

Minutes of Liberty League Fall Meeting September 18, 2018 – Turning Stone, Verona, N.Y.

Present: Kris Hall, David Lindholm (Bard); Steve Yianoukos, Laurel Kane (Clarkson); Brian Miller (Hobart & William Smith), Susan Bassett (Ithaca), Lee McElroy, Kevin Beattie (RPI); George VanderZwaag, Kris Shanley, Jacob Lees (Rochester); Lou Spiotti, Amy Reed (RIT); Bob Durocher, Randy LaBrake (St. Lawrence); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan (Skidmore); Jim McLaughlin, Beth Tiffany, Dru Alvez (Union); Michelle Walsh, JoAnn Acquarulo, Kaitlin Leach (Vassar); Deb Steward (William Smith); Tracy King, Katie Meline (Liberty League).

I. Call to Order

Susan Bassett (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 11:09 a.m.

II. Review of Minutes

The minutes of the May 30-31, 2018 meeting at the Otesaga Resort Hotel in Cooperstown, N.Y., were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

Motion: A motion (Yianoukos, Durocher) to approve the minutes from the May 30-31, 2018 meeting PASSED 11-0-0.

III. Financial Report

Liberty League treasurer Deb Steward provided details of the financial report. A year-end surplus for FY18 totaled \$25,792.60. A surplus of \$16,615 is projected for FY19. At the direction of the league, Steward invested \$50,000 of reserve funds in a 20-month certificate of deposit. Membership dues invoices were distributed to full and associate members in August and should be processed for payment to the league. Steward continues to focus on modernizing the league's financial practices, including online bill payments and exploring options for accounting firms.

Motion: A motion (McElroy, Hall) to approve the financial report, including the proposed FY19 budget as presented PASSED 11-0-0.

The Liberty League dues structure for FY20 and FY21 was discussed. Current annual membership dues are \$20,000 for a full-member institution, \$2,000 for an associate member participating in a round-robin sport and \$250 for an associate member participating in a single-site championship. With a budget surplus in FY18 and a forecasted surplus in FY19, consensus was that a dues increase was not necessary for the next two years. Budget projections will be prepared to determine if a dues increase is recommended beyond FY21.

Motion: A motion (Steward, Walsh) to establish Liberty League annual membership dues for FY20 and FY21 at \$20,000 for full-member institutions, \$2,000 for round-robin associate members and \$250 for single-site associate members PASSED 11-0-0.

IV. Commissioner's Report

- A. Membership Inquiries:** Tracy King reported receiving a call from an institution's president, gauging interest in Liberty League full membership. The president indicated that a colleague from another institution also expressed interest in Liberty League full membership. King had expressed to the president that the league is not currently pursuing additional members, but would bring the inquiry to the league for consideration. While Susan Bassett spoke supportively of the inquiring institutions, there was little interest expressed in exploring additional full-members.
- B. National SAAC Associate Representative:** Based on the change in composition of the Division III National SAAC, King indicated that the Liberty League needed to select a student-athlete to serve as an associate member on the National SAAC. It was strongly recommended by NCAA staff that the associate member be from a different playing season than the primary SAAC member. Under the new SAAC partner conference structure, the Liberty League is partnered with the University Athletic Association whose SAAC representative is a baseball student-athlete from Emory University. King reported that six institutions nominated student-athletes for the associate member role, but four participated in spring sports. Rhona Eseyade, a Union men's basketball student-athlete, was nominated for the position and received support from the league. [Following the meeting, it was determined that Eseyade would be unable to serve in the position due to academic commitments. Annie MacMillan, a Vassar women's volleyball student-athlete agreed to serve as the league's associate member.]
- C. SAAC Meeting – Greg Shelley Program:** Based on a discussion from the January 2018 league meeting regarding the possible inclusion of educational programming at the Liberty League SAAC meeting, King secured the services of leadership and performance facilitator Greg Shelley. The league SAAC meeting will be held Sunday, Oct. 21. The optimal meeting size is 30-40 attendees. Schools were encouraged to have student-athletes participate in this leadership development opportunity. King will remind SAAC advisors of the meeting date.
- D. NCAA Division III Student Immersion Program:** Deadline for schools to nominate individuals to the Division III Student Immersion Program at the NCAA Convention is Sunday, Sept. 30. Nominations must be submitted through the NCAA Program Hub. Ethnic-minority students, preferably juniors

and seniors, with a strong interest in a career in Division III athletics are encouraged to apply. All students – not simply athletes – are eligible to apply.

V. NCAA / National Issues

- A. **Management Council Update:** NCAA Management Council member Gail Cummings-Danson provided an update on key Division III issues including: 1.) increase in Division III budget for non-championship initiatives to include funding for athletic trainers and officials through the conference grant program, LGBTQ initiatives, and professional development funding for female and ethnic minority assistant coaches; 2.) men’s volleyball bracket expansion from 12 to 14 teams; 3.) continuation of alcohol sales at joint championships (e.g., men’s lacrosse).
- B. **Preview of NCAA Legislation:** Brian Miller reviewed proposed NCAA legislation. Currently, only one membership-sponsored proposal has been included in the NCAA’s Initial Publication of Proposed Legislation (IPOPL). The proposal calls for the addition of a three-day acclimatization period for the sports of soccer and field hockey. Additional governance-sponsored proposals, to be announced no later than Sept. 23, may include, 1.) mandatory student-athlete graduation rate reporting; 2.) acceptance of pre-enrollment educational expenses; 3.) comments before acceptance through social media; 4.) final term before experiential learning requirement; 5.) in football, establishing a preseason start date of 23 days before the institution’s first permissible contest.
- C. **Proposed Division III Regional Realignment:** King shared the work of a committee of Division III commissioners and their proposed regional realignment in a number of sports. Division III last explored regional realignment a decade ago. Since that time, the division has grown and a number of new conferences have been formed. The committee focused on balancing the size of the regions and establishing the number of regions in each sport based on the number of sponsoring institutions. Further information will be shared as it becomes available.

VI. League Governance

- A. **Role of the FAR in League Governance:** Based on a discussion with a Faculty Athletic Representative at a member institution, Tracy King inquired as to the role of the FARs in league governance. FARs are involved at the campus level to varying degrees. Is there an issue/problem the league is trying to solve that would benefit from the involvement of FARs? Connecting members of the group may assist in sharing of best practices and onboarding of new FARs. Consensus is to have King email the FARs to gauge interest in an introductory Liberty League conference call or meeting.

- B. Hardship Waivers – Non-League Sports:** During the summer, a member institution submitted a hardship waiver to the league for a student-athlete who participates in a sport not sponsored by the league. The program competes as a Division III independent and is not affiliated with a conference. In previous situations, the league has referred institutions to the NCAA Committee on Student-Athlete Reinstatement. NCAA staff confirmed to King that the league, as a service to its membership, can administer hardship waivers for student-athletes who participate in sports not affiliated with a conference. Consensus was that as long as the student-athlete meets the criteria for a hardship waiver and the program is not affiliated with another conference, then the league can administer the waiver.

Motion: A motion (Hall, Yianoukos) to have the Executive Committee administer hardship waiver requests from member institutions for student-athletes in sports not sponsored by the league (independent sports) PASSED 11-0-0.

Susan Bassett inquired as to the role of the Executive Committee in reviewing hardship waivers. In order to grant waivers, certain conditions must be met: 1.) injury/illness occurs before the completion of the first half of the playing season; 2.) injury/illness occurs when the student-athlete has not competed in more than one-third of the contests; 3.) medical documentation from a physician that establishes that the injury/illness is season-ending. Is it necessary to bring the waivers to the Executive Committee when the Commissioner can determine if all conditions have been met? The Commissioner can consult the Executive Committee if needed.

Motion: A motion (Spiotti/Steward) to authorize/empower the Commissioner to administer hardship waivers while consulting with the Executive Committee as needed PASSED 11-0-0.

- C. All-Liberty League Honorable Mention:** As a follow-up to the spring meeting Tracy King compiled data on the number of student-athletes currently receiving All-Liberty League ‘Honorable Mention’ recognition. Currently, in order to be recognized as honorable mention, a student-athlete must receive all-league votes from at least two coaches. Sponsorship varies by sport – for example, women’s lacrosse has 11 sponsoring institutions while softball has eight – so sports with more teams typically have more honorable mention selections. Data was prepared to show the impact of increasing the standard to a minimum of THREE votes as well as determining honorable mention based on a percentage of the coaches voting – 33 percent or 50 percent. Utilizing a percentage would account for differences in sport sponsorship.

Motion: A motion (Beattie/McLaughlin) to specify that All-Liberty League Honorable Mention shall consist of student-athletes who are not on the first or second team, but receive votes from at least 33 percent of coaches PASSED 10-0-1.

[Clarification: since a coach cannot vote for his/her nominees, the 33 percent standard will be based on the number of coaches from which a student-athlete can receive votes. In basketball, for example, there are 10 teams, but a coach cannot vote for his/her nominees, so a student-athlete could only receive votes from a maximum of nine coaches. In order to be recognized as honorable mention, a student-athlete would need to receive votes from 33 percent, or a minimum of three of the nine coaches.]

Deb Steward noted that women's golf does not currently have any honorable mention honorees because the All-Liberty League awards are determined by individual place finish at the championship. Men's golf determines all-league awards by ballot vote and, therefore, individuals can earn honorable mention if they receive enough votes. Steward suggested that women's golf can recognize individuals as honorable mention based on place finish.

Motion: A motion (Steward/Yianoukos) to recognize individuals placing 11th through 13th at the Liberty League championship as All-League Honorable Mention PASSED 6-0-5. [First Team consists of individuals finishing 1st through 5th while Second Team consists of individuals finishing 6th through 10th.]

D. Moratorium on Sport Issues: As a follow-up to the spring meeting, the concept of placing moratoriums on certain issues was discussed. Particular sport groups have consistently brought forward proposals on the same issues for the administrators to consider (e.g., schedule formats, tournament formats). Unless new information has been provided, should the sport group be able to bring the same proposal forward repeatedly? Rather than imposing moratoriums, it was agreed that the sport liaison should guide the discussion with the sport group and share rationale for why a proposal may not have passed previously.

VII. League Championships / Scheduling

A. Championship Manual: King has created a draft Liberty League championship manual utilizing NCAA championship handbooks and guidelines from other conferences. It was agreed that sections would be reviewed with individual sport committees prior to implementation. Committees should review and provide feedback prior to the spring meeting.

B. Single-Site Championship Entry Fees: Based on a recommendation of the track and field coaches in the spring regarding proposed entry fees for the Liberty League championships, the entry fees for other championships were reviewed to determine an appropriate structure. Currently, golf and swimming and diving are the only Liberty League championships that have established entry fees. Utilizing a professional timing company has been a significant expense for the host institution in track and field. Not all institutions are capable of hosting based on current facilities so the hosting

burden is not shared equally. It was agreed that additional financial data would be needed comparing the costs of hosting with the costs of the traveling institutions to determine appropriate entry fees. Information will be gathered and prepared for the next meeting.

- C. **Soccer Schedule Options:** It had been determined at the spring meeting that if the soccer coaches desired to change the format of the league championship from Tuesday-Saturday-Sunday to Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday, they should submit a revised schedule for consideration. King drafted three models to gauge the level of support for different scheduling options. Consensus was that models that included Sunday play and models that included additional midweek games would not garner support. If the coaches wished to utilize an additional Saturday for tournament play, then regular-season play would need to start a week earlier.
- D. **Softball Tournament:** King reported that the softball coaches met on Aug. 27 to review contingency plans for the league tournament. Under current guidelines, the league tournament times are 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Thursday. The coaches recommended moving the times up to noon and 2:30 p.m. as teams will typically travel to the site on Wednesday evening unless teams are local. It was noted that it is easier to push the start times back than to move them up. It was also recommended that the host school conduct a pre-tournament call on Tuesday to discuss logistics and format. If it appears that weather may create challenges in completing the three-day tournament between Thursday and Sunday, the coaches recommended condensing the schedule to two days (four games one day; two or three the second day) and starting as early as 9 a.m. Administrators agreed that the decision to switch to a two-day format would be made by the athletic directors of the participating teams. The coaches also recommended a change in the formula for determining the home team throughout the tournament. In games 1-5, the higher-seeded team will be the home team. In game 6, the team that is 2-0 will be the home team. In game 7 (if necessary), the visiting team from game 6 will be the home team.
- E. **Baseball Scheduling / Format Proposals:** Following up on action items that were tabled from the spring meeting, Jim McLaughlin reviewed items pertaining to the 2020 season, when Ithaca joins the league (confirmed by Susan Bassett) and the play shifts to a two-division format.
 - 1. **Default Weekend Schedule:** McLaughlin reviewed the format for league weekends, noting that this would be the *default* option that could be adjusted by the competing teams due to weather. Teams currently play doubleheaders Saturday and Sunday, a 7-inning game followed by a 9-inning game both days. If the first game goes extra innings, the second game defaults to seven innings. The 2020 schedule

will become 3-game weekend sets. McLaughlin noted that the preference of the coaches was for three 9-inning games.

Motion: A motion (Beattie/Yianoukos) to establish a default schedule of two 9-inning games Saturday and one 9-inning game Sunday with the second game on Saturday being nine innings regardless of whether the first game goes extra innings (effective 2020) FAILED 3-6-2.

Concern with all games being nine innings was the length of the day and being able to complete the two games. While teams have the flexibility of moving games up to Friday and adjusting the schedule in order to complete the three-game series, it was agreed that teams will still be required to complete two games against all scheduled opponents. If rained out, the third game does not need to be rescheduled.

Motion: A motion (VanderZwaag/McLaughlin) to establish a default schedule of a 7/9 doubleheader on Saturday and one 9-inning game Sunday with the second game on Saturday defaulting to a seven-inning game if the first game on Saturday goes extra innings (effective 2020) PASSED 9-0-2.

Motion: A motion (McLaughlin/Yianoukos) to specify that the final day for regular-season make-ups prior to the crossover series will be Tuesday prior to the crossover series (which begins Saturday); and the final day for make-ups from the crossover series prior to the four-team double-elimination tournament will be Monday (League tournament begins Thursday). If the crossover series cannot be completed, the higher seed will advance (effective 2020) PASSED 10-0-1.

Motion: A motion (McLaughlin/Yianoukos) to specify that divisional and overall league winning percentage will be calculated for all teams. Divisional games count in divisional win percentage and will be utilized to determine crossover weekend matchups based on winning percentage. All league games, including results from the crossover weekend, will be factored into League winning percentage and will be utilized to determine tournament seeds for the four teams advancing from the crossover weekend. The site of the 5 vs. 5 matchup on the crossover weekend will be determined by League winning percentage (effective 2020) PASSED 10-0-1.

VIII. New Business

- A. **Sportsmanship Concerns:** Michelle Walsh conveyed sportsmanship issues that had occurred with non-conference institutions during soccer games. It was agreed that if such an incident occurred during a Liberty League game, athletic directors would share feedback and work to address such issues.
- B. **Volleyball Officiating:** Laurel Kane indicated that Clarkson was having issues with incorrect volleyball officiating fees listed in Arbiter. JoAnn

Acquarulo reported that Vassar did not have line judges assigned until shortly before the scheduled matches. Tracy King indicated that Mara Wager, the league's new assignor, acknowledged the issues and was working with Arbiter to resolve them. King also noted that Wager was selected as the league's assigner in April and urged the schools to provide her with an opportunity to build a deeper pool of officials.

IX. Future Meeting Sites / Dates

Meeting dates for 2018-19 were reviewed.

- A. Winter Meeting:** Friday, Jan. 25, 2019 at NCAA Convention (Orlando, Fla.). NCAA Convention dates: Jan. 23-26, 2019.
- B. Spring Meeting:** May 29-30, 2019. Interest was expressed in meeting at Turning Stone rather than the Otesaga Resort Hotel in Cooperstown. The league has paid a \$1,000 deposit to Otesaga, so King will determine if the deposit can be refunded.

XVII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.