



Minutes of the Gippsland Bowls Region Annual General Meeting Maffra Bowls Club, Sunday 29 May 2022

Jan Morton opened the meeting at 10am.

Present

Shane Higgins (West Sale), Graeme Hemming (Maffra), Nev Irish (Rosedale), Marg Brandhoj (Lakes Entrance), Jeff Amos (Yarram), Sue Jenkins (Paynesville), Sue Robinson (Orbost), Colin Smith (Paynesville), Nannette Hamilton (Bairnsdale), Chris Wain (Metung), Peter Beesley (Paynesville), Judy Beesley (Paynesville), Marj Menner (Maffra), Nigel Plunkett (Lindenow), Barry Anderson (Heyfield), Alison Harrower (Bruthen), Steve Brill (Lindenow), Bronwyn Thwaites (Paynesville), Jan Morton (Sale), Kel Brandhoj (Lakes Entrance), Phil Clifford (Maffra), Gerry Dwyer (Howitt Park), Terry White (Howitt Park), Neil Hutchison (Bairnsdale), Marj Menner (Maffra), Leigh Bryant (Sale), Nev Irish (Rosedale), Brad Lancaster (Lakes Entrance), John Simmons (West Sale), Jill Dennison (Bairnsdale Golf), Helen Everett (Bairnsdale Golf), Hayden Sellings (Heyfield), Kerry Binotto (West Sale), Peter Hardy (Paynesville), Val Hardy (Paynesville), Nola Wheeler (Stratford), Maureen Petty (Stratford), Mandy Pemberton (Maffra)

Apologies

Jenny Blair (Loch Sport), Karen Chenney (Orbost), Keren Blake (Sale), Chris Kyle (Howitt Park), Bruce Melrose (Sale), Bert Middelhuis (Heyfield), John Crawford (Bairnsdale Golf)

Previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2021 were previously circulated. Moved by Jeff Amos (Yarram) and seconded by Leigh Bryant (Sale), the minutes were confirmed. There was no business arising.

President's Report

Jan Morton presented her report for 2021/22 (made available to delegates), stating the past year was difficult and challenging with Covid delaying the start of the season and weather creating other problems.

It was a credit to the clubs that only one round was abandoned in North and one game forfeited in East due to Covid.

Overview

Jan noted the following:

- 2021/22 was a season of change, with Region pennant finals contested in all divisions for the first time, State events played as a Region and open Midweek pennant introduced
- State events at the Region level were supported with no big difference in entries
- Midweek pennant saw a 30% increase in numbers, with Midweek Division 1 being played at Region level due to low entries.

Jan acknowledged and accepted that it was a mistake not to recognise pennant area winners on the day and confirmed that in future, division winners in area finals will receive a flag at the conclusion of play.

Jan congratulated all those who represented the Region during the season, with particular mention to players who went to Bendigo for the State finals. She also commended Lakes Entrance which represented Gippsland in the State pennant finals at Moama. Both Midweek and Weekend pennant teams achieved excellent results, with the Weekend team finishing second in their section and Midweek narrowly missing the finals.

Acknowledgements

Jan expressed her sincere thanks to the following:

- Secretary Bronwyn Thwaites for making sure things keep ticking along smoothly
- Treasurer Colin Smith who streamlined the Region's banking and managed the Men's Region side
- Nigel Plunkett for his outstanding work bringing the junior development squad to fruition
- Marg Brandhoj assisting with umpire accreditation and junior development
- Peter Beesley who organised the new Region shirts, hoodies and caps
- Keren Blake who assisted the Competitions Committee, umpired and managed the Women's Region side
- the Competitions Committee of Pam Carter, Brad Lancaster, Colin Smith and James McCausland who did a great job under ever changing circumstances.

In closing, Jan said there can be no progress without change and that while change is never universally popular, going back is not an option. She welcomes constructive feedback but will not respond to negative and personal attacks.

Moved by Brad Lancaster (Lakes Entrance) and seconded by Sue Robinson (Orbost), receipt of the report was carried.

Treasurer's Report

Colin Smith presented the Region's accounts for the period ending 30 April 2022, noting the Region finished in a solid financial position.

The top line financial results for 2021/22:

- income - \$\$19.8k comprising State Government grants, payment for Region hoodies, capitation fees (funds transferred from the former East and North divisions), and State event entry fees
- expenses – \$25.6k including
 - \$7.2k for pennant flags, banners, medallions and trophies

- \$5.6k accommodation for Region sides at Echuca/Moama, partly offset by the Bowls Victoria travel subsidy of \$2.8k
- \$5.9k for the design and supply of the Region Sides uniforms
- \$2.8k in prize money for State events, partly offset by entry fees of \$2.3k

Colin reported that while the net operating bottom line was a loss of \$5.7k, the cash bank balance of \$17.5k as of 30 April 2022, along with once off and substantial set up costs, placed the Region well financially for the coming year.

Colin asked that his financial report be received. Moved by Shane Higgins (West Sale), seconded by Jeff Amos (Yarram), receipt of the report was carried.

Committee reports

All delegates received written reports from the Competitions Recorder (Brad Lancaster), Region Sides Managers (Colin Smith and Keren Blake), Junior Development and Coaching (Nigel Plunkett) and Umpiring (Keith Pritchard).

In presenting his report, Brad Lancaster highlighted that the move to BowlsLink had been an outstanding success, reducing administration dramatically with a very low error rate. He appreciated the efforts from clubs' sides managers and others who took the time to learn how to use the new system. While far from perfect, BowlsLink was well ahead of the previous paper-based system. Brad thanked President Jan Morton for her steadfast leadership under extremely heavy pressure and scrutiny.

Nigel Plunkett said it was important the junior program be further promoted by clubs, and he asked those present to 'like' the Gippsland Geckos Facebook page and spread the word.

Jan Morton asked that the reports be received. Moved by Chris Wain (Metung), seconded by Graeme Hemming (Maffra), receipt of the reports was carried.

Election of office bearers

Jan Morton handed over this part of the meeting to appointed Returning Officer Judy Beesley. As there was only one nomination for the vacant office bearer and director positions, Judy declared the following duly elected:

- Treasurer Colin Smith for a period of 3 years.

There were no nominations for the vacant director positions by the closing date. The Board may appoint appropriately qualified persons to fill these vacancies.

Other business of which notice has been given

Notice of Motion submitted by Heyfield and West Sale Bowls Clubs

That the Competitions Committee consider amending the GBR Pennant Conditions of Play by removing Rule 6 - Scheduled Break.

Moved Barry Anderson (Heyfield), seconded Shane Higgins (West Sale).

Speaking for the motion, Barry advised he was representing Bert Middelhuis. He said Heyfield believes that since pennant was reduced to 21 ends, there is no reason to have a break. By 3pm there is normally only six to seven ends to play and to have a break then is sometimes inconvenient. While Heyfield acknowledges that some clubs have raffles during a break to raise money, other avenues could be explored.

Speaking against the motion, Nev Irish (Rosedale) said the proposal was discussed at the club's AGM and rejected. Rosedale was a small club with traditional old blokes who enjoyed the community feel of Saturday pennant, including getting together before the game to make the bread rolls. It was not about the raffles. He suggested a break may be held at a scheduled time.

Others who spoke against the motion were Jeff Amos (Yarram), Brad Lancaster (Lakes Entrance), Steve Brill (Lindenow), Gerry Dwyer (Howitt Park) and Alison Harrower (Bruthen).

Following discussion, Jan put the motion and asked for a show of hands. The result was 7 for, 8 against. The motion was lost.

Next Annual General Meeting

Sunday 28 May 2023, 10am, venue to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 10.50am

General meeting

Jan Morton opened the general meeting at 10.51am.

Member survey report

Bronwyn Thwaites presented the results of the end of season member survey conducted on the Region's behalf by GippSport.

Overview

- 370 respondents
- 62% male; 38% female
- Nearly 80% retirees
- Spread of postcodes:
 - most responses (97) from 3875 – Bairnsdale and surrounds
 - 65 from 3850 - Sale
 - 43 from 3880 - Paynesville
 - 37 from 3909 - Lakes Entrance
- 62% from east playing area; 38% north
- More than 80% of respondents have been playing for more than five years of whom 40% for 15+ years

Amalgamation/management

- 90% aware of the amalgamation
- 90% aware that east and north divisions no longer exist
- 65% aware of the Board and committee structure
- Very little interest in nominating for a Board or committee position (87%)
- A 'pass' (2.9) for management of bowls on a sliding scale of 1 to 5

Pennant

- Majority support for Midweek pennant start time of 10am (54%)
- Majority support for Saturday Pennant start time of 1pm (62%)
- Strong support for 21 ends in both Midweek and Saturday Pennant and four-week break at Christmas

State events

- 70% of respondents did not enter a state event
- All venues were rated above 3 on a scale of 1 to 5 for quality
- Most favoured event structure options - 2 matches a day, 9.30am start and finals being played at one venue over 1-2 consecutive days
- Strong support for Champion Pairs and Fours (4 on a scale of 1 to 5), with slightly more support for Pairs
- Majority support medallion plus prize money for winners (39%), no preference 27%

BowlsLink

- On a scale of 1 to 5, ease of using BowlsLink was between 3 and 3.5
- Best things – efficiency, eradication of paperwork, easy to use
- Worst things – more training needed, members' limited computer skills, unwillingness by some to embrace the new system resulting in reliance on others

Communications

- Favoured communications tools by respondents - email (82%) and Facebook (58%)
- GBR website and Facebook page generally well received, with room for improvement (search process, updates)
- Majority receive GBR information from their clubs via email (75%) and noticeboard (55%)
- Majority prefer to receive information about GBR activities and events via email (78%)

Bronwyn said the number of respondents was very high, reflecting members' interest in having a say about the season. Many members took the opportunity to comment on specific issues, and while most comments were constructive, some were not.

Jan Morton said comments asserting that the draws for events were seeded needed to be addressed and knocked on the head. She explained that BowlsLink does the draw for all events, none of which is seeded in any way. This year three redraws were required because of specific circumstances including last minute withdrawal of players.

Brad Lancaster said that when he read the comments, he was angry and upset that anyone would think he would rig the draws. When setting the fixtures, he always asks another party to press the button or witness it being pressed.

Update from President

Jan Morton reported the following:

- Entries for 2022/23 pennant are starting to come in with Loch Sport entering Midweek. Deadline for entries is 31 July
- Rumours: There is no intention to introduce Region-wide pennant; the make-up of divisions will be driven by the number of teams club submit. Nor is the Competitions Committee establishing a premier league. Any such move would need to be driven by the clubs.
- The Competitions Committee will be largely the same as now in season 2022/23.

- There have been no nominations for Delegated Officer/Coordinator positions other than Pennant and Events Recorder.

Jan acknowledged and commended Paynesville Bowls Club's support for the Paynesville Primary School which had great success in the Victorian schools bowls competition, coming third overall against a very strong field.

She invited questions/comments from the floor.

Length of season

Leigh Bryant (Sale) suggested that pennant could be started later in the year to allow clubs to run their championship events. Jill Dennison (Bairnsdale Golf) commented that pennant season was too long. In response, Jan suggested that clubs which had concerns about the length of the season write to the Competitions Committee. Nigel commented that clubs consider having events at different times, e.g., twilight. Sue Jenkins (Paynesville) said the club was considering different times for club championships, including running twilight games, to take off some of the pressure.

Finals

Nannette Hamilton (Bairnsdale) queried whether pennant finals could be played on consecutive days, e.g., in the case of Midweek one final on Tuesday, the next on Wednesday with the grand final the following week.

Vic Open

In response to concern about the Vic Open being held in November 2022 and March 2023, Jan agreed there would be a big impact on pennant. She said the Open would be held in Shepparton in November, then Gippsland in March in subsequent years after La Trobe Council secured a five-year deal. The Open would be focused on Traralgon and Morwell, with north Gippsland clubs Heyfield, Maffra, Sale, West Sale, Rosedale and possibly Stratford having an opportunity to be involved. Bowls Victoria (BV) will write to each of these clubs to determine their interest in taking part.

Affiliation fees

Peter Beesley reminded clubs that junior membership is not exempt from the Bowls Victoria affiliation fee. He urged clubs to write to the Region requesting that the fee for juniors be waived, thus enabling the Region to make a case on the clubs' behalf.

Close of meeting

Jan closed the meeting at 11.35am, thanking everyone for their attendance and contribution.