

# Minutes of Liberty League Spring Meeting June 8, 2021 – Zoom Video Conference

**Present:** David Lindholm, Stefanie Carrington (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, Katie Paradise (RPI); George VanderZwaag, Kristine Shanley, Morgan Stout (Rochester); Lou Spiotti, Amy Reed, Scott McVean, Jeff Siegel, Bethany Marren, Pat Sofia (RIT); Gail Cummings-Danson, Megan Buchanan, Keelin Hollowood (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).

**Guest:** Nevin Caple – Diversity, Equity & Inclusion workshop facilitator.

## I. Call to Order

Lee McElroy (Liberty League President) called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. Tracy King provided a brief review of the 2020-21 academic year. Well wishes were extended to retiring RIT athletic director Lou Spiotti.

## II. Review of Minutes

The minutes from the spring 2021 weekly athletic director meetings were reviewed. No changes or corrections were noted.

**Motion:** A motion (Steward, McElroy) to approve the minutes from the weekly athletic director meetings was *APPROVED 11-0-0*.

## III. Financial Report

King provided an update on the league financials. A budget deficit of approximately \$24,700 was projected for FY21, which was mainly due to a \$5,000 reduction in full member dues (from \$20,000 to \$15,000) as a COVID budget relief measure. The budget projection for the remainder of the fiscal year is consistent with the adopted budget.

King noted that budget expenses for the Liberty League men's and women's golf championships held at Turning Stone totaled \$4,618.95, which include greens fees and Golfstat live scoring services. The expenses are typically paid by the designated host institutions, which then charge an entry fee to participating teams. Rather than have two different host institutions pay Turning Stone, the league covered all expenses on site. Due to budget savings with meetings and travel, King suggested the league absorb the cost within the budgeted expenses for FY21 rather than bill the schools.

**Motion:** A motion (VanderZwaag, McLaughlin) to approve the Liberty League FY21 budget report with the Liberty League golf championship expenses being absorbed by the league for 2021 was *APPROVED 11-0-0*.

King reviewed the proposed FY22 budget. Full member dues for FY22 will be \$15,000 – the second year of an agreed-upon two-year COVID dues reduction. Associate member dues for football and single-site championships will resume after being suspended for FY21. Proposed revenues total \$243,000. Proposed expenses total \$271,400 resulting in a budget deficit of \$28,400. Under the proposal, expenses for meetings (\$2,500) and travel (\$5,000) will increase slightly in anticipation of COVID conditions trending toward normal.

**Motion:** A motion (VanderZwaag, Durocher) to approve the proposed Liberty League budget for FY22 was *APPROVED 11-0-0*.

#### **IV. Commissioner's Report**

- A. NCAA Grant Reimbursements:** Institutions seeking reimbursement through the NCAA Conference Grant program should submit reimbursement requests to King by July 16. The league's impact form is due to the NCAA by Aug. 1.
- B. NCAA Woman of the Year / Scholar-Athletes of the Year:** Nominations for the NCAA Woman of the Year award are due by Tuesday, June 22, through the NCAA portal. The league's nominee will also be recognized as the Liberty League Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year. Nominations for the Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year award should be submitted by June 22 through the nomination form via the Liberty League website.

#### **V. Review of Sport & Committee Reports**

- A. Single-Site Championship Dates and Host Rotation:** King reviewed the single-site championship dates and sites for 2021-22. Hosts/sites for league championships are: Cross Country (RPI/Union at Saratoga State Park); Indoor Track & Field (Ithaca); Outdoor Track & Field (Vassar); Swimming & Diving (Ithaca); Squash (Vassar/Bard). Sites for tennis and golf are currently unconfirmed. King is waiting on confirmation from Cornell (tennis) and Turning Stone (golf) as host sites. The date for the rowing championship at Saratoga Lake (Fish Creek) is also unconfirmed. The Saratoga Rowing Invitational is currently scheduled for Saturday, April 30, the day after the traditional date of the Liberty League rowing championship. King is awaiting a response from the Saratoga Rowing Association as to whether it can host the Liberty League regatta on April 29.
- B. Reports from Sport Groups:**
  - 1. Cross Country / Track & Field:** Action item: To award medals to the top eight finishers at the Liberty League indoor and outdoor track and field championships. Discussion items: Coaches were pleased with the

East/West championship meet setup for outdoor track and field this spring. Given the institutional travel restrictions, the two 4-team regional meets provided a positive student-athlete experience. Because of the smaller sized meets, more student-athletes received event medals, which the coaches felt was a positive experience. With meet becoming larger and more competitive, the coaches supported the expansion of the awards program to provide medals to the top eight finishers in each event (currently the top three receive medals). Coaches were willing to fund the additional cost through a meet entry fee. Administrator discussion: King estimated that the additional medals would cost approximately \$2,000. NCAA grant funds could be utilized, but it would likely result in smaller reimbursements back to the schools. If approved, the swimming and diving coaches may also request medals for the top eight finishers at the league championship.

2. **Field Hockey:** Action items: None. Discussion items: 1.) Coaches inquired about league plans for acclimatization for fall sports teams. Would there be a phased-in approach similar to what the NCAA proposed last fall? With the availability of COVID vaccines, NCAA fall guidelines will likely not include a phased-in approach to resocialization. 2.) Coaches anticipate a normal schedule for the fall season. Some institutions may make scheduling modifications due to budgetary restrictions, but it is not anticipated to impact league play.
3. **Football:** Action items None. Discussion items: 1.) Coaches received an update from officiating coordinator Bill Schuster who noted that the coaching box has been extended from the 25-yard-line to the 20-yard-line on each end. Schools will have to adjust field markings accordingly. Schuster also inquired as to league/school COVID protocols for officials (to be determined). 2.) Coaches discussed game times and travel and were not in favor of the league mandating squad sizes and no overnight trips. Administrator discussion: While administrators may look to limit overnight trips where possible, the consensus among the group was to support institutional requests, but not to mandate or require same-day travel across the league. Not all institutions have lighted fields, so night games and later start times may not be feasible on all campuses.
4. **Soccer:** Action items: None. Discussion items: 1.) The coaches had an extensive discussion of the NCAA Alternative 114-Day Playing and Practice Seasons Model implemented for the 2020-21 academic year to provide flexibility due to COVID-related interruptions. The coaches who were able to utilize it this past spring found it to be beneficial in conducting practices and training throughout the spring focused on skill development. The group was supportive of seeing the alternative model extended or implemented permanently. NCAA legislation would be needed to implement a new model. It was recommended that the United

Soccer Coaches Association assist in advocating for the change. Administrator discussion: The alternative model has expired, but the Division III Management Council is expected to discuss this further, including a survey of the Division III membership. Legislation may emerge as a result of the survey. Member-sponsored proposals may also be brought forward for the 2022 NCAA Convention.

5. **Volleyball:** Action item: To require that video from all matches – both league and non-league – be uploaded to the designated video exchange server (Hudl) and shared with all league members. Discussion items: 1.) King confirmed with the coaches that Mara Wager will be handling officiating assignments for the upcoming fall season. Mid-June is the target date for finalizing and sending team schedules to Wager. 2.) The current video exchange policy calls for all *league matches* to be uploaded and shared with all members. Additionally, a request may be made from coach to coach to share one non-league match. The consensus among the coaches was that most are already uploading video from all matches. As recording and upload technologies have improved, the process has become less of a burden. It was agreed that some leniency in meeting upload deadlines should be afforded this year as some coaches lost assistants due to budget cuts.
6. **Basketball:** Action item: To increase the number of All-Liberty League honorees from five (5) to seven (7) on both the first and second teams. Discussion items: 1.) The bulk of the coaches' conversation centered on the league schedule and the challenging travel it has created. Are there other scheduling models that could potentially reduce travel and improve the student-athlete experience? A sub-committee of Mark Gilbride, Jeff Gorski, Amy Reed, Brian Miller and Tracy King was formed to examine formats and make recommendations to the group. 2.) The coaches were unanimously in support of student-athletes not wearing face coverings during competition in 2021-22. 3.) The coaches were unanimously in favor of adding two spots to both the All-Liberty League first and second teams. Administrator discussion: The league had previously voted that all-league teams would consist of the number of starters plus specialists in each sport. It was recommended that the league survey other conferences to determine the whether the size of the Liberty League teams is consistent with other conferences.
7. **Squash:** Action items: 1.) To extend an offer of Liberty League squash associate membership to Denison University (men and women), Fordham University (men) and Mount Holyoke College (women). 2.) To establish an annual award in memory of former St. Lawrence student-athlete Enzo Corigliano. Discussion items: 1.) The coaches were supportive of adding associate members to enhance the Liberty League championship experience for the student-athletes. The additions of

Denison (men and women), Fordham (men) and Mount Holyoke (women) would create a more competitive tournament. The coaches noted that the Liberty League is the smallest of the four college squash conferences. Adding members would also help the viability of the sport and would provide independent programs with a conference affiliation and greater stability. The coaches felt that eight would be the optimal number of teams. The coaches noted that the league has not supported adding club teams, and no current members plan to add squash, so adding associate members would be the only viable path to grow the league's membership. 2.) The coaches were also supportive of creating an award to memorialize former St. Lawrence squash player Enzo Corigliano. The award could recognize a student-athlete annually who exemplified the spirit and sportsmanship with which he competed. Administrator discussion: 1.) The administrators were not opposed to membership growth in squash, but it was unclear what expansion might mean to an institution's ability to host the championship. The men's and women's squash championships are currently held jointly with each institution taking a turn hosting or co-hosting on an annual basis. Would that still be possible with a larger group of teams? Coaches should present tournament format options to gauge the feasibility of institutions in hosting the championship. 2.) The administrators commended the coaches for seeking to create an award in Corigliano's memory. The consensus was that memorial awards might be best left to individual institutions. From a historical perspective, there may be other individuals who the league could memorialize. If there is interest in doing so in the future, parameters for such awards should be established.

8. **Swimming & Diving:** Action items: None. Discussion items: 1.) The meeting served primarily for information sharing among the coaches. The home/away rotation of regular-season meets was discussed. Coaches agreed that they were moving ahead with 2021-22 as if meets in 2020-21 had occurred. If a team was scheduled to host another team this past season, it would travel this upcoming season, regardless of whether the meet was held. This is consistent with scheduling in other league sports. Coaches also discussed winter training trips and whether they planned on taking them. Some were making plans, but were attempting to do so with the condition that they could be refunded if the trip was cancelled.
9. **Baseball:** Action item: To specify that no infield/outfield shall be conducted prior to Liberty League games unless mutually agreed upon by the coaches. Discussion items: 1.) Matt Righter agreed to replace Paul Mound as the league's NCAA RAC representative. 2.) Coaches discussed eliminating pregame infield/outfield from the pregame routine as a time-saving measure. Teams are typically able to take grounders and fly balls during batting practice, so infield/outfield doesn't offer a great benefit. If

teams are not able to use the field for batting practice, coaches could agree to take infield/outfield. 3.) The all-league voting process was discussed. Voting can be challenging with coaches not seeing all other teams. The concept of utilizing strength of schedule was discussed, but there were questions about the source and accuracy of SOS numbers. The topic was tabled. 4.) Travel with the divisional scheduling model was discussed. It was noted that there is a disparity in travel between the East and West divisions with the West schools having more travel and overnight trips. Since teams haven't experienced the divisional model, it was agreed that they should see how it works and then discuss options to equalize travel.

10. **Softball:** Action items: None. Discussion item: The league has reached the end of its current contract with assignor Kathie Graf. While the coaches recognized that Graf was able to accommodate the many schedule changes due to COVID-19, they were not satisfied with the overall quality of the umpires, some of which were lacking in knowledge of NCAA rules. It was agreed that the league should explore other options for umpiring. Mike Aguglia, who assigns for the Empire 8, was suggested as a potential option to consider.
11. **Women's Golf:** Action items: To hold the Liberty League women's golf championship at a neutral site annually; Turning Stone resort in 2022 Discussion items: 1.) Due to travel restrictions and the need to play the championship at a central location this spring, the Liberty League women's championship was played at Turning Stone Resort along with the men's championship. Because it was a favorable experience for the student-athletes, the coaches are supportive of having the championship at a neutral site moving forward and at Turning Stone in 2022. 2.) With the men's championship being conducted over 54 holes, it was recommended that the women's golfers be polled to gauge their interest in moving from a 36-hole championship to 54. 3.) The coaches also discussed live scoring, hoping to avoid having players enter their scores via their smart phones in future years. Administrator discussion: Based on King's conversation with Kyle Kidder, Turning Stone's director of golf sales, it was unclear whether the course could accommodate the women's tournament next year. According to Kidder, Turning Stone receives many requests to host tournaments and has not set its schedule for the spring of 2022. Other options may need to be considered if Turning Stone is unable to accommodate the tournament.
12. **Men's Golf:** Action items: None. Discussion items: The coaches discussed establishing a checklist or set of responsibilities for the Liberty League championship for the designated host institution to follow. Typically, the host coach from the preceding year assists the current host coach, but

having an established checklist or set of duties would help the event run more smoothly as host duties rotate from year to year.

13. **Men's Lacrosse:** Action item: To approve the 2022-25 Liberty League men's lacrosse schedule (previously approved on April 13). Discussion items: The coaches were unanimously in support of maintaining a six-team tournament. Due to Bard eliminating its men's lacrosse program, league sponsorship in men's lacrosse dropped from nine to eight teams. Per league policy, a sport with eight or fewer teams would have a four-team tournament. Coaches felt that the strength of the league warranted consideration to maintain a six-team tournament.
14. **Women's Lacrosse:** Action items: None. Discussion items: Coaches did not feel a meeting was warranted as normal league protocols will resume for spring 2022 season.
15. **Rowing:** Action items: None. Discussion items: 1.) Weather contingency plan was reviewed in the event the league championship was unable to be conducted on the originally scheduled date. Consensus among the coaches was that there would likely be a time during the day when conditions would permit the women's 1V8+ to be held, even if it was delayed until early evening. If it wasn't possible, NCAA regional rankings would need to be utilized. 2.) Coaches offered feedback on the championship. It was agreed that specific responsibilities of the Saratoga Rowing Association (SRA) and the host institution should be clearly spelled out. 3.) The championship date was discussed. With the Saratoga Invitational scheduled for April 30-May 1, it was unclear if the Liberty League championship could be held April 29. As an alternative, the coaches suggested holding it on April 27 or 28. King will offer alternatives to Eric Catalano. 4.) The coaches discussed a definition of a novice. Consensus was that any individual in her/his first year of collegiate rowing is considered a novice.
16. **Tennis:** Action items: None. Discussion items: 1.) Tiebreakers for league tournament qualification were reviewed. The regular league tiebreakers were not utilized this past year due to unbalanced schedules with teams not playing all other teams. With an anticipated return to a normal schedule in 2021-22, the regular tiebreakers would be utilized. No changes were proposed. 2.) With the league being asked to resolve a protest between two league teams, it will be important for the league to establish a match protest procedure that can be utilized to resolve future protests. ITA rules indicate that a protest between conference schools needs to be addressed and resolved by the conference. Administrator discussion: Feedback should be solicited from other conferences on protest procedures. Will future protests go beyond lineup disputes? It

will be important to clarify what tennis rules can be protested and how the league plans to address them.

17. **Athletic Trainers:** Action items: None. Discussion items: The athletic trainers began discussing plans for the resumption of fall sports. They have compiled a Google doc to share information regarding testing and vaccinations. A key question that institutions and the league will need to address: if an institution is requiring all individuals to be vaccinated, will teams be permitted to participate against other teams that are not fully vaccinated? The question will be revisited once institutions establish plans for the fall.

## VI. Vote on Sport Action Items

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

- A. **CROSS COUNTRY / TRACK & FIELD:** **Motion** to award medals to the top eight finishers at the Liberty League indoor and outdoor track and field championships. *PASSED 7-3-1.*
- B. **VOLLEYBALL:** **Motion** to require that video from all matches – both league and non-league – shall be uploaded to the designated exchange server (Hudl) and shared with all league members. *PASSED 8-0-3.*
- C. **BASKETBALL:** **Motion** to increase the number of All-Liberty League honorees from five (5) to seven (7) on both the first and second teams. *FAILED 1-9-1.*
- D. **SQUASH:** **Motion** to extend an offer of Liberty League squash associate membership to the Denison University varsity squash programs. *FAILED 3-2-6; requires 2/3 majority of those voting to approve an associate member.*

**Motion** to extend an offer of Liberty League squash associate membership to the Fordham University (M) varsity squash program. *FAILED 3-2-6; requires 2/3 majority of those voting to approve an associate member.*

**Motion** to extend an offer of Liberty League squash associate membership to the Mount Holyoke (W) varsity squash program. *PASSED 4-0-7.*

**Motion** to establish an annual award in memory of former St. Lawrence student-athlete Enzo Corigliano. *FAILED 0-6-5.*

- E. **BASEBALL:** **Motion** to specify that no infield/outfield shall be conducted prior to Liberty League games unless mutually agreed upon by the coaches. *PASSED 8-1-2.*

- F. **WOMEN'S GOLF: Motion** to hold the Liberty League women's golf championship at a neutral site annually; Turning Stone resort in 2022. *PASSED 6-0-5.*
  
- F. **MEN'S LACROSSE: Motion** to approve the proposed 8-team Liberty League schedule for the 2022-2025 seasons. *PASSED 6-0-5 (April 13, 2021).*

## **VII. Proposed Future Meeting Dates**

The tentative schedule of meeting dates for the 2021-22 academic year is as follows:

- A. Athletic director weekly Zoom meetings to resume Tuesday, July 13.
- B. Fall meeting: Tuesday, Sept. 21, to be held virtually.
- C. Winter meeting: Friday, Jan. 21, at NCAA Convention.
- D. Spring meeting: June 1-2 or June 8-9, in person. Location to be determined.

## **VIII. Executive Session**

The athletic directors held an executive session to discuss league business.

## **IX. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Workshop**

Guest speaker Nevin Caple joined the meeting to facilitate a 90-minute training session for league administrators on diversity, equity and inclusion.

## **X. Adjournment**

*Meeting adjourned at 12:33 p.m.*