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If your federation would like to publish information on tournaments, clinics, etc. in this newsletter please send your information and pictures to Michael Schmidt at: mschmidt@europeansoftball.org

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear friends,

The 15th of May last month was an important day for the ESF and the development of softball in Europe.

That day, we received a letter from the International Softball Federation that the ESF will receive major financial support for the coming three years for our regional development plans.



This month, the five Regional Development Commissioners, along with the Commissioners for slowpitch and men's fastpitch, will start to work together with you to prepare individual plans for your country based on the information we received from the 2009 ESF questionnaire.

Two months ago, the Japanese Softball Federation put forward a proposal to bring the Olympic Champion Japanese team to Europe to play a series of exhibition games in several locations on the continent.

It was our idea to bring together a "BackSoftball Team Europe" to compete against the Japanese during their tour, alongside European national teams.

The tour was to be financially supported by the Japanese Federation and a contribution from the ISF, but it was not possible to get enough funds to cover all the costs on such short notice. With much regret, we had to cancel this great opportunity to show high-level softball at several places in Europe – but the idea of a "Team Europe" stays alive.

A meeting of the 2009 ESF Technical Commission was hosted in London from May 29-31, where our TCs and UCs discussed issues concerning ESF rules and tournaments.

The meeting was chaired and very well organized by ESF Technical Director Bob Milosavljević.

Details of the discussions and decisions at this meeting will be published on the ESF website in the coming weeks, and there is more detail on this meeting below.

With the help of Jan Rijpstra, former Dutch Federation President and present board member of the Swiss Federation, we are trying to find possibilities in Brussels for EU support for our ESF development plans.

Our plans will mainly focus on establishing school softball programs to make it possible for Federations and their clubs to integrate softball into the curriculum at schools across the continent.

At the end of this month, the ESF competition season starts with the European Junior Boys' Championship at Ledenice in the Czech Republic, and the ESF season will end with the the European Men's Cup in Bagnaria Arsa, Italy at the end of August.

There will be a total of 11 ESF tournaments in three months, and we wish all organizers, officials and participants great softball, great weather and a lot of fun.

Keep your fingers crossed on the 15th of June when the ISF and the BackSoftball team will make their final presentation to the IOC Executive Board with regard to bringing softball back to the Olympics in 2016.

World Softball Day on the 13th of June is a great opportunity to show everyone that we belong there.

Your President
Andre van Overbeek

SUCCESSFUL ESF TECHNICAL COMMISSION MEETING

Fourteen members of the ESF's Technical Commission met in London over the weekend of May 29-31.

The meeting, which was chaired by ESF Technical Director Bob Milosavljević and also attended by President Andre Van Overbeek, provided an opportunity for Technical Commissioners and Umpire Commissioners to review and discuss a number of policies and procedures that have evolved and changed over the past several years, including bat control, ID control, player eligibility and pick-up player regulations.

The meeting also looked at dealing with increased instances of unsportsmanlike conduct and disciplinary matters in general.

At the end of the meeting, there was a demonstration of new software and web tools that will simplify the tasks of assigning umpires during competitions and updating the ESF website with game results and tournament standings.

In addition, separate discussions were held regarding proposed changes to the structure and format of European Championships and slowpitch competitions, and there was a meeting of the ESF's umpire administration staff to discuss changes in umpire mechanics and a plan to mirror the ESF's development initiative by moving forward with the creation of a regional structure for supporting the domestic umpiring needs of our member Federations.

More details from the meeting will be published here and on the ESF website in the coming weeks.



MEET ESF UMPIRE-IN-CHIEF MARLIES STRUYVÉ

I live in Zeist in the middle of the Netherlands and I work for the Dutch government in a managerial capacity.

I took up softball in 1987 as a novice player. When I began, I did not understand why sometimes I was allowed to go to first base and another time had to bat again or had to go back the dugout, so I wanted to learn the rules. And the only possibility for this was to attend an umpire clinic.

In 1991, I became ISF-licensed and worked in many international

tournaments including European Championships, European Cups and eventually World Championships and the 2000 Olympics in Sydney.

After I had been an active international umpire for 10 years, I was asked by Jacques Reinenbergh to join the ESF Technical Commission and since 2004 I have been the ESF's Umpire-in-Chief.

Since end of 2007, I have been the Regional Umpire Coordinator for Europe on the ISF's umpiring staff and this year I have been appointed as the ISF Assistant Rules Interpreter.

I do not do my work in Europe alone (it would be too much work for one person alongside a regular job). I have a great assistant and brainstorm partner in Gilbert Tobback.

And we could not supervise all ESF tournaments without the help of the ESF's deputy UICs: Tony Illegems, Rob Kerkman, Bob Kessler, Geri Lindberg, Bert Loggen, Duncan McLean and Joeri Tobback.



SECOND ANNUAL SLOWPITCH CLINIC INCREASES ENTHUSIASM IN BELGIUM

The Royal Belgian Baseball and Softball Federation hosted a Slowpitch Clinic on Sunday, April 19, delivered by BaseballSoftballUK Level 3 Coach Mark Kerr.

It was the second year in a row that Belgium has requested a Slowpitch Clinic through ESF Slowpitch Development Commissioner Bob Fromer, and after last year's clinic, an eight-team league was started and one of the teams from that league played in the annual Softball World Series in the UK (and will do so again this year). Here is Mark Kerr's account of his day in Belgium.

"Continuing the ESF initiative of promoting slowpitch softball in the fastpitch-dominated countries of Europe, I delivered a Slowpitch Softball Clinic at the Afterburners Club in Booischot, Belgium (not too far outside of Brussels) on Sunday, April 19.

Last year's clinic was delivered by GB Slowpitch Team Head Coach Mark Saunders and ESF Umpire Duncan McLean, but Mark Saunders has recently embraced the joys of fatherhood, cutting down on his time. So when ESF Slowpitch Development Commissioner Bob Fromer approached me to see if I was available, I was delighted and honoured to be involved and Duncan once again agreed to act as Umpiring and Rules expert.

Organisation of schedules meant that we both needed to fly in and fly out of Belgium on the Sunday, but on the morning we were due to fly Duncan was unfortunately taken ill with a nasty bug and was unable to make the trip.

A 5:15 alarm clock (and a very understanding wife) had me on



board a 07:40 flight to Brussels, where I was collected by Afterburners' player and club stalwart Stijn (Stan). We made the 30-minute journey to the club to be met with a something we just don't see in the UK, a fully-fenced diamond with a beautiful (newly laid) dirt infield and dugouts etc. I was itching to get out there!

Pieter Debaets from the Royal Belgian Baseball and Softball Federation had once again organised the clinic on the Belgian side. He told me that unfortunately the clinic date clashed with some fastpitch scheduling; however, we still had 12 players/coaches and four umpires attending from a number of clubs around Belgium.

Pieter had provided all of the technical equipment I needed, meaning I only needed to travel with a data stick, and the Afterburners provided all of the playing equipment, which was very much appreciated.

UMPIRING AND RULES

We kicked off dead on 11:00 am with the slightly (well, totally) re-worked umpiring and rules section, and as this is not my strongest area, my thanks go to a very understanding umpiring cohort who let me off lightly!

Next was the playing theory side of the clinic, with presentations that focused on areas where slowpitch and fastpitch differ, as well



as slowpitch-specific factors in relation to offensive (i.e. pitch selection and keep the forces off!) and defensive (i.e. keep the forces on!) strategies.

And, of course, pitching (i.e. you're lobbing a ball, it's going to get hit, so you better be a fielder too!).

Regular breaks for drinks and lunch split these presentations, which resulted in, rather surprisingly, none of the attendees falling asleep!

GLORIOUS SUNSHINE

Following the theory sessions, the rest of the afternoon was spent outside in glorious sunshine on the beautiful diamond stepping through the practical aspects of pitching, calling strikes and pitch selection, followed by both offensive and defensive game play scenarios. Too soon 16:45 arrived and we wound up the clinic up with a few more Q & A's. I showered (for the benefit of my fellow travellers) and Stijn scooted me back to the airport.

Immediate feedback from the group was that the practical aspect to the clinic was most appreciated, as they could see the strategies

and tactics in action, and by stopping scenarios at crucial points, more understanding was gained. Everyone was extremely enthusiastic and great plans are afoot to promote the game in Belgium, including more visits like that from a Belgian team at the 2008 World Series. Certainly Pieter has already begun thinking about when and where the next clinic might be held!"

Mark Kerr

TOURNAMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

World Sport Festival 2009 Vienna

Softball U19 and U14, July 9th - 12th

Message sent by organizers:

„PDM Sports is organizing from 9th to 12th July the WORLD SPORTS FESTIVAL, one of the most important european sport event for youth. This year we expect more then 5000 youth coming from 20 different nations and will play 12 different sports. 1500 young american athletes have already confirmed their participation to the 2009 edition!

We suggest also to visit our website <http://www.world-sports-festival.com/en/> to have an idea of the characteristic of the World Sports Festival. There you'll also find the file with the General Information relevant to this event, the offers for board and lodging and the program, together with the Registration Form.

If you have any question please contact us via email: 2009@world-sports-festival.com or by phone +43 1 478809030.“

Download Documents also available at:

<http://www.europeansoftball.org/node/373>

19th Annual Canadian Airlines Softball Tournament, Honolulu (USA): 2 - 5 Nov

Tournament open to entry by teams from all European countries. This tournament is co-ed 18 year of age and older. Contact for information: Franco Cairra at fcaira@hotmail.com

2009 W 5° International Women's Fastpitch Softball Tournament, Boves (ITA): 10-12 Jul

Tournament open to entry by teams from other countries. Contact for further information: Ilario Zuin at Ilario50@alice.it

Download Documents also available at:

<http://www.europeansoftball.org/node/354>

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER

If you would like to publish articles and information of your federations please send your inputs until June 28th to: mschmidt@europeansoftball.org

