



Board of Directors Meeting

February 23-24, 2024

Holiday Inn Express

MINUTES

Present:

Scott Neiles, President

Directors:

Brooks Penrod

Bob Stanton

Jackie Dugger

Robb Andison

Kareena Zanolli

Neil Teague

Staff:

Mike Branchaud, CEO

Donna Ozarko, Mgr –Officials/Recognition

Gilles LeBlanc, Mgr. – Operations

Angela Ballantyne, Mgr. – Sport Development

Christine Robertson, Mgr. – Financial Services

Cassidy Burton, Mgr. – Marketing/Communications

Other:

Benoit Girardin, LBB Strategies (Strategic Planning)

1) Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

President Neiles opened the meeting at 8:30am and thanked all for taking the time to join. He acknowledged that the meeting originated on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people.

2) Acceptance of the November 11 Board Minutes

Motion # 1 - Move to approve the November 11 Board Minutes

Penrod/Andison CARRIED

3) Approval of Agenda with power to add

Add Training Centre BC (Dugger)

Motion # 2 - Move to approve the Agenda.

Dugger/Andison CARRIED

4) Strategic Plan Presentation

Benoit Girardin of LBB Strategies was introduced, initiating the morning's Strategic Planning session.

5) Women's National Teams

5.1 U18 WNT and WNT update

The U18 Women's National Softball Team will compete in the WBSC Americas Pan Am Qualifier in Monteria, Colombia from March 30-April 6th. The top 5 teams qualify for one of 3 Stage 1 events including: Pingtan, China; Dallas, Texas; or San Paulo, Brazil, depending on the team's performance in the America's Pan Am Championship. There were 3 invitational camps held in February to select the best talent for the team – ON, BC and SK. The team will be announced on February 26th.

6) **Sport Development Risk Management**

Safe Sport

- cases handled by our ITP can become costly and time consuming.
- any new cases that may result out of the OSIC partnership could cause a potential financial and/or communications risk.

National Teams

- the rising travel expenses consistently contribute to the overall cost of participating in competitions.
- uncertainty regarding competition locations and dates from WBSC Americas often results in last-minute planning and heightened travel expenses.
- OTP will assess our chances of winning medals based on the funding we anticipate receiving.

Motion # 3 - Move to approve the Sport Development Report

Zanolli/Dugger CARRIED

7) **Men's National Teams**

Pan American Championship/Kelowna - The Men's Pan American Championship will take place in early April. We made the decision not to attend because we are already guaranteed a berth as the host of a 2024 World Cup Group Stage and the 2025 Finals in Prince Albert. Our coaching staff felt it would be a better use of our money to have a training camp and play in the Kelowna May Days tournament May 15-21 to see more of our athlete pool.

Saskatoon Tournament - Saskatoon will host a tournament (July 5-7) the week prior to the World Cup Group Stage in Prince Albert (July 10-14). Hill United, the New York Gremlins and two Saskatoon-based club teams will be attending this tournament, and possibly a few National Teams from other countries. The participation of Hill United and the Gremlins was dependent on whether we would allow our Canadian athletes on their roster to play for them, so the coaching staff decided to allow it and we will enter a Development team for anyone who does not have a team at the event. We made it clear that all Team Canada World Cup athletes will be required to play in this tournament either with their club team or our Development team to prepare for the Group Stage.

World Cup Group Stage - After the Saskatoon tournament, our roster of 16 players will travel to Prince Albert on July 8th for a couple of days of preparation before the World Cup Group Stage begins on the 10th. Canada, New Zealand and Singapore are confirmed for our Group Stage, and we will have one team from the Americas Qualifier and one wild card team named to our group after the Pan American Championship to round out the group of six. Mexico is hosting another Group Stage June 12-16 and the United States Group Stage will be September 17-21. The top two teams from each Group Stage and two wild card teams will advance to the 2025 Finals. We are guaranteed a spot as the host.

7.1 MNT Player Availability

Based on the availability of our players, we will be missing several core players from our team

for the World Cup Group Stage. This creates a good opportunity for other players from our athlete pool to gain international experience and solidify our depth ahead of the 2025 Finals.

7.2 U18 and U23 Head Coach Approvals

Motion # 4 - Move to approve Doug Allin as Head Coach for U23 MNT and Mark Quinn as Head Coach for U18 MNT

Penrod/Teague CARRIED

8) Operations Risk Management

- Hosts are currently required to provide at least 2M of comprehensive liability insurance – with rising costs, concern that this is not enough.
- Rising cost of flights/hotels for teams, supervisors, umpires.
- We currently require supervisors to complete Vulnerable Sector Checks – there is a risk those checks would flag an issue that would need to be handled.
- Our Canadian Championships depend on finding suitable hosts. Some facilities are not being maintained properly, and it could lead to a lower amount of potential hosts.
- The uncertainty of WBSC Americas events. The short timelines of confirming events and preparing a team for them is very challenging.
- Unfortunately, some of our Men’s team athletes continue to test positive for doping infractions. As previously discussed with the Board, we do everything in our power to inform/educate them, but they continue to make personal mistakes.
- Some of our top Men’s National Team players are being put into positions where they need to decide between competing for their country (pride) or their club team (to make money). We are fortunate that we have an automatic berth to the World Cup Finals this cycle. 2025 will be even more challenging on our athletes’ playing and work schedules if they plan on playing ISC, World Cup and World Games.

Motion # 5 - Move to approve Operations Risk Management

Andison/Zanolli CARRIED

9) **Slo-Pitch**

9.1 SPN / ON Nationals

With the merge between SPN and SPO it is likely that additional PTs will merge with SPN in the future. Currently there is some discussion with SPN and Softball Canada involvement, and updates will be provided to the Board.

9.2 Working Group next steps

Working Group has finalized the terms of reference and objectives for the upcoming year. The tasks assigned to the Slo-Pitch working group are outlined as follows:

Growth

Objective: Facilitate the growth and development of the Co-Ed discipline in Slo-Pitch at the national level through strategic initiatives, focusing on the following key components:

1. Alignment with WBSC
2. Player Selection Process
3. Identification of Athlete Pool

Rules/SORs

Objective: Evaluate existing Rules/SOR's to provide insights and recommendations for enhancing future safety standards and operational practices.

1. Bats, batter area, helmets, defensive face protection
2. Game play standard practices i.e. stealing.

Motion # 6 - Move to approve SP Working Group Terms of Reference

Andison/Zanolli CARRIED

Motion # 7 - Move to approve SP Report

Andison/ Teague CARRIED

10) Tim Hortons / Tim Bits Softball

With Tim Hortons discontinuing its sponsorship with Softball Canada, the 2024 season will serve as a transitional period. Meanwhile, Softball Canada has engaged in discussions with the Bluejays Academy and is in the process of crafting a presentation to explore potential partnership opportunities for the Timbits Softball Program.

11) Programs Risk Management

- Not securing Timbits sponsorship(s).
- Proceeding with programming in LTPD areas without prior consultation with Softball Canada by P/Ts.
- USA Softball not providing appearance money for the Border Battle
- SPN partnering with P/Ts and operating National Events

Motion # 8 - Move to approve Tim Horton's Report and Risk Management

Penrod/ Dugger CARRIED

12) Officials

- In 2023, there was a notable success in umpire registrations, marking a significant stride exceeding pre-pandemic levels. The majority of provinces had an uptick in registrations, with particular attention to Ontario.
- The printed Rulebook will be ready for the provinces in mid-March.
- The Women in Umpiring group has undergone a transformation and is now known as "Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity," with Tonya Ribalkin Zanon taking the lead within the ODC. Ribalkin Zanon will collaborate closely with Ozarko on umpiring initiatives as Ozarko transitions into the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) role for Softball Canada.
- The Level 5 Point System for umpire selections has recently been updated.
- The Umpire Facebook page has transitioned to the general Softball Canada Facebook page, with plans for eventual closure of the dedicated Umpire page.

2024 International Selections

FP

USA Softball - Men's Major – Justin Van Horn (ON)

Softball Europe – European Exchange Women's – Kearney O'Keefe (NL)

SP

USA Softball - Men's A - Stuart Bowden (ON)

USA Softball – Regional - Jeff McKay (ON)

Border Battle - Gary Barnes (AB) and Shawn Miller (BC)

Softball Europe - Co-ed - Dave Jones (ON)
Softball Europe Men's - Lance Davidson (AB)

***Motion # 9 - Move to approve Officials Report, International Selections and Risk Management
Penrod/Stanton CARRIED***

13) AGM

The contract for the 2024 AGM in Saskatoon, SK has been finalized, with the Saskatoon Inn and Conference Centre selected as the venue, located approximately 5 minutes from the airport. Room rates have been set at \$139 per night, excluding applicable taxes. These rates are available starting November 5 – November 9. Ozarko will collaborate with the host, staff, and PT associations to develop workshop topics for future events. Additional information will be shared as it becomes available.

13.1 Hall of Fame Rings

The committee is considering the option of introducing a Hall of Fame ring that can be purchased. Heavy Metal Designs, located in Winnipeg, has already crafted both male and female versions which will be called large or small instead of male/female). Initial pricing is set to start at \$250 for the smaller size and \$300 for the larger size, depending on the metal chosen. It has been agreed to contribute a \$50 kickback to Softball Canada for each ring sold. Ozarko will collaborate with the supplier to coordinate the implementation of this initiative. Additionally, a press release will be organized to promote the rings among all previous Hall of Fame inductees.

13.2 Awards Committee

The Awards Committee is also considering revising the existing selection criteria and scoring system for all awards. Additionally, it was observed that while the Hall of Fame banquet is specifically for Hall of Fame recipients, there is a need to enhance the significance of the delivery of other awards.

Motion # 10 - Move to approve AGM Report

Andison/Dugger CARRIED

14) Officials Risk Management

- Possible challenge: Ensuring an adequate crew roster for the SP Canadian Championship in Leduc, AB.
- The Webinars were well received, however had to be put on hold due to not being offered in both French and English. We aim to restart these webinars; however, translation remains a significant challenge for delivering content in certain program areas.
- Continual Challenge: Translation and getting materials out at the same time remains an issue. - Underage umpires at Canadian Championships raises concerns about deciding on appropriate roommates for accommodations.
- Lack of attention to the abuse of officials may pose challenges in recruiting new umpires and result in existing umpires leaving the program prematurely.

15) WBSC Americas Meeting

Approximately 22 countries participated in the meeting, which was conducted in Spanish with simultaneous translations provided. Positive discussions were held with representatives from USA Softball while at the meeting.

16) Staffing

For the new intern position, approximately 30 applications were received, and 7 candidates were interviewed. The position was offered to a candidate who had until the following Monday to accept. A hiring decision is pending for the front desk/admin role. Additionally, 5 applications were received for the new program coordinator position, with some intern applicants also expressing interest.

17) Prince Albert World Cup

The event planning is moving along as expected with no updates to report at this time.

18) Working groups

Neiles presented the Working Groups with the Board liaison appointments for the various committees for 2024.

Motion # 11 - Move to approve Working Groups

Dugger/Stanton CARRIED

19) Canadian Championships Contact Chart

	<u>Supervisor</u>	<u>Assistant Supervisor</u>	<u>UIC</u>	<u>DUIC</u>
U15G	Sophie Bedard	Danyka Massicotte	Annie Michaud	Ariane Longtin
U15B	Gary MacDonald	Dave Northern	Sarah-Ève Jacob	Audrey DH
U17G	Kareena Zanolli	Lynda Turton	Valerie Pelleck	Ryan Webber
U17B	Bob Stanton	Mike Mulvey	Diego LaManna	Mike French
U19W	Jackie Dugger	Garry Burns	Tonya Ribalkin-Zanon	Laura MacMillan
U20M	Lawrence Beatty	Tony Cummiskey	Brent Chadwick	Ed Otterman
U23M	Brooks Penrod	Adam Brown	Daryl Helmer	Steve Gallagher
WFP	Jackie Dugger	Lynda Turton	Geneviève Gaudreau	Daryl Way
MFP			Scott McLaren	Mitch Zuk
M/WSP	Robb Andison	Neil Teague	Mark Gough	Don Farr
	Ron Hawthorne	Lisa Brown-Rooke	Jason Clark	Patrick Chiquette

Motion # 12 - Move to approve Canadian Championship Contact Chart

Dugger/Zanolli CARRIED

20) Other Business

The sufficiency of the current liability insurance was a topic of discussion. Dugger reported on the construction of a new National Centre of Excellence in BC and requested support from Softball Canada. The board expressed its support for the building.

21) Next meeting

TBD

22) Adjournment

Motion # 13 - Move to adjourn

Penrod/Teague CARRIED