

12/04/2017

Newsletter No 10

Dear Member

I just wanted to get a Newsletter out following the National Championships, which will also serve as a summary report on the event. All the other items are essentially updates on the progress of the other Board projects and, hopefully, I will get another one out to everyone before the summer break.

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1. National Championships review

It's hard to know where to start with this but, typically, it's a round of thanks to everyone who had a part to play in making the Nationals both a memorable event (in-house and contracted), and setting a standard that we will now maintain for all our annual events. There was a plan, and this was to produce an event that put the athletes centre stage, and moved away from the 'churn' of categories where individual successes broadly went unnoticed. To do this we cut down the categories, many of which have been almost duplications of each other, introduced finals, a repackage system and medal presentations and all within a tightly managed time-frame that was adhered to. We also ensured that the quality of the medals was of a higher standard than in previous years, for which we had, again, great feedback.

To add a further layer to all of this we also had a live stream of the finals on Sunday and a running commentary. Putting finalists under the spotlight has two outcomes, the first being they should feel the event is special and really worth competing in and,

second, that we are trying to duplicate the spotlight they'll be under when they fight in international events with all the pressure those conditions impose. I saw some of the best fighting I'd seen from some of our senior athletes and if this is duplicated in the major championships we'll be looking to do well.

The photos from the event are now up on the EKF website so go and have a good browse.

From the competitors and coaches experience we provided proper dedicated space for the warm-up area and from a audience perspective we hoped we delivered a really enjoyable event. Leicester Arena is now our future 'home' for all our championships, and although we have some fine tuning to make it an even better experience we now have a model to be proud of and one which should be very attractive to sponsors; this was a another driver for venue and format change. We've had some great feedback this week and thank everyone who's taken the trouble to email or post on social media.

As mentioned above, and to make the Nationals a showpiece event, we cut down on the number of categories but these we will have included in the **Kyu Grade Championships** that are in January 2018. Given the size of the entries to this event we will now be holding this over two days. In the past the pressure on officials and everyone associated with the event has been too much and spoiled the Championship. From now on, the emphasis will be on delivering a quality competition not a 'sausage factory' production line. This will cost more to stage but improve all aspects of the event.

2. National/Regional - Training and Selections

The weekend's event has now set the scene for our **Regional Championship** on the **24th July** and personally, as an event, I think the excitement and competition on the day will trump the National as there is regional pride at stake. Apart from athlete medals the regions will be competing for the **President's Cup**, a prize that will be fought over annually. Already we have had regional selections take place in the north and south and on that specifically, we're breaking records in attendance figures with 75 in the north and over 80 in the south which is unheard of on a regional basis, to which we can add to the numbers I reported on in the last Newsletter.

The selections that have taken place have been for both our domestic Regional Championship in July and the European Regional Team Championships in Kosovo in June and all of this activity is providing exactly what we had hoped would be the case, which is that we are 'tapping into talent' at a regional level to provide our regional and national coaches with as much opportunity as possible to identify people who may well become our future England Team members and, fingers crossed, World Champions. We are not short of talented athletes (and the Nationals showed us this), we just need to identify it and create the pathways for people to move up that pyramid that starts with their club, association, regional training opportunities and selection, and eventually national team.

The structure is now in place and is working really well, but the Board recognises that in the absence of Sport England financial support, that's been missing for a number of years, we have been limited in what we've been able to do ourselves, but I can say that over the last few months we have been able to do more in terms of funding as a consequence of the success of the regional training programmes. However, and I'll mention this in more detail later, members of the Board have taken on the task of looking at some major sponsorship and our championships will be a major plank in that 'sell.' We have set ourselves some goals for the funding of our National squads and the Board is working hard to bring these to fruition.

Even in the absence of external funding we have made huge steps in trying to support our athletes, as follows. At present if an athlete wins a European or World medal they are supported by EKF in following way;

- Next European or World Championships fully funded
- Money given to athletes for winning a medal at championships
- Free National training days/squads
- Free National Training weekends
- Free accommodation for weekend training camps
- Free training for pre-trains
- Cognitive Training support

Other benefits on top of above for 'picked' ENGLAND team

- Free pre-train for championships

- Free National Team training
- Free accommodation for Northern National training camps

Additionally, we have also invested in the new structure;

- More coaches (Kumite and Kata)
- Expenses for coaches
- Split roles for more time to be spent with different age groups
- Support for athletes winning medals

On this last point, our World and European medallists, Jordan Thomas and Joe Kellaway are funded for the forthcoming Senior Europeans in Turkey in May, with Jordan also funded for his invitation to the World Games in July.

Just on funding, and when I speak to former successful competitors many of whom are our regional and national coaches they will constantly refer to the years of funding they may have enjoyed, but then had it taken away. To be clear on this, the funding came from Sport England, via the last National Governing Body, that collapsed in ignominy and whilst, with the emergence of a new NGB, there may be opportunities to once again tap into funding, it's an illusion for people to think this is a forever guarantee. We only have to look at the sports in the UK that have recently lost every penny of funding and where professional athletes have had their lives turned upside down to recognise the fragility of relying on such sources.

We need to know that we when have secured funding, as well as we ever can, that it is long-term and stable. External funding for projects may well have merit, but funding our athletes needs solid foundations that are not at the whim of arbitrary decision making.

3. Board update

The National Championships, for all those who were there, should serve as a prime example of the work the Board has been doing. Alongside all that work, we have been looking at software innovations to handle student registrations, sponsorship, improved compliance and, after a long absence, a new Coaching qualification; which is shortly going to be officially announced.

This has been some time in the development, but we had to get not just the content of the coaching qualification right, but also the delivery model and now, with the new regional structure in place, we have the means to deliver the necessary training.

4. National Governing Body (NGB) update

In May we have board members attending the next meeting of the nascent NGB, hosted again by the Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA). Last month we issued the joint press release announcing the creation of the English Karate Working Group, as many of you may have seen, and the next meeting is essentially to get an update from the work that certain people have been doing specifically on membership criteria, membership verification and NGB budgetary requirements and how this may translate to 'per head' association membership fees. So far it has been agreed that the new body will be incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee and structured to meet the Voluntary Code of Good Governance and the recently published UK Code of Sports Governance.

This is now gathering pace and we'll keep everyone up to date following the May meeting. The object of the Working Group is to knock into shape how we all think the new NGB should look like and actually what it should do. At some point when all this has been developed and agreed an application can be made for official recognition as English Karate's NGB. I will state once again, for the avoidance of any doubt, that this new body has no negative impact on our WKF member status, or Olympic pathway. We need to remember that all the other WKF Karate 'Home' nations are part of their own country's NGB, England being the only one without a recognised governing body. If at any time we feel participation is prejudicial to the EKF we will reconsider our position.

Kind Regards

Peter Consterdine
Vice President