ANNEXURE C

European Squash Annual Report 2020

2020 Overview

- In line with the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act, ESF successfully ran a virtual AGM using an online platform, after initially adjourning the meeting.
- At the virtual AGM, 22 Member Nations were represented. ESF has 46 Member Nations.
- The AGM re-elected Rosie Barry (IRE) and Thomas Troedsson (SWE) as Vice-Presidents.
- The motion to change Officers terms to 2 terms of 3 years with effect from 2019 was passed.
- The ESF Board from September 2020 comprises President Hugo Hannes (BEL) and Vice-Presidents Rosie Barry (IRE), Jim Hay (SCO), Jackie Robinson (ENG) and Thomas Troedsson (SWE), supported by Peter Derrick (ESF Treasurer and Company Secretary).
- Claire Leech is the ESF Office Manager and Joanne Collins is the Office Administrator.

2020 General

- COVID-19 has affected squash in Europe since mid-March. In most countries, venues were closed with a few exceptions (Sweden). Restrictions for play started to lift from permitted in many countries because of the second wave of COVID-19. This means that many countries were unable to organise their individual and team championships in 2020 and 2021.

- The postponement and then cancellation of ESF tournaments has produced frustration for all parties involved (ESF, MNFs, hosts, clubs etc.), not to mention the financial impact. The desire to get back to some 'normality' is strong however the uncertainty with increasing numbers of positive tests and the introduction of further restrictions in different countries is reality.

- The second wave of COVID-19 is now impacting. Hence, it is not possible to have a fair policy for Europe however we hope we can have a restart in September 2021.

- Travelling within Europe will continue to severely limit the chance of any international competition, and in any case requires testing and quarantine in most cases.

Portfolios

- Championships and Marketing Committee: Thomas Troedsson
- Junior Committee: Jackie Robinson
- Masters Committee: Rosie Barry
- Referees & Coaching Committee: Jim Hay
- Treasurer and Company Secretary : Peter Derrick

2020 Administration

- Since July 2020 to date, online Board meetings are held monthly. We intend to keep this up until August 2021. All contact between the Board members and the staff is made by email and telephone. The Board and the Committees are comfortable with virtual meetings which means less travel costs. However, they will never replace physical meetings.
- The office staff began working remotely on March 17th 2020 in line with UK Government advice. To maximise the Government furlough scheme, whilst ensuring essential office administration routines were completed, the team furloughed where possible and a total UK Government grant of €14000 was received.
- Both office staff will continue to work remotely until July earliest, and the furlough scheme will be utilised until the end September 2021 as appropriate.

2020 Championships

- All 7 Championships were cancelled in 2020. The Spring events caused some administrative issues because MNFs had already entered teams and players. We initially postponed, however ultimately cancellation was the only option.
- In 2021 we cancelled the junior team events and postponed the senior championships until July & August. The Individual U19 Championship was postponed till the Autumn. The health of the players remain our primary concern.
- ESF are reviewing the 2021 Championship planning.

2020 Junior Circuit Events

Junior Committee

- The Committee consists of Jackie Robinson (Chair), Michael Gaede (Director of Seeding), Pascal Bruhin, Lee Drew, Andrew Evans, Kim Hannes, David McAlpine, Jan Mutina, Oliver Pettke and Thomas Troedsson.

Junior Circuit

- Whilst the annual meeting of the Junior Committee has not been possible in either March 2020 or March 2021 there has been regular contact by email and MNFs informed of any decisions.

- There were 30 scheduled events for 2020 and only 8 took place before COVID 19 restrictions came in at the end of March 2020. It is hoped that the Junior Circuit may restart in September 2021 but the decision lies with the ESF Board.

- All Junior Championships since March 2020 were cancelled though it is hoped the Under 19 individuals will take place in October 2021.

2020 Coaching

- The ESF Coaching Committee comprises Jim Hay (Chairman), Michael Khan (director), Peter Hirst, Ronny Vlassaks, Csaba Altvater and Colin White.
- This last year has been challenging for all of us in many ways and the plan to have a Coaching Conference was adjusted on more than one occasion due to the situation with Covid-19. It is still hoped that the Conference may take place before the end of this calendar year but that is, of course, dependent upon factors outwith our control.
- On a more positive note, it was possible to still run local coaching courses and over the period from March 2020 to February 2021 and a total of 8 Level 1 Courses and 1 Level 2 Course were held at various locations within Europe. A total of 98 candidates participated in the Level 1 Courses, with 68 successful. A total of 9 participants attended the Level 2, with 5 being successful.
- Thanks are due to all the participants and to the tutors, Michael Khan, Matt McFahn, John Milton, Kostya Rybalchenko, Alexey Svereinov and Arnis Tihvinskis.

2020 Refereeing

- The ESF Referee Committee comprises Jim Hay (Chairman), Tomas Forter (Director), Roy Gingell, John Massarella, Marko Podgorsek, Martin Roberts and Marc Palmieri.
- Refereeing was similarly adversely affected by the Covid-19 crisis and apart from some high-level PSA events there were very few opportunities for referees to be involved in any events. As a result, there has been no movement of referees within the various grades and with the imminent launch of the WSO project any future changes will be via this platform. There has been a 'soft launch' of the platform with a view to testing the system and apart from some initial issues with one technical aspect, it has proven to be an excellent facility and its full launch is awaited with excitement by many referees anxious to utilise the learning opportunities as well as seeking opportunities for advancement in their refereeing journey.
- It is hoped that a Refereeing Conference may be held either late 2021 or early 2022.

2020 Finance

- The year of COVID 19 was extraordinary forcing the cancellation and postponement of planned events. Despite this the outturn for the financial year 2020 was an underlying surplus of €41,715, some €38,000 more than the budget plan.
- Because of the relationship between Events and Officer and Committee activity the loss of income from Levies, Entry Fees, SPIN/ESID and Coaching of €105,000 was largely offset by reductions in expenditure on Travel, Committee work and Tournament support (€103,000).
- The surplus arises from two main sources; support from the U.K. Government to retain staff where loss of income could give rise to redundancy - the Furlough Scheme (€14,000), and an Exchange Rate gain of € 25,500 as a result of the strengthening of the Euro against Sterling at Balance Sheet revaluation and on transactions throughout the year.
- During the year no payments were made from the Capital Fund.
- In view of the scale of the underspend, the Board decided to make a further contribution to the Fund of £30,000 (€34,500). After making this contribution, the net surplus is €7,215. The Capital Fund now stands at €130,514 and the accumulated surplus is €175,103.

Future

- ESF are receiving monthly information from Members regarding restrictions in each country.
- ESF gathered information from the MNFs re: their national championships (individual or team) in 2020 and 2021.
- There is a need to keep people in the sport, since some clubs are struggling and individuals may have been tempted away to other sports that they can play (tennis, golf, padel, etc.).
- Concern for venue owners, as more than 90% of our courts and venues are privately run. WSF, ESF and the national federations have no impact on these venues however we need their infrastructure to play our sport.
- Today there still are Government restrictions on playing both recreational and competitive squash. Our sport is linked to bars, cafés and restaurants, which makes it more difficult. No players, no atmosphere and vice versa.
- There are also restrictions for the catering industry. The difference being that other sports like table tennis and badminton use municipal halls. A Squash centre with a daily revenue of less than €100 will not cover costs.
- Concern over how many venues will close in 2021 for economic reasons if the pandemic is history.
- Possible registration for our Championships, depending on the uncertainty and European travel restrictions, with worry regarding the opportunity to practice at the level required.
- Many Governments have reduced subsidies (up to 25–30%) and many federations will suffer financially. The subsidy system varies from country to country. Some countries get funding for entering or hosting a Championship, others don’t. Only those that have a chance to win a medal will go for it or when they are subsidised.
- The issue today is to bring squash back to the level as it was and then look forward and draw conclusions. A review of ESF events and how they may be improved and/or adapted to make best use of whatever the situation is post COVID-19. Opportunities are limited due to the pandemic.

Summary

To conclude :

- The ESF Board regrets that we had too many Board meetings in which we discussed the cancellation of our Championships and tournaments of our Junior and Master circuits. We hope that our meetings in this respect can be more constructive in 2021.
- We very much regret that squash cannot be played even recreationally in most European countries. We hope that we can go back to 'normal' as soon as possible, because international meetings, courses, championships and tournaments also have a social value. Bringing people together is in our nature …

"Everything will fall into place. Let us be patient"