the Elite League). The rule would apply to any player from the ENIHL “playing up” to the EPIHL.

The reference in the Rules to “Non-English Trained Players” should read “Non-British Trained Players”. Agreed the rules be amended accordingly.

For clarification purposes, it was confirmed that players over 21 in the National League can play up to their EPIHL team a maximum of three times; once a fourth appearance was made, the player would automatically become rostered for the EPIHL team and would no longer be available for selection by the ENIHL team.

As regards netminders, it was confirmed that (subject to age qualification, i.e. having reached their 16th birthday) netminders had free movement within the teams in the Club and as such did not have to meet the Play Off eligibility criteria mentioned above.

14. LICENCE CARDS

Swindon asked for the Registration Secretary to give thought to not issuing licence cards but instead considering some form of officially released team list to replace cards. A number of teams spoke against the idea but it was agreed that ST look into this and report back to a future meeting.

15. ITC CARDS

AF outlined requirements for documents to be submitted for ITC card approvals. As regards passports, he would require a copy of the photo page along with a copy of the page showing the relevant stamp. No ITC card would be issued until such time as full payment had been received by IHUK and he emphasised that the onus was on teams to ensure that they made payments in a timely fashion otherwise players would not be allowed to bench if their card had not been issued.

Some ITC card payments were outstanding from last season and it was explained that no further cards would be issued by IHUK until such time as all outstanding amounts had been cleared. Also, to support this, fixtures for teams with ITC debts to IHUK would not be sanctioned by the EIHA.

16. FAIR PLAY AWARD

The Chairman took great pleasure in making this award to Sheffield.

17. EPIHL FINALS WEEKEND – APRIL, 2007 AT COVENTRY

H Howton circulated an up to date report on the financial position reached with the finals last season. Two or three final issues were still to be sorted but the figure for distribution among the 12 teams in last year’s league and to junior development were agreed. Deductions from the team’s allocations were agreed to be:

- Full payment of any outstanding debts to the EIHA
- £50 per team for AF expenses in setting fixtures schedule

The remaining monies to be allocated to each teams’ registrations account for next season.

18. ICE MEDIA PRODUCTIONS

The situation regarding filming of games and submission of recordings to Ice MMedia Productions was on-going and it was hoped that more effort would be made by all concerned next season in order to try and extend the marketing value of the broadband TV facility.

19. PENALTY SHOTS

The Slough representatives raised the issue of whether the League would be prepared to consider introducing penalty shots to determine the winner of games in the EPIHL. KT said the League would support the request should the teams want to go along these lines. The suggestion was accepted by the teams on the following basis:

- Three penalty takers to be nominated to referee prior to start of overtime period
- Visitors take first penalty shot
- No restriction to be placed on Non-British Trained players
- Any netminder to take goal
- If still even after 3 penalty shots, goes to sudden death with same three players rotating in same order as initial three shots.

It was agreed the Rules of Competition be amended to enable this change.

20. SPONSORSHIP

KT outlined the current position. A survey was to be undertaken by Elaine Witteridge on behalf of a sponsorship consultant and teams agreed to respond quickly to that survey.

21. GUILDFORD

The team representative asked others in the EPIHL to help his local marketing by faxing game sheets to his local press reporter on the night of the game when Guildford visited other rinks. It was agreed this be done where possible.

22. NEXT MEETING

KT said he would schedule a meeting either at the start of the season or shortly thereafter to coincide with his availability.