

# **Minutes of Liberty League Fall Meeting September 24, 2019 – Turning Stone Resort, Verona, N.Y.**

**Present:** Kris Hall, (Bard); Scott Smalling, Laurel Kane (Clarkson); Brian Miller (Hobart & William Smith), Susan Bassett (Ithaca), Lee McElroy (RPI); Kris Shanley, Morgan Stout (Rochester); Lou Spiotti, Amy Reed (RIT); Bob Durocher, Randy LaBrake (St. Lawrence); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan (Skidmore); Jim McLaughlin, Beth Tiffany (Union); Michelle Walsh, JoAnn Acquarulo, Kaitlin Leach (Vassar); Deb Steward (William Smith); Tracy King, Katie Meline (Liberty League).

**Guests:** Luke Walczewski (Perfect Record Software – via teleconference); Chuck Brown, Ph.D. (Penn State-Behrend/NCAA Management Council).

## **I. Call to Order**

Susan Bassett (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m. Attendees introduced themselves.

## **II. Perfect Record Demo**

Luke Walczewski provided an online demonstration of the Perfect Record contract scheduling platform. Walczewski noted that four Liberty League schools – Bard, Ithaca, RIT, Vassar – are currently utilizing the software or have signed up for a trial. Approximate cost is \$100 per sport. Interested schools can contact Walczewski at Perfect Record.

## **III. NCAA / National Issues**

Chuck Brown, Ph.D., Faculty Athletic Representative at Penn State-Behrend and a member of the Division III Management Council attended the meeting to provide an NCAA update on key governance topics. Among the topics in which Brown provided updates and sought feedback were: Name, Image and Likeness (NIL); Sports Wagering; Sports Science Institute/Injury Surveillance Program; Attestation of Compliance (due Oct. 15; institutions that don't complete will be locked out of NCAA championships); NCAA transfer portal; Division III University; Ice hockey international pilot; SWA resources; Gameday the D3 Way; LGBTQ Working Group; Division III Identity Initiative.

Brown also reviewed key legislative proposals for the 2020 NCAA Convention, noting that the Second Publication of Proposed Legislation (SPOPL) was released with 11 proposals receiving the necessary co-sponsorship to be voted upon at the Convention. Key proposals highlighted:

- SPOPL 2-4: Snacks and Nutritional Supplements Incidental to Participation: will this disproportionately benefit institutions with larger athletics budgets which are able to provide snacks/supplements to student-athletes?

- SPOPL 2-5: Permissible Practice Expenses – Exceptions for Golf and Swimming and Diving: teams are currently required to engage in competition during a training trip. This proposal would remove the competition requirement and would simply allow teams to practice on a trip without competing.
- SPOPL 2-7, 2-8, 2-9: These proposals would add acrobatics and tumbling, women's equestrian and women's wrestling to the list of emerging sports for women. Two Liberty League institutions currently sponsor equestrian (Skidmore and St. Lawrence) and both are opposed to adding equestrian to the emerging-sport list. The sport is currently governed by the IHSA, which has policies that would conflict with NCAA policies.

#### **IV. Review of Minutes**

The minutes of the May 29-30, 2019 meeting at the Turning Stone Resort in Verona, N.Y., were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

**Motion:** A motion (Steward, McElroy) to approve the minutes from the May 29-30, 2019 meeting PASSED 11-0-0.

#### **V. Financial Report**

Tracy King noted that the league office is now handling the Liberty League's day-to-day financial duties. King met with Liberty League treasurer Deb Steward in June to transfer bank information. Steward will continue to review financial reports and will serve as liaison to the league's payroll company for the purpose of making payroll adjustments for the commissioner and assistant commissioner.

King provided details of the financial report. Liberty League bank balance as of Sept. 10 totaled \$242,384.12. For FY19, the league had a budget deficit of \$20,228.21, but that included a \$50,000 transfer for a certificate of deposit (CD). Not including the CD withdrawal, the league had an operating surplus of \$29,771.79. A budget surplus of approximately \$10,220 is projected for FY20. Membership dues invoices were distributed to full and associate members August 1 and have been received from eight full members and three of the five associate members. The due date for the submission of dues is September 30.

**Motion:** A motion (Cummings-Danson, McElroy) to approve the financial report as presented PASSED 11-0-0.

Investment opportunities for the league's fund balance were discussed. King indicated that the interest rate for a 24-month CD is currently 0.45%, which would yield a two-year return of approximately \$225 on a \$25,000 CD. Lou Spiotti suggested the league consider other investment opportunities, including a bond account. King will explore potential options.

## VI. Commissioner's Report

- A. **Monica Feeley – NCAA Woman of the Year Top 30:** King recognized and congratulated Vassar on the selection of Monica Feeley for being selected among the top 30 finalists (top 10 among Division III nominees) for the NCAA Woman of the Year award. Feeley, a 2019 graduate and former field hockey student-athlete, will be honored with the other finalists on Oct. 20 in Indianapolis. Feeley is the second Liberty League student-athlete in three years to be recognized as a top-30 honoree. *[It was announced on Oct. 2 that Feeley is one of the nine finalists for the award, including one of the top three from Division III.]*
- B. **Liberty League SAAC Program:** The Liberty League fall SAAC meeting is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 27, at the Delta by Marriott Hotel in Utica. The focus of the program is mental health and the program facilitator is Dr. Jarrod Spencer, a sports psychologist who has worked with athletes from all levels, including high school, college and professional. King indicated that the goal is for each school to send a minimum of 2-3 student-athletes to the program. Additional participants from each school are welcome.
- C. **Liberty League 25th Anniversary Recognition:** King indicated that the Liberty League's 25th anniversary commemorative mark has been completed after incorporating feedback from the members. The logo is being utilized on the league website and social media. The league also plans to recognize top teams and individual performers from its 25-year history throughout the academic year.

## VII. League Governance

- A. **Roger Williams Swimming & Diving Inquiry:** Roger Williams University submitted a letter of inquiry, expressing interest in joining the Liberty League as an associate member in swimming and diving. Based on the discussion from the spring meeting, an institution would be considered for associate membership if there is a mutual benefit to the institution and the league. While having a conference championship opportunity would benefit Roger Williams, an additional school might take away opportunities for Liberty League student-athletes to compete in event finals. King reported from a Sept. 11 conference call of the swimming and diving coaches that there was no interest among the group in adding associate members. No action was taken to add Roger Williams as an associate member. King will follow up with Roger Williams athletics director Kiki Jacobs.
- B. **Liberty League Nondiscrimination Policy:** Following up on the spring meeting discussion, two sample nondiscrimination policy statements (Sample 2 and Sample 3 below) were considered for possible adoption as the Liberty League nondiscrimination statement. Consensus among the group

was that Sample 2 was more proactive in terms of a commitment. Kris Hall suggested adding veterans, domestic violence victims and ex-offender status to the list of persons outlined. Noting that both samples seemed more institutional based, Susan Bassett will draft a statement to share with administrators and Faculty Athletic Representatives prior to the league's January meeting.

**SAMPLE 2:** "Diversity and inclusion are essential to the fulfillment of our [institutional/conference] mission. We value inclusive excellence in learning, curricular and co-curricular programming; campus climate; recruitment; admissions; hiring; and retention. We are deeply committed to promoting and maintaining a civil community that facilitates opportunities for shared understanding and expression of individual and collective truths. Moreover, we resolve to create and uphold a community that is respectful of all persons despite differences in age, class, creed, disability, educational background, gender expression, gender identity, geographical location, income, marital status, national origin, parental status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, work experiences and other dimensions of diversity."

**SAMPLE 3:** "[Institution/Conference X] is committed to its diversity and inclusion of its student-athletes, athletics administrators and staff, which is a point of pride and a hallmark of the institution. The framework for our commitment to diversity sits within our active prohibition of discrimination in our educational policies, employment, campus services and activities on the basis of age, class, creed, disability, educational background, gender expression, gender identity, geographical location, income, marital status, national origin, parental status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, work experiences, and all classifications protected by law."

- C. **Benchmarking Study:** As a follow-up to the spring meeting, King had circulated a spreadsheet provided by Jim McLaughlin that compared athletics staffing levels of Liberty League member institutions. The data was previously compiled in approximately 2010. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to update the document to compare current staffing levels. Data should be compiled and sent to King by the end of October.
  
- D. **Awards Committee Recommendations:** Katie Meline reported back on a Sept. 10 conference call of an ad hoc awards committee. The committee considered proposals from the spring meeting to add an All-Liberty League second team in rowing and a midfielder of the year in field hockey and men's lacrosse. The committee agreed that the addition of a second team in rowing was consistent with other sports with sponsorship numbers of seven or more institutions and was supportive of the proposal. Regarding the proposed midfielder of the year award, the committee surveyed both Division I and III conferences and determined that very few (one in Division III) had a midfielder of the year award and was opposed to the proposal.

**Motion:** A motion to add an All-Liberty League second team to the men's and women's rowing awards program PASSED 8-0-3.

**Motion:** A motion to add a Midfielder of the Year award to the field hockey awards program FAILED 0-8-3.

**Motion:** A motion to add a Midfielder of the Year award to the men's lacrosse awards program FAILED 0-8-3.

**Motion:** A motion to add a Midfielder of the Year award to the women's lacrosse awards program FAILED 0-10-1.

**E. Campus Accessibility (Hall):** Kris Hall reported that she is currently serving as a member of Bard's Working Group on Accessibility, focusing on making the community and campus to more fluent in ways that students, faculty, staff and guests can understand the facilities and how the college can support individuals that may have accessibility challenges. The college hired a consultant, AHEAD, to assist in the review process. As part of the review, recommendations could include changes to facilities as well as website accessibility.

## **VIII. League Championships / Scheduling**

**A. League Championship Assessment:** As a follow-up to the spring meeting discussion regarding the assessment of Liberty League championships, King shared an NCAA championship survey document. The purpose of the survey is to solicit feedback from all NCAA championship participants. While some areas of the NCAA survey, such as hotel and banquet questions, do not apply to Liberty League championships, a survey might provide helpful feedback in assessing the quality of the league championship experience. It was agreed that a championship survey could be piloted this year. The focus should be on the championship experience rather than on specific facilities.

**B. Soccer Scheduling Options:** As a follow-up to the spring meeting, the soccer scheduling models that King drafted in the fall of 2018 were reviewed to assess whether any options could address the primary concern of the coaches, which is eliminating the back-to-back tournament weekend. All models were compiled based on the assumption that the tournament would be conducted in a Saturday-Wednesday-Saturday format, which was one of the acceptable options presented to the coaches. The concern expressed by some coaches was that giving up an additional Saturday for the league tournament would further compress and shorten the regular season. If keeping the final Saturday for regular-season play is important to the coaches, are there any other acceptable options for moving away from a back-to-back championship weekend? The Tuesday-Friday-Sunday model

considered in the spring eliminates the single-site back-to-back weekend, but could result in additional travel and missed class time. For teams that participate in the first round of the tournament, the Tuesday-Friday-Sunday format still results in potentially playing four games in nine days. If approved for soccer, coaches in other sports, such as basketball and women's lacrosse, might request a similar format. Coaches need to prioritize what is most important – eliminating the back-to-back tournament weekend or preserving the final Saturday of regular-season play.

**Motion:** A motion (Steward, Spiotti) to adopt a Tuesday-Friday-Sunday format for the Liberty League men's and women's soccer tournaments FAILED 4-6-1.

**Motion:** A motion (Hall, Cummings-Danson) to maintain the existing Tuesday-Saturday-Sunday format for the Liberty League men's and women's soccer tournaments PASSED 7-3-1.

**C. Swimming & Diving Championship Format:** As a follow-up to the spring meeting, the swimming and diving coaches were polled via conference call on Sept. 11 about potentially condensing the format of the Liberty League Swimming & Diving Championship from a full four-day meet (NCAA championship format) to a 3 1/2 day meet in which competition would begin Wednesday evening. A shortened format could potentially reduce missed class time and result in budget savings. Bassett reported that the coaches voted unanimously (10-0) to retain the four-day NCAA championship format for the Liberty League Swimming & Diving Championship. The coaches noted that the Liberty League championship is the only meet in which their student-athletes miss class. Since many teams currently depart Tuesday afternoon for the championship, the coaches felt that a condensed format would result in Wednesday morning departures and would not result in a significant academic impact. There was also concern that with a 3 1/2 day format that the divers might have to travel separately from the swimmers in order to arrive in time for the diving preliminaries, which would likely be held early afternoon on Wednesday. The coaches also felt that the current format provides for optimal rest for the student-athletes, maximizing their opportunities to earn NCAA championship cut times. No action was taken on changing the championship format.

**D. 2020 Baseball Guidelines:** As a follow-up to the spring meeting, King worked with Jim McLaughlin to revise the baseball guidelines for the 2020 season when the schedule shifts to a two-division format. Based on recent feedback from a committee of coaches, there appears to be a lack of consensus with what had been previously agreed upon. With George VanderZwaag taking over as baseball liaison, King proposed that a meeting or conference call with the coaches be conducted in the near future to address any unresolved issues. King will work with VanderZwaag on a date for convening the coaches.

- E. Lacrosse Game Time Policy:** As a follow-up to the spring meeting, King drafted language addressing potential time conflicts between men's lacrosse tournament games and regularly scheduled women's lacrosse games. The consensus was that the originally scheduled regular-season contest takes precedence over the tournament contest in establishing game times. In the event of a conflict, the tournament game time shall be adjusted.

**Motion:** A motion (Hall, Cummings-Danson) to amend the men's lacrosse tournament game time policy as follows: "**F. Game Times.** ~~Wednesday's semifinal games shall be 4 p.m. unless there is a field with lights, and both institutions mutually agree to a later start time. Saturday first-round games and championship game shall be 1 p.m. unless both teams mutually agree to an alternate time.~~ Recommended game times are 1 p.m. for Saturday first-round and championship games, and 4 p.m. for Wednesday semifinal games. Teams may mutually agree to alternate times. In the event of a facility conflict with a regular-season contest (e.g., women's lacrosse game), the previously scheduled regular-season contest shall take precedence over the league tournament game in establishing a game time." PASSED 10-0-1.

- F. Track & Field Games Committee:** At the spring meeting, a proposal from the cross country and track and field coaches to establish a three-person Games Committee for Liberty League championships was approved. Specific language for the sport guidelines needed to be established. King drafted the following language addressing the composition and responsibilities of the committee:

**Games Committee.** A Games Committee shall be convened to address and take action on issues that arise prior to or during the championship that are not explicitly covered in the sport guidelines. The committee shall consist of a Liberty League representative, the host championship manager and three coaches that shall rotate alphabetically by institution/team gender. If a coach on the committee is from an institution involved in the issue, then that coach shall be replaced by the next coach of the same team gender in the alphabetical listing.

**Cross Country:**

2019: Bard (M), RPI (W), Clarkson (M)  
2020: RIT (W), Hobart (M), St. Lawrence (W)  
2021: Ithaca (M), Union (W), RPI (M)  
2022: Vassar (W), RIT (M), Bard (W)  
2023: St. Lawrence (M), Clarkson (W), Union (M)  
2024: William Smith (W), Vassar (M), Ithaca (W)

**Indoor Track & Field:**

2020: Ithaca (M), RIT (W), RPI (M)  
2021: St. Lawrence (W), Rochester (M), Union (W)

2022: RIT (M), Ithaca (W), St. Lawrence (M)  
2023: RPI (W), Union (M), Rochester (W)

Outdoor Track & Field:

2020: RIT (M), Bard (W), St. Lawrence (M)  
2021: Ithaca (W), Union (M), RPI (W)  
2022: Vassar (M), Rochester (W), Bard (M)  
2023: RIT (W), Ithaca (M), St. Lawrence (W)  
2024: RPI (M), Union (W), Rochester (M)  
2025: Vassar (W), RIT (M), Bard (W)

**G. Track & Field Entry Fees:** The cross country and track and field coaches proposed implementing entry fees for the Liberty League championships in the spring of 2018 – \$300 per gender per team in indoor and outdoor track and field – to help offset the costs of the host institution. Additional data needs to be collected from participating teams. The due date for the submission of data is November 1.

**H. Golf Official (King):** As a follow-up to the spring meeting, King secured a cost estimate for utilizing a USGA official at the Liberty League men’s golf championship. Rochester coach Dan Wesley reported that the cost to have an official work the tournament would be \$100 per day per official. It was recommended that the league utilize two officials, resulting in a cost of \$600.

The option of utilizing a USGA official for the women’s championship was also discussed. The initial proposal made by the men’s coaches was based on the understanding that the championship would be held in central New York with the officials drawn from the Syracuse chapter of the USGA. Since the women’s tournament rotates among the member institutions, the cost and availability of officials in other areas is unclear. The women’s coaches will be surveyed to determine their interest in having an official present at the championship

**Motion:** A motion to utilize a USGA official at the Liberty League Men’s Golf Spring Championship to make rules interpretations and decisions on halting play PASSED 5-2-5.

**I. Tennis Officials (King):** A motion by the tennis coaches in the spring to require an USTA/ITA official for all Liberty League matches was tabled to further assess the availability of officials in the region. King contacted Frank Thomas-Rechichi, who assigns officials for the Liberty League tournament and western New York schools, to solicit his input on the availability of officials. Thomas-Rechichi was relatively confident that there was an adequate pool of officials to work the Liberty League matches. He noted that staffing matches at St. Lawrence would be more challenging and might require an additional per diem or a hotel night.

**Motion:** A motion (Walsh, Cummings-Danson) to mandate the use of an ITA official at all Liberty League regular-season tennis matches [effective in 2020-2021] passed 6-2-3.

- J. Tennis Schedule Development / Challenges:** Based on interest from the spring meeting, King drafted scheduling models for a Liberty League tennis regular-season schedule. King noted that the coaches voted in the spring to continue with the current scheduling method (scheduling matches by mutual agreement). The league now has six schools with dual-gender coaches (Bard, HWS, Ithaca, RIT, St. Lawrence, Union) and three schools (RPI, Skidmore, Vassar) with single-gender coaches. There are a number of challenges in creating a schedule including the availability of off-campus indoor backup facilities on weekends, having both genders play on the same day, and the possible addition of more overnight trips. Additional discussion will be held with the coaches. In a straw poll among the administrators, a league-mandated schedule was supported by a vote of 5-2-3.

## **IX. New Business**

A discussion took place on roster cuts, particularly with first-year players. For returning players, past participation typically does not guarantee a future roster spot. This is generally communicated to current student-athletes. For incoming recruits, there may not be the same level of communication regarding roster expectations. Should incoming recruits be guaranteed of a roster spot? Policies vary from institution to institution.

## **X. 2019-2020 Meeting Dates:**

- A. 2020 NCAA Convention:** Anaheim, Calif. (Jan. 22-25, 2020);  
**Winter Meeting:** Friday, Jan. 24, 1:30-5 p.m.  
**B. Spring Meeting:** May 27-28 (Turning Stone Resort).

## **XI. Adjournment**

*Meeting adjourned at 3:57 p.m.*