

The English Karate Federation

Annual General Meeting 28th March 2010

President's Report

It seems incredible that it has only been a year since the last AGM, as so much has happened in the English Karate Federation. A year ago I was sharing my vision for English Karate: namely, the highest standards of safety and teaching for every person walking into a dojo in this country. That vision remains unchanged, but what has become so apparent is the fact that we are running a company, a sporting national governing body with obligations towards each and every member, legally and morally responsible for making those standards reality.

I will go through some of the key work of the EKF and how that impacts on all our associations and all our members. Child protection is something that has become an integral part of all sport and we now need to ensure that our policies are adopted in every club. I must pay tribute here to the excellent work of Liz Legg, who has developed this and other strategies, and is now about to embark on an ambitious series of training courses for instructors.

Equality is something that all sport must seek to achieve. This is not mindless political correctness, but something we must see become second nature in our teaching and is inextricably linked to our fundamental principle of fairness for all. Karate has traditionally been accessible to those from the most socially deprived backgrounds and succeeds like very few sports in bringing those from diverse communities together in harmony and understanding. I want to see our Equality Policy adopted and supported by all clubs. This is not only right, but is the sort of issue on which we, as a national governing body, are judged.

Criminal Records Bureau checks, chaperones with clear rules for our young charges, first aid courses, registration and data protection safeguards, as well as NVQ standard coaching awards, are further examples of the way the EKF is seeking to improve standards. We now have all this in place and the next stage is trying to quantify uptake and compliance by associations, so that we can rightly show to external scrutiny how we are pro-active in ensuring those standards are maintained.

Competition is a small part of Karate, but international success by our elite athletes not only showcases Karate, but also encourages our young members to strive to achieve of their best. I am immensely proud of our athletes and I know that thousands of our members follow the England Team; the support shown by family friends, as well as ordinary EKF members, is fantastic. England has been

one of the most successful Karate nations of all time, and to see our youngsters winning medals at world level is very encouraging. I am also delighted with the team spirit and mutual support shown by our athletes. I want to thank our Head Coach, Wayne Otto, and all his assistants for their work in seeing the team achieve their best. Wayne has begun a very professional programme to develop the cream of English sporting talent, initially begun by Willie Thomas, and I am confident that the EKF will re-establish England as being among the leading Karate nations.

Our sporting success is made more impressive by the incredibly high standard of the World Karate Federation competitions. There are other so-called world bodies, but these cannot be compared in size or standard. We have the WKF mandate, and maintaining that means upholding their rules. The WKF expressly forbids sporting relations with non-affiliated members. This is not negotiable. This is not something we can ignore, and I do not want to risk denying a whole generation of athletes the opportunity to compete with the very best in the world.

The EKF has, over the past year, been in conflict with some of its members and some heads of associations over issues like child protection and WKF rules. This is not pleasant for anyone, but I suppose it is part of the collective learning that we all need to achieve. This is neither personal nor unfair, since the standards the Board sets must be a benchmark of all of us. My Vice President, Mike Dinsdale, whose hard work and dedication has led to much of our success, has felt it necessary to resign that role after a breach of rules by one of his students. I regrettably accepted his decision and hope he will continue to support the EKF with the same enthusiasm.

This past year was made more difficult by the need for an Extraordinary General Meeting, and I would like to think that the process and all that accompanied it has made us better. We now have accounts that are both transparent and visible to the last penny, and I would like to thank our Treasurer, John Moreton, for his enormous work. The EGM was the opportunity to address a number of issues of concern to some members, and showed the need for an overhaul of our Memorandum and Articles of Association, or the regulations under which we operate. I thank Liz Legg again for her work here. The MemArts are safer and fairer, and you have already had the opportunity to check them and make recommendations, many of which have been encompassed into subsequent versions. I trust these will be acceptable and will take us forward as a company.

Ladies and gentlemen we are a company. We have to employ the services of lawyers, accountants, auditors and other sources of advice and guidance. The work load is unimaginable, yet none of us are paid anything. I hope we can keep it that way, to ensure everyone is acting totally ethically and because any funds are for the sole benefit of our members. I would, however, like to invite any members, particularly if they have beneficial skills or experience, to consider

giving their time to helping the Board. Any assistance would be gratefully received.

This next year you will see greater support for associations, particularly in achieving necessary standards of health & safety and proper accounting. This support will safeguard both students and instructors.

I have more people to thank for their contribution to making the EKF what it is today. Our Secretary, Brian Noble, for all his administration, Andy Genery for his work on coaching, Mike Billman for his work on establishing competition rules for disabled athletes and for closer links with the British Karate Federation, Chris Thompson for his grade recognition work, and Ticky Donovan and John De Bono for their work in dealing with so many enquiries that are raised. I want to thank Dale Gamble, our new Chief Referee, for his work in establishing a new programme to develop the next generation of referees, and Paul Campbell, Competition Organiser, for his services. Additionally, I must thank 'Jel', our webmaster, for our site that rivals any sport anywhere, and now makes 1 million 'page views' a distant memory. Debbie Sell has been invaluable as our Administrator and I also thank Mark Sell for maintaining our database of registrations.

Finally, I want to thank all of you. The vast majority of members and association heads have shown great support for the Board and what we are trying to do. We remain united and continuously becoming more organised and professional. The EKF is English Karate and with unity and hard work, one of the most popular, rewarding and beneficial participative sports will continue to grow and develop throughout this country.

My very best wishes to all of you.

Carl Lindley
President
English Karate Federation