

Minutes of Liberty League Spring Meeting -- DRAFT May 27-28, 2020 – Zoom Video Conference

Present: Kris Hall, David Lindholm (Bard); Scott Smalling, Laurel Kane (Clarkson); Deb Steward, Brian Miller, Sally Scatton (Hobart and William Smith); Susan Bassett, Erienne Roberts, Will Rothermel (Ithaca); Lee McElroy, Kevin Beattie, Karen Hansen (RPI); George VanderZwaag, Kristine Shanley, Morgan Stout (Rochester); Lou Spiotti, Amy Reed (RIT); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan (Skidmore); Bob Durocher, Randy LaBrake, Fran Grembowicz (St. Lawrence); Jim McLaughlin, Joanne Little, Beth Tiffany (Union); Michelle Walsh, JoAnn Acquarulo, Kaitlin Leach (Vassar); Tracy King, Katie Meline (Liberty League).

I. Call to Order

Susan Bassett (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Sally Scatton, who has assumed the new position of Associate Athletic Director/SWA at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, was welcomed to the meeting.

II. Review of Minutes

The minutes of the January 24, 2020 meeting at the NCAA Convention in Anaheim, Calif., were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

Motion: A motion (Hall, Steward) to approve the minutes from the January 24, 2020 meeting was APPROVED 11-0-0.

III. Financial Report

Liberty League commissioner Tracy King provided an update on the league financials. Due in part to the cancellation of spring sports, King projected that the league would have a budget surplus of approximately \$27,000 for FY20. Due to COVID-19 budget challenges, King reported that the athletic directors previously agreed on a dues reduction of \$5,000 (25%) per year for the next two years, setting Liberty League full-member dues at \$15,000 for FY21 and FY22. Through budget reductions and the utilization of reserve funds, a budget deficit of approximately \$25,000 is projected for each of the next two years. The athletic directors also previously agreed to waive associate member dues for FY21 in the single-site championship sports of golf and rowing since those championships were not conducted this past spring. Associate member dues for football will also be reduced 25% from \$2,000 to \$1,500.

Motion: A motion (Cummings-Danson, Steward) to approve the Liberty League full-member dues reduction of 25% (\$5,000) for the next two years, setting full-member dues at \$15,000 for FY21 and FY22; additionally to waive associate member dues for single-site championships of golf and rowing for FY21 and to reduce football

associate member dues by 25% to \$1,500 for FY21 PASSED 9-0 [approved during virtual meeting on May 7, 2020].

IV. Review of Sport & Committee Reports

A. Single-Site Championship Dates and Host Rotation: King reviewed the single-site championship dates and sites for 2020-21. Several adjustments were made due to the cancellation of spring championships. Since Vassar did not have the opportunity to host the Liberty League women's golf championship, the coaches recommended that Vassar host in Spring 2021. Skipping over Vassar in the host rotation would result in the school not having an opportunity to host again until 2028. In outdoor track and field, St. Lawrence was scheduled to host in 2020, but because St. Lawrence is also scheduled to host indoor track in 2021, the coaches agreed to bypass St. Lawrence in the outdoor rotation and proceed with Rochester as the host in 2021. Skidmore, the designated host institution for rowing in 2020 at Saratoga Lake, will serve as the host in 2021.

B. Reports from Sport Groups:

- 1. Cross Country / Track & Field (Tracy King for Lou Spiotti):** Action items include: 1.) Specifying that the procedure for determining the starting heights for high jump and pole vault shall be as follows: "On the Monday before the championship, the meet host will send out the progressions. Heights will be based on the 12th-seeded athlete on the NCAA list (the "NCAA height"). Heights will proceed down from the NCAA height on 5cm/15cm progression and then proceed up from the NCAA height on 3cm/10cm progression. The starting heights will be at least 3cm below the standard in the HJ and 10cm below the standard in the PV." 2.) Specifying that the procedure for determining the number of competitors in the Mile, 3000 and 5000 shall be as follows: "b. Mile, 3000M and 5000M: Finals only, sections based on time, fast section runs last. In the Mile and 3000M, the section size shall consist of a maximum of 15 competitors. If more than 15 competitors are entered, a minimum of four competitors shall run in the slower section. In the 5000M, the section size shall consist of a maximum of 18 competitors. If more than 18 competitors are entered, a minimum of four competitors shall run in the slower section. Discussion items: 1.) The primary focus of the meeting served to address issues with the indoor track and field championship regarding starting heights in the vertical jumps (high jump, pole vault) and determining the number of competitors in each section in the distance events. 2.) The coaches also discussed a timeline to submit scratches prior to the meet so that events could be re-seeded. 3.) Liberty League championship and association records were discussed. The question of how to best address association record times that were established on banked tracks was clarified. John Lynch agreed

to serve as the league liaison for maintaining records. 4.) The coaches also provided feedback to Sam Albert for the USTFCCCA on the selection of All-Americans. The awards are typically determined by place finish at the national championship, but since the meet was cancelled, there wasn't agreement among the members of the coaches association as to the best way to name All-Americans.

2. **Field Hockey (Tracy King for Joanne Little):** Action item: To adopt a proposed schedule for the four-year cycle of 2021-2024. Discussion items: 1.) The coaches developed a recommended list of umpires for the Liberty League tournament. 2.) The focus of the meeting was on scheduling options for the next four-year cycle. The coaches were generally split on the two options, which included the current format (two Friday-Sunday weekends, two single Saturdays and a travel partner scheduled by mutual agreement) and a proposed schedule that would replace the Friday-Sunday weekends with two Friday-SATURDAY weekends (one home weekend, one away weekend). Two (Skidmore, St. Lawrence) favored the Friday-Saturday model; two (Rochester, William Smith) favored the Friday-Sunday model; three (Ithaca, Union, Vassar) were undecided or saw benefits in both models.
3. **Football (Lee McElroy):** Action items includes: 1.) Adoption of the proposed Liberty League schedule for 2023-2026. 2.) Moving the conference call to determine All-Liberty League awards from Monday to Sunday in order to provide teams with additional time to prepare for postseason games. Discussion items: 1.) The coaches discussed postseason bowl opportunities now that the Empire 8 no longer wished to continue participating in the New York Bowl between the two conferences. The coaches suggested that the league seek out another interested conference for a bowl arrangement. The ECAC bowls remain an option for institutions that are ECAC members. Administrators did not support the concept of an arrangement with another conference, primarily due to financial concerns. 2.) The coaches discussed the proposed schedule for 2023 to 2026. In order to secure an opponent for its designated homecoming date the first Saturday in October, Rochester inquired as to the feasibility of scheduling a home game that weekend each season. King adjusted the draft schedules to provide that opportunity. 3.) The coaches have conducted a conference call on the Monday after the final regular-season weekend to vote on all-league awards. To give teams that qualify for postseason games additional time to prepare, it was suggested that the call be moved to Sunday.
4. **Soccer (Susan Bassett):** Action item: adoption of a league schedule for the 2021-2024 scheduling cycle. Discussion items: 1.) The primary focus of the coaches call was to discuss contingency planning for the fall 2020 season. Given the uncertainty with the COVID-19 situation, the

coaches agreed that it would be difficult to plan for different scenarios and that a follow-up call may be needed. 2.) King drafted two scheduling models and shared with the coaches. The first model (Model A) was a rollover of the current four-year schedule with the same travel partners on the back-to-back weekends. The second model (Model B) was the same format, but with revised travel partners. After receiving feedback from a coach, King had also drafted an alternate model with one Friday-Sunday weekend that balanced travel to different membership regions that he shared with the administrators. Since the administrators had only sought feedback from the coaches on Models A and B, those were the options they wished to consider for adoption.

5. **Volleyball (Kris Hall):** Action items: 1.) The adoption of a proposed league schedule for the 2021-2024 scheduling cycle. 2.) To contact Jeff McKinney to determine interest in serving as Liberty League assignor. Discussion items: 1.) The coaches discussed adjustments to the tournament schedule, including earlier match times on Friday and Saturday. The current 4 p.m. start time for the championship match on Saturday has been problematic as the visiting team has typically needed to check out of its hotel by noon. It was agreed to adjust the start time on Saturday to 2 p.m. while adjusting the times for the semifinal matches on Friday to 4 and 6:30 p.m. It was also agreed that a certified scorekeeper would be hired for the tournament. 2.) The coaches supported the proposal draft schedule put forth by King, which continues the current schedule rotation. The proposed schedule was adopted at the league's January meeting. 3.) The primary focus of the coaches was on the assignor and the desire to replace Mara Wager with Jeff McKinney, who serves as assignor for the SUNYAC. The administrators agreed to retain Wager for the 2020 season while having Hall and King work with her on meeting an agreed-upon timeline for completing officiating assignments.
6. **Basketball (Brian Miller):** Action items include: 1.) To utilize Synergy for video exchange in basketball for three seasons from 2020-21 through 2022-23. 2.) In the basketball pre-game introduction protocol, to re-implement the coaches' handshake following team introductions; 3) replacing the All-Liberty League honorable mention awards with a five-player All-Liberty League Third Team. Discussion items: 1.) With potential uncertainty with the 2020-2021 schedule due to COVID-19, the coaches discussed potential alternatives. Amy Reed, Jessica Turner, Jeff Gorski and Chris Murphy agreed to serve on a subcommittee to explore scheduling options if changes are needed. 2.) The coaches voted unanimously to continue with Synergy as the league's film exchange provider. The group felt the cost savings would be limited by switching to another company like Hudl. Synergy is also the company utilized by most Division III conferences, providing coaches with access to video on

most opponents. 3.) Some coaches felt that sportsmanship within the league has taken a step back in recent years and recommended that a pregame handshake between the coaches be re-implemented along with team introductions. 4.) The coaches were unanimously in support of replacing the All-Liberty League honorable mention awards with a Third Team. The number of players receiving honorable mention status varies from year to year due to the number of votes players receive. The coaches supported a standard five-person third team. All other sports currently recognize a first team, second team and honorable mention All-Liberty League.

7. **Squash (JoAnn Acquarulo):** Action items: 1.) Adoption of the 2021 Liberty League squash championship schedule. 2.) Consideration of Chatham and Mount Holyoke (women) as associate members. Discussion items: 1.) The coaches drafted a schedule for the 2021 league championship utilizing courts at both Bard and Vassar. Bard has four courts and Vassar has six courts. Splitting the championship sites by gender is not preferred since each institution has one coach for the two genders and the coach would be forced to choose which team coach if the genders were split it. Under the proposed format, Bard would host Vassar on Friday evening. Vassar would host all Saturday matches and both schools would host Sunday matches. 2.) The coaches proposed contacting Chatham and Mount Holyoke (women) to gauge interest in Liberty League associate membership. Chatham, located in western Pennsylvania, is a new varsity program. Mount Holyoke is a well-established program that regularly competes against Liberty League teams. The coaches believe that adding teams to the championship would increase the quality of the championship experience.
8. **Swimming & Diving (Susan Bassett):** Action items include: 1.) Consideration of sponsoring NCAA legislation to permit male swimmers serve as training partners for female swimmers qualifying for NCAA championships. Discussion items: 1.) The coaches discussed the use of relay judging platforms (RJPs) to validate/confirm judges' calls at the league championship. Since not all schools currently have RJPs and budgets may not allow for the purchasing of the equipment this year, it was agreed that the use of RJPs should be delayed until at least the 2022 championship. 2.) The coaches agreed that when an athlete is disqualified from an event at the championship, the head official should immediately notify the athlete's head coach of the disqualification. This past year, disqualifications were noted on the results, but coaches were not directly notified. 3.) Permitting non-scoring athletes to compete at the championship was discussed. While there was general support among the coaches for allowing these student-athletes to participate, it was acknowledged that doing so would likely result in additional expenses for competing teams in the form of hotel, meals, etc. Given the

challenging budget climate, it was agreed that additional non-scoring athletes would not be pursued for the 2021 championship. 4.) The coaches discussed the concept of utilizing male swimmers to serve as training partners for female swimmers who qualify for the NCAA championships, something that is not currently permitted under NCAA rules. NCAA legislation would have to be approved for the practice to be permitted.

9. **Softball (Karen Hansen):** Action items: 1.) To adopt a proposed schedule for the four-year cycle of 2022-2025; 2.) To establish an Easter Weekend makeup policy in which games postponed on Friday or Saturday of Easter weekend are to be rescheduled for Sunday, weather permitting. 3.) To establish a start time of 2 p.m. for Liberty League games scheduled on Fridays. Discussion items: 1.) The 2022-25 draft schedule follows the same format as the current schedule. League play consists of doubleheaders over four consecutive weekends (Saturday-Sunday) prior to the Liberty League tournament. The final weekend includes a single doubleheader on Friday, allowing for make-up dates on Saturday and Sunday. 2.) Regarding postponements and makeup games over Easter weekend, there was support expressed among the coaches for a league-wide policy rather than leaving the rescheduling decisions up to each institution. The consensus among the coaches was that if games are rained out on Friday or Saturday of Easter weekend, then Sunday would be used as a makeup day if weather permitted. 3.) The coaches proposed starting any league games played on Fridays at 2 p.m. to ensure that the games are completed.
10. **Women's Lacrosse (Laurel Kane):** Action item: the adoption of a league schedule for the four-year period of 2022-2025. Discussion item: The coaches considered four different scheduling models with 'Option B' being the preferred model by a 6-5 vote of the coaches. The proposed model changed the order of the opponents while maintaining the same pairs on the back-to-back weekends. Other models considered changed the travel partners on back-to-back weekends, which would have resulted in teams traveling to some of the same opponents in consecutive years.
11. **Tennis (Tracy King for Fran Grembowicz):** No action items. Discussion items: In an effort to improve the current scheduling practice, the coaches agreed to utilize a format of 'reciprocal dates' in which they would maintain consistent home and away dates with opponents in odd and even years. Union tennis coach Brian Bowman created a Google Sheet for coaches to enter their Liberty League match dates with opponents for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

Meeting adjourned for the evening at 3:10 p.m.

Thursday, May 28

Meeting reconvened at 9:01 a.m.

- 12. Sports Information / Athletic Communications (Kevin Beattie):** No action items. Discussion items: 1.) Athletic communications staff members discussed how events may be staffed due to possible condensed work schedules, furloughs and layoffs. SIDs also agreed that web streaming will take on added importance due to the possibility that fans may not be permitted at games.
- 13. Athletic Training (Michelle Walsh):** No action items. Discussion items: 1.) The athletic trainers discussed the medical monitoring settlement in the case of the NCAA Student-Athlete Concussion Injury Litigation (Arrington Matter). Specifically, ATCs discussed how their institutions plan to demonstrate compliance with the member obligations as noted within the settlement. 2.) It was noted that expectations of visiting student-athletes are increasing, particularly among non-Liberty League institutions. These increasing expectations placed on ATCs by visiting institutions impact treatments, budgets, and staffing.

V. Cost Containment Initiatives: Due to the impact of COVID-19 and the expected budget shortfall within many institutions and athletic departments, a Liberty League cost-containment committee (Bassett, McLaughlin, Steward, Walsh) proposed a number of potential cost-saving measures for the league to consider.

- A. Use of Hudl for Video Exchange Services:** Hudl currently provides video exchange services for the Liberty League sports of football, soccer, volleyball and lacrosse. The league currently utilizes other video exchange companies in basketball (Synergy) and field hockey (TeamXStream). Hudl is capable of providing breakdown and exchange services in other sports and can offer discount packages to schools that utilize Hudl for all sports. Under the recently-expired contract with Synergy, basketball teams paid a minimum of \$2,000 per program. Basketball coaches strongly favor Synergy, which provides video access to other Division III (as well as Division I and Division II) teams that utilizes the service. Field hockey utilizes TeamXStream as part of an agreement with its national coaches association (NFHCA). Should the league consider mandating Hudl for all sports? This initiative was added to the list of action items.
- B. Mileage Limit on Overnight Trips (225 Miles):** The committee discussed a possible league-wide restriction on travel and hotel stays. After reviewing travel distances between member institutions, the committee proposed that hotel stays for single games only – not back-to-back games – would be

limited to any trip with a one-way mileage exceeding 225 miles. Most institutions have typically not stayed overnight for games that are less than a four-hour trip. A concern with a potential restriction might be the policies of bus companies and the number of hours a driver is permitted to drive in one day. No action was taken on this proposed initiative as the impact of COVID-19 on institutional budgets has not been determined.

C. League Tournament & Championship Formats: League championship consist of six-team tournaments in all sports in which nine or more institutions sponsor the sport (basketball, lacrosse, soccer, tennis). Sports in which there are seven or eight competing teams (field hockey, softball, volleyball) have four-team tournaments. As a cost-saving measure for 2020-2021, should the league consider four-team tournaments with a Wednesday-Saturday format for all sports. The tournaments with Saturday-Sunday championship formats currently require three teams to travel to the host site. A Wednesday-Saturday format could potentially reduce travel and overnight stays. No action was taken on this proposed initiative as the impact of COVID-19 on institutional budgets has not been determined.

D. Maximum Contest Limits: While certain institutions have limited the total number of games their teams can play, the league has not previously imposed any restrictions. Teams are permitted to play as many contests as the NCAA permits. As a cost-saving measure for 2020-2021, should the league consider implementing contest restrictions based on NCAA maximum contest limits? The committee compiled figures for potential reductions to 85%, 90% and 95% of the NCAA maximum. It was noted that institutions can choose to implement contest limits aside from any league mandates. No action was taken on this proposed initiative as the impact of COVID-19 on institutional budgets has not been determined.

VI. NCAA Management Council Report: Michelle Walsh provided an update on behalf of the NCAA Division III Management Council. Specifically, Division III is drafting a survey on the Name-Image-Likeness issue and will be seeking membership feedback. Also, CSMAS has been discussing the formalization of responsibilities for athletic training coverage for away contests. Additionally, the Division III Playing and Practice Seasons Subcommittee will be meeting in the coming weeks to discuss potential changes to fall championship dates and spring nontraditional seasons. King will distribute a copy of the recent survey compiled by the Division III Commissioners Association, which surveyed the Division III membership on possible options for fall competition and championships.

VII. Fall Sports Planning: A discussion took place regarding planning for fall sports competition. Most campuses have formed committees to make recommendations for how athletics will be conducted in the fall. It will be important to communicate a plan to student-athletes as early as possible. When institutions make plans for bringing students back to campus this fall, are student-athletes being considered as a cohort? If only certain

classes are being brought back for in-person classes, institutions may have challenges fielding teams.

Also, should the league develop a set of shared expectations for student-athlete health and safety, travel and competition so all members are operating under the same set of expectations? A committee consisting of Kris Hall (chair), Bob Durocher, Lou Spiotti and Michelle Walsh will be convening to develop a set of guiding principles and shared expectations for competition.

VIII. Vote on Sport Action Items

Votes on sport action items were conducted electronically following the virtual meeting:

- A. CROSS COUNTRY / TRACK & FIELD: Motion** to specify that the procedure for determining the starting heights for high jump and pole vault shall be as follows: "On the Monday before the championship, the meet host will send out the progressions. Heights will be based on the 12th-seeded athlete on the NCAA list (the "NCAA height"). Heights will proceed down from the NCAA height on 5cm/15cm progression and then proceed up from the NCAA height on 3cm/10cm progression. The starting heights will be at least 3cm below the standard in the HJ and 10cm below the standard in the PV." *PASSED 7-1-3.*

Motion to specify that the procedure for determining the number of competitors in the Mile, 3000 and 5000 shall be as follows: "b. Mile, 3000M and 5000M: Finals only, sections based on time, fast section runs last. In the Mile and 3000M, the section size shall consist of a maximum of 15 competitors. If more than 15 competitors are entered, a minimum of four competitors shall run in the slower section. In the 5000M, the section size shall consist of a maximum of 18 competitors. If more than 18 competitors are entered, a minimum of four competitors shall run in the slower section." *PASSED 8-0-3.*

- B. FIELD HOCKEY: Motion** to adopt the proposed schedule for the four-year cycle of 2021-2024 (Friday-Sunday format). *PASSED 7-1-3.*
- C. FOOTBALL: Motion** to move the conference call to determine All-Liberty League awards from Monday to Sunday in order to provide teams with additional time to prepare for postseason games. *PASSED 7-0-4.*

Motion to adopt a proposed schedule for the four-year cycle of 2023-2026. *PASSED 6-0-5 via email vote on 4/21/2020.*

- D. SOCCER: Motion** to adopt a proposed schedule – Model A – for the four-year cycle of 2021-2024 (Model A follows the existing format with the same travel partners). *PASSED 8-2-1.*

Motion to adopt a proposed schedule – Model B – for the four-year cycle of 2021-2024 (Model B follows the existing format with the new travel partners). *FAILED 3-6-2.*

- E. **VOLLEYBALL: Motion** to adopt a proposed schedule for the four-year cycle of 2021-2024. *PASSED 8-0-3.*

Motion to direct Tracy King to reach out to Jeff McKinney as a possible replacement for assigner Mara Wager. *Discussed in January – retaining Mara Wager for 2020 season.*

- F. **BASKETBALL: Motion** to utilize Synergy for video exchange in basketball for three seasons from 2020-21 through 2022-23 (per a three-year Synergy contract at a rate of \$1,800 per team in year 1, \$2,200 in year 2 and \$2,200 in year 3). *PASSED 8-2-1.*

Motion, in the basketball pre-game introduction protocol, to re-implement the coaches' handshake following team introductions. *TABLED due to COVID-19 concerns.*

Motion to replace the All-Liberty League honorable mention awards with a five-player All-Liberty League Third Team. *FAILED 2-8-1.*

- G. **SQUASH: Motion** to approve the proposed format for the 2021 Liberty League championship, co-hosted by Vassar College and Bard College. *PASSED 6-0-5.*

Motion to contact Mount Holyoke College to determine interest in participating as an associate member in Liberty League women's squash. *FAILED 2-2-7.*

Motion to contact Chatham University to determine interest in participating as an associate member in Liberty League men's squash. *FAILED 1-4-6.*

- H. **SWIMMING & DIVING: Motion** to sponsor NCAA legislation to permit male swimmers to serve as training partners for female swimmers qualifying for NCAA championships [current legislation only permits swimmers of the same gender to serve as training partners]. *FAILED 7-2-2 – Per Liberty League policy, in order for the Liberty League to sponsor NCAA legislation, two-thirds of the full members, 8 of 11, must vote in support of the proposal.*

- I. **SOFTBALL: Motion** to adopt a proposed schedule for the four-year cycle of 2022-2025. *PASSED 8-0-3.*

Motion to establish an Easter Weekend makeup policy in which games postponed on Friday or Saturday of Easter weekend are to be rescheduled for Sunday, weather permitting. *PASSED 6-1-4.*

Motion to establish a start time of 2 p.m. for Liberty League games scheduled on Fridays. *PASSED 6-2-3.*

J. WOMEN'S LACROSSE: Motion to adopt a proposed schedule for the four-year cycle of 2022-2025. *PASSED 10-1-0.*

K. VIDEO EXCHANGE: Motion to utilize Hudl for video exchange in all available sports (soccer, volleyball, basketball and men's lacrosse). *FAILED 3-8-0.*

IX. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

DRAFT