

## MINUTES – FINAL TOURNAMENT REVIEW MEETING – 14 April, 2021

Time & Date: 1pm – 2pm. 14 April 2021

Meeting – Online Zoom meeting

Attending – Eugene Gilbert (SNZ), Glen Roff (SNZ), Moira Annandale (CB), Gareth Teahan (AK), Rangi Luke (HV), Graham Davidson (HV).

Apologies – Nicole Jack (WGTVN), David Gillander (NH)

NOTE:

In red below (in Italics), is the original decisions from the review meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> March.

In purple below is the final decisions from the committee after submissions received, meeting held 14<sup>th</sup> April

### AGE GRADE TOURNAMENTS

1. A possible decision to revert back to the original tournament structure of U15 NI & SI, U17B & U17G, and U19B & U19G?

*A strong majority of the committee would like to see the return of U15, U17, and U19 Nationals for Boys & Girls. A portion of the committee felt that reverting back to that structure is a step backwards, and that alignment with WBSC should be given another year to run its course. It should be noted that the National men's programme, and a majority of the National women's programme want SNZ to revert back to the U17 & U19 age grade Nationals.*

*Discussion was undertaken to increase participation at the U15 level, by instigating Open Club U15 Regional tournaments in the three regions (Northern Region, Central Region, South Island). All felt this was important, the majority would like to see this take place before Christmas, with the U15, U17, & U19 Nationals to be held in January. A portion of the committee would like to see an Open Club U15 National tournament in January instead of U15 Association based Nationals, the result being more participation numbers. A majority of the committee were wary of U15 Club 'Super teams' resulting from a National U15 Open Club format.*

It was decided that the format for the SNZ Age Grade Nationals for next season would be the re-introduction of the U19, U15, and U17 Nationals in January (in that order).

Pre-Christmas, the committee would recommend the Northern, Central, and Southern regions host age grade regional tournaments. It will be left up to those regions to decide whether those tournaments will be association-based teams or open club teams.



## 2. Fence Distances for different age grade tournaments

*Alignment with WBSC in fence distances was agreed to stay in place for the U17 grade upwards. However, for the U13 and U15 grade it was felt the 76.2m fence (same as adult men's distance) needed to be reduced for these age groups. The key reason is letting these younger age groups play proportionally to a fence distance similar for older age groups fence distances. To also provide a more confined space to play, which has reduced the effect of errors in the North Island Rookie Sox tournament, and more thrill at possible home runs.*

For Softball NZ Nationals, the U15's fence distance should be reduced proportionally, from U17 upwards to stay at WBSC recommended distances.

## NATIONAL FASTPITCH CHAMPIONSHIP

3. The NFC to be overhauled and become a National Open Provincial tournament allowing any association to attend. The format would be similar to an age grade National tournament in the sense of;
  - The duration of the tournament would be 4-5 days (to be determined)
  - Any association could enter a mens or womens team, with the addition of a 2<sup>nd</sup> association team into the tournament.
  - Associations outside the 'Big Four' can combine to form a team
  - Pick ups would be allowed for associations outside the 'Big Four' and International players can play for the teams
  
  - A round robin in sections will determine the top teams to play a Championship round, whilst lower teams after the round robin play in a Trophy section.
  - NZ National teams would be allowed to participate
  - No International teams allowed

*A clear majority of the committee agreed with the concept of it all, especially having greater number of teams and players at this National Provincial tournament. A small portion of the committee felt that the current NFC format is fine as it stands, as it's our elite players playing, and games are generally competitive.*

*There were clear reservations about having NZ National teams play at both the current NFC format and the new proposed format, as it deprives associations of players they would use in their association-based team.*

*The committee felt International teams would be welcome on certain conditions (ie. Not play the finals)*

*Rules around imports and pick-ups need to be fair for all, and finalized once the format has been determined.*



It was decided that the NFC will see an adjustment to the format, in essence it will be run very similar to the age grade Nationals. The tournament will be open to all associations, players will no longer need to register with SNZ (there will be no player draft). Further finalisation of rules will be forth-coming.

Associations want the use of all their eligible players to play at the NFC, hence no NZ National teams will be permitted to play.

4. NFC Draft Player process & NFC Injured Player process.

Discussion was undertaken about the current NFC draft process, in terms of players being selected by teams and then pulling out so easily. Teams use valuable draft selection positions to select players on the draft list, then at some point these players pull out due to work or something else trivial. Teams also use resources to purchase flights for players, then to see these players pull out costs the associations time and resources.

*The committee felt one option was to put penalties in place for any pull outs, unless it is a serious injury or other extreme circumstance. Time off for work should be planned ahead of time and should not be used as a reason for pulling out. Another option was to have all players pay a deposit, and if they pull out they lose it. Further deliberation is required.*

With the new NFC format, there is no need for player registrations to SNZ, and no need for a player draft.

**OPEN CLUBS**

5. The Open Clubs had a new rule in place where teams were only allowed three imports at the Open Club Championships (imports = players who are not NZ permanent residents or NZ citizens). There are a number of players/former players that have lived in NZ for a number of years that are not permanent residents or NZ citizens. They do not go overseas to play in the off-season, they live and work in NZ, can a case be made about them not being classed as an import?

*The committee decided that teams should be still allowed three imports, however dispensation requests should be submitted for players who may reside in NZ as residents but don't have full citizenship.*

*The only way an import can be fairly identified, is any player not holding NZ Citizenship. This is in alignment with other sports such as Football, Basketball and Netball. However, we need to allow for specific examples in our sport of players in NZ permanently that are not here as Softball imports. The true meaning of an import will be decided upon by SNZ (in consultation with stakeholders), and these factors will be passed on to the Dispensation Committee to determine if a player is an import or not.*



A majority of the committee would like to see Open Clubs drop to two imports, it is currently at 3 imports. Softball NZ will decide this quota in the coming week.

6. Every entrant in the NZ Open Clubs is allowed **one** wildcard player that has not otherwise qualified through the minimum number of games played. To qualify a player must
  - Be eligible for a NZ National team
  - Have played Premier Softball for the club (not just as a pick up)
  - If a player is currently playing any level of softball for a club that is attending Open Nationals, they must first be available for that club prior to being available for any other club they may be eligible to play for.

*The committee felt that players should be committed to playing competitive softball throughout the season, and not wait for a 'free card' into the Open Clubs. Our best players need to be playing consistently in their local competition, then they are rewarded with playing at the Open Clubs.*

There will be no wild card player as described above, players need to be playing throughout the season.

7. A number of Fastball 45 rules were put forward to possibly be integrated into our Fastball game.

*The committee at this stage felt those rules should stay just as Fastball 45 rules. A future working group could be formed to look more thoroughly through these Fastball 45 rules and possible implementation into our Fastpitch rules.*

Fastball 45 rules will remain with the Fastball 45 format of the game.





## Softball New Zealand

Sports House, 93 Hutt Park Road, Seaview PO Box 30 322, Lower Hutt 5040

Phone: 64 4 560 0388, Fax: 64 4 560 0400, Email: [snz@softball.org.nz](mailto:snz@softball.org.nz), Website: [www.softball.org.nz](http://www.softball.org.nz)

### Additional agenda item

8. There was an added agenda item at the end which proposed the possibility of combining boys and girls, men & women National tournaments together. That is, have the U15 Boys & Girls Nationals in one place together, Men's & Women's Open Clubs in one place together, etc, etc.

Reasoning for the possible proposal was the added atmosphere of a combined tournament, cost efficiencies for associations sending both boys and girls to the same tournament, and possible cost efficiencies for SNZ in terms of tournament officials.

It was noted that only half a dozen associations have the park size to cater for it though. Other associations could host the regional U15 tournaments before Christmas.

*In essence the committee liked the idea, and understood the task would be immense for the host association, but they would all jump at the opportunity to host these combined tournaments if presented to them.*

There was still a positive outlook to this proposal to combine equivalent National tournaments (U17 Boys & Girls, Mens & Womens Clubs, etc). The committee by majority would like to see this implemented. Softball NZ to work through logistics about the feasibility of this proposal.

Meeting closed at 1:50pm, Wed 14 April, 2021

