



WELSH HOCKEY UNION UNDEB HOCI CYMRU

NEWSLETTER September 2006

A VIEW FROM THE BOARD

There is no doubt that this has been a difficult period at corporate level for Welsh Hockey but the aim of the Board has been to try to ensure that it has not affected your ability to and enjoyment of your hockey playing.

You may know that Mike Bull, our CEO, resigned in January. His son is a talented tennis player and the best opportunities were available in Spain. Mike spotted a business opportunity that would enable him to be with his family on a permanent basis – Spain's gain is our loss!

The Board tried to recruit a new CEO but after a long and extensive process no suitable candidate was found. As we were heading into the summer period it was decided to delay any re-advertisement until the autumn and the process will be beginning again shortly – let's hope for more success.

Alan Rookes said this time last year that he had been looking to give up his role as Chairman but had been persuaded to continue. He got more responsibility at work and decided in January that he was no longer able to carry on.

The Board appointed an interim Chair who decided, after four months, that he would prefer to use his talents elsewhere in Welsh Hockey where he felt he could make more of a difference.

Currently the President is chairing meetings and a small group of directors are carrying out the functions of both CEO and Chair. In addition the Sports Council have seconded one of their officers, Ian Blackburn, to the Union for two days a week to assist with the strategic and development plans.

As you will read elsewhere the focus for the next period is club development. We have to make sure that all the youngsters that have come from the development programme have appropriate clubs to go to so that the stability and growth of our sport can be assured.

The website has been running for some while now and is a credit to the hard work of Chris Brewer and others who contribute items. It is a treat to be able to see results for our national teams as the tournament is progressing, often with reports. The professionalism of the site is reflected by the huge number of 'hits' that it receives each week.

We have also started an irregular electronic newsletter called *WHU4U* to try to keep you bang up to date with what's going on. As our new database comes on stream we will be able to send this to individual members as part of our improved communications strategy.

There is a need for improved dialogue with clubs and, this autumn, it is hoped that we can start a regular series of meetings with Chairs of clubs so that you can tell the Board what your problems are and we can tell you what's going on at national level. These will be held in various parts of the country so that it will be easy for club Chairs to attend.

Finally it would be remiss to finish without thanking all the staff and a huge number of volunteers for the extra efforts that they have made to ensure that things have run as smoothly as possible during this transitional period.

If you have any thoughts or comments to make we are always pleased to receive them - send them in the first instance to chris.brewer@welsh-hockey.co.uk and he'll pass them on to the appropriate person.

John Turton - Director

AN EXCITING SEASON AHEAD IN INTERNATIONAL HOCKEY

It is time to get into shape and brush up those skills for the start of another club season, and I wish all the very best for a successful start to another enjoyable season.

Much has been happening in the International scene over the summer months, with programs running for all eight of our representative teams.

Here is a summary of the year's performances

- Whitchurch and Swansea both finished third and are primed to earn promotions in the English National League in 2007.
- Cardiff Men promoted back into the Trophy, and Swansea Ladies performing well in the same division, in the European Clubs
- Our Junior Academy teams did well in the European's, with a bronze medal for the boys and a creditable sixth for the girls
- A determined and at times high quality performance from our U/21 Women against the best countries in Europe, which regrettably was not enough to keep them in the 'A' division, where they finished seventh.
- Competitive performances in the reintroduced Home Nations Competition for our U/18 Boys
- A tour of Holland provided great development for our U/18 Girls

Our regional Coaches, will soon be hard at work in the junior elite development areas, with LETS and the U/13 program poised to commence again for this year, following last years expansion of our talent identification procedures. Sadly, our Junior Performance Manager, Mark Hopkins, has moved on to pastures new, and his dedication and commitment to quality will be missed.

2007 will see the introduction of the GB Superleague, and our teams, The Celtic Panthers will contest over three weekends in March and April, in Edinburgh, Swansea and Manchester. We expect the standard of hockey to be very high, as players vie for places in the GB squads.

Our National sides both contest Europeans in 2007, as will our U/18 Boys and Girls. We are also looking forward to the reintroduction of the U/16 Home Nations.

All in all, an exciting time to come for Welsh Hockey, and I hope that we will see you at some of the forthcoming events. I trust that you will enjoy your season.

David Griffiths
National Performance Coach

CLUB CONTACTS

In an effort to reduce large postal expenditure, more and more communication is being undertaken via email. The vast majority of clubs already have a 'club contact' in place whose sole 'job' is to ensure that the information received is passed to the appropriate person(s) within their club. If your club does not receive information have you such a person in place? Please follow the following link <http://www.welsh-hockey.co.uk/regions.htm> to find your club and see if a contact is detailed – if not then let the WHU office know and you will be added to the list!

WHU AGM

Following the success of last years AGM, this years meeting will again be held at two sites (WIS and Plas Menai) on Sunday 7th January at 14:00. Video conferencing facilities will also be used to ensure that everybody can have their say! This is your opportunity to feedback your thoughts to the WHU Board so don't miss the chance to attend.

COMPETITIONS REVIEW

Do you say "no-one ever asks for my view?"

Do you say "we should do things differently?"

In which case has your club completed and returned the review questionnaire?

If you haven't then why not?

A major review of all domestic competitions is being undertaken and questionnaires should have been passed on to all clubs by their regional committee. They were sent to your regional secretary in April so if you haven't seen one let me know and I will send you another one.

This is the opportunity for all Clubs to have their say and those that have been returned are not holding back from saying what they think! If you have something to say then this is your chance and if a club member wants to have their say as well as the official club response then that's fine. Any comments made in the questionnaire will not be attributed to a club or individual!

The Competition Review representatives for South Wales Ladies and North Wales Men have done a sterling job in getting their clubs to respond. A few have been returned by South Wales Men but I only have one from North Wales Ladies. Now this could mean that those clubs who haven't replied are happy with the way things are but it would be nice to see a few more coming back.

I appreciate that sending them out at the end of the season was not the best idea but most clubs are probably starting to think about the season ahead so we do need as many responses as possible by the end of September. A feedback document will then be prepared and issued for further comments by clubs and regions and we will then be looking at having a final document as to the future prepared by early 2007. We would hope to have this available at the AGM but do not want to commit to a definite date at the moment.

Please don't waste this opportunity to have an input into the future of domestic competitions.

2006/7 Calendar

The coming season is one of the busiest ever for league and representative competitions and fitting in all the cup games has been very difficult. At the time of writing we have still not confirmed all the dates but there is close communication between the regional competition representatives and myself and I am sure we will get there in the end. As soon as it has all been agreed it will be advised to those clubs who have entered a competition, to the regions and be placed on the WHU website.

Men's Coordinator

I have been doing this for the past couple of years and keep saying that unless someone takes over then the competitions will not run! There must be someone out there who could spare an hour or so (not very often) to organise the rounds and collate results. It is not an onerous task and there is plenty of support.

If there is a volunteer you would make my husband very happy as he keeps telling me I am doing too much. He might even buy you a pint!

Alison Cook
Competitions

MEN'S VETS

The Men's vets continues to grow with Wales not only having successfully hosted the 40 & 50's Home Nations in Swansea but whose 45+ squad are also due to fly out to Germany to play in the 45+ World Cup in the next few weeks. The Home Nations tournaments have already been arranged for next year with the 40's & 50's playing in Edinburgh and the 45's & 55's playing in Swansea. If you would like to be considered for selection for any of these teams please contact Bernie Wheeler at the_wheelers@talk21.com

COACHING

Mike Williamson, Men's National Team Coach has been selected to attend an FIH High Performance Coaching Event at the Men's Hockey World Cup in Monchengladbach in September. He will join top coaches from around the world to discuss cutting edge developments in techniques and tactics.

Two staff members will be attending a Disability Hockey Awareness event run by the FIH at the World Cup in Germany to explore the feasibility developing a disability hockey product.

WHU in partnership with England and Scotland Hockey under the banner of Hockey Coaching UK has now completed the design of new Coaching Qualifications to meet United Kingdom Coaching Certificate standards at Levels 1, 2 and 3. Already on the QCA Framework via 1st4Sport, these VRQ qualifications, and the associated courses and resources are currently with Sports Coach UK awaiting formal UKCC endorsement. Delivery of these new courses will start early in the new season. Incorporated in the new structure is the opportunity for holders of existing WHU awards to update them to the new qualifications subject of course to some conditions. Whilst the cost and length of courses will be higher than the previous awards, the new VRQ qualifications are significantly more valuable and will carry UK recognition. Now that's something really valuable that coaches and their clubs can use to market themselves when recruiting and attracting new players! Courses are currently being arranged across Wales. A full calendar of formal coaching courses and downloadable application forms can be found on the WHU coaching site. All those holding current coaching WHU awards will be contacted over the coming season with information about converting to the new UK recognised qualifications.

The Sports Council for Wales have confirmed their commitment to coaching by advising that any Community Chest applications seeking grants for coach education and development will be looked on very favorably. Contact your Club Development Officer, local Sports Development Unit or the Welsh Hockey Union Development Section for information on Community Chest Grants.

We are currently looking to recruit more Tutors and Assessors for our coaching courses and qualifications. If you would like to be considered, please contact the Coaching Unit with a full cv covering hockey and any coaching/teaching/lecturing/instructing/tutoring experience. All successful candidates will receive free formal training leading to nationally recognised Tutor and/or Assessor qualifications. All Tutors and Assessors receive payment for coach education work done for the WHU Coaching Unit.

Malcolm Wood, WHU High Performance Coaching Consultant will be running a number of coaching workshops on various topics in North and South Wales over the coming season. Topics include amongst others, Attacking Play, Team Defence, Core Skills, Goalkeeping (see below) and Coaching Indoor Hockey. Flyers and application forms for all workshops will be placed on the WHU coaching site as soon as details have been finalised.

Pam Richards U21 Womens Head Coach has been accepted onto the Women in High Performance Coaching Programme. The only coach in Wales currently on the programme, Pam will join coaches from a number of other sports across the UK at conferences and seminars to further their development as high performance coaches. Previous conference lecturers include David Whitaker (GB Olympic Hockey Gold Medal winning coach) and Sir Clive Woodward.

Former Great Britain Double Olympian Goalkeeper Simon Mason has been signed up to run two Goalkeeper Coaching Workshops for Welsh Hockey next year.

Two new Coaching for Teachers courses will be rolled out during the forthcoming season to add to the existing FUNdamentals course that has proved very popular with Primary School Teachers across Wales. Designed by WHU Grass Roots Coaching Consultant Margaret Medlow, these two new courses are aimed at Key Stages 2 to 3 (Transitions) and Key Stage 3 (Introduction to Game Play). A calendar of Coaching for Teachers courses and application forms are available for download on the WHU coaching site.

A number of clubs have been able to recruit new coaches just by advertising on the Coaching site. If you are a coach looking for coaching opportunities, or a club secretary looking for a coach for your club,

download, complete and return the form from the coaching site and we will post your advert free for three months.

For more information on the above events or any other coaching matters please contact the WHU Coaching Manager at chris.marriott@welsh-hockey.co.uk

Chris Marriott
Coaching Manager

DEVELOPMENTS IN DEVELOPMENT!

Development within Welsh Hockey has taken a huge leap forward especially as far as Coach Education and coaching opportunities are concerned. Chris Marriott (Educational Development Manager) and his team, Malcolm Wood and Margaret Medlow have been working hard on improving and standardising the coaching programme. Malcolm has been concentrating on mentoring and improving our 'high performance' coaches, and Margaret has been working with the 'grass roots' coaches. Chris's efforts have been focussed on implementing a standardised GB-wide coach award structure. For more information as well as transferring of existing qualifications please speak to Chris Marriott at the WHU

The Local Development officers, who do enormous amounts of development work in all parts of Wales, will be moving into "Phase 2", of the partnership with their Unitary Authorities. This phase is dedicated to club development, to help provide support to new and existing hockey clubs in Wales to enable them to meet the new challenges and demands that have been created through initiatives such as Dragon Sport. An exciting time ahead for the development officers but also for all clubs in Wales as well.

All clubs will soon be receiving 'Club Audit' papers to fill out. It is vital that these are filled in and returned as we will then be able pin-point areas which need addressing within your clubs structure and provide appropriate support. The development officers' proven success within the development field can only serve to help your club go from strength to strength.

Anwen Owen, National Youth Development Manager, is now overseeing all of our Activator's development and programmes. Now in its fourth successive year the Activator programme, dedicated to bringing the Youth into all aspects of hockey is thriving. The Welsh Youth Conference is soon to take place at the Welsh Institute of Sport where competition for places are once again extremely high and the rewards potentially great as Bethan Walsh, Chloe Guy and Jon Elliott can vouch for in their experiences already through the programme. For further information on the benefits and how to get onto the programme contact Anwen Owen at the WHU.

Our National Trainer, Sarah Powell has been working tirelessly in developing our Hockey NVQ's (Coaching Teaching & Instruction Level's 2 & 3). The rewards of Sarah's endeavours can be seen in the results of those that now hold their NVQ Level 2 & 3. Unfortunately, Sarah is soon to move onto pastures new but we take this opportunity to thank her for all her hard work and dedication on this project and her involvement with Sportrain and the WHU. I'm sure Sarah will still be involved in some aspects of Welsh Hockey but Good Luck in your future role.

Without the structured approach that has been in place over the last four years, the fervour and dedication of present and past staff, and the continued advice and support from the Sports Council for Wales, the task of overseeing the Development section would be much harder, if not impossible, particularly on a part-time voluntary basis.

That's what we've been doing - no doubt you'll agree that there are lots of good things happening on the development front, many of which can benefit your club. Please make sure that you make the most of the opportunities available - how else are we going to expand and improve.....

STRATEGIC PLANNING – THE WAY FORWARD

Congratulations! I salute you if you've managed to read past the title. Most normal people switch off instantly when you start to talk about strategic plans, me included.

However, as I've found, most businesses revolve around planning their strategy and the Welsh Hockey Union are no different. We rely heavily on funding from the Sports Council for Wales (SCW) and in order to secure that money we have to provide them with our strategic direction for the foreseeable future.

Our last strategic plan covered the period 2002-2006. Some of you may have seen it, but I would be surprised if anyone has looked at it more than once. I don't think it's unreasonable to say it doesn't make for easy reading.

The plan that we are producing to cover the period April 2007 to March 2009 is hopefully going to be a lot more user friendly and relevant to everyone. It sets out how we see the WHU progressing over the next 2-3 years and which areas we will be concentrating on. The detailed indicators that will make up the targets, on which we will be measured, will be contained in a separate operational plan.

If you're still with me, in a nutshell, the background to the focus of our new strategy is the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) 20 year strategy for sport & physical activity – 'Climbing Higher'. The strategy has three main focuses – Governance; Performance; and Development; and we have been asked to consider the areas in which we can make the biggest impact.

As a team sport competing as Great Britain at the Olympics, and with both senior teams needing to qualify for the Commonwealth Games, we would find it hard to make a significant impression in the short term. That is not to say that we are not looking to contribute in the long term on the performance side, it's just that for the period of time ending March 2009, we feel that the biggest contribution can be made through the grass roots development of the game.

Under normal circumstances the honour of writing the strategic plan would fall to the Chief Executive, however this time, the Board have rolled up their sleeves, practised their best handwriting, and pulled together the new document. We're working on completing it by September and then we want to send it out to all stakeholders for consultation. That means you'll all get a chance to read it and comment. (I can tell you can't wait!!).

Seriously though, the plan is an important document because without it we wouldn't have any SCW funding. We want everyone in Welsh Hockey to be comfortable with the content and so we would greatly value any feedback or comments that you wish to make.

Karen Evans
Director

SPONSORS

Without doubt, many of the initiatives that the WHU undertakes would not be possible without sponsors and to the following companies we offer our grateful thanks:

SCW – sponsor the vast majority of staffing, development and international squads (see details on back page).

Newmarket / Sport Experiences – WHU Travel agents - sponsor the Youth Activator programme.

RAF – Sponsor the WHU Youth Club and School tournaments and support our Youth Camps.

HSBC – WHU Bankers – Sponsor the Skills and Teacher awards

Worldwide Sports Insurance UK Ltd – WHU insurers – Sponsored the Junior Celtic Cup tournament

Gilmour Sports – WHU kit suppliers – Sponsor International squads playing kit and staff kit

Please help the WHU by supporting our sponsors.

UMPIRE AND TECHNICAL SNIPPETS

When is the hockey "out of season"?? Well never it would appear as some umpires and technical officials have had one continuous hockey season with so many tournaments and matches now being played. Since the beginning of May there have been a number of senior internationals, European Nations under 21 and 16 tournaments, under 18 internationals, European club competitions, mixed and vets internationals. In total, Wales provided over twenty umpires and technical officials to these events. Who said that the summer was for rest and the family??

Hurray!!!! The FIH has announced that there will be a new rules book for 2007, (which will be forwarded to all WHU schools and clubs with the next mailing), with implementation of new rules in January 2007. A summary of the changes are detailed elsewhere in this newsletter. Also look at the WHU website where the WHUA has a section dealing with umpiring matters and you will find important information on any changes.

However as from **1st June 2006** for all levels of hockey the maximum bow/rake of the stick has being reduced from 50mm to **25mm** when laid down with the playing side facing the ground. The FIH has also stipulated that the front side of the stick must be flat and smooth and the introduction of any grooves or slots is forbidden. If you buy a new stick for the season be careful and remember that all sticks must conform to this new dimension. If it does not, then you will be prevented from playing with it!!

In an effort to develop umpires the WHUA are hoping to appoint a Development Co-ordinator in the early part of the new season. Watch out for the advertisement! It is absolutely necessary to encourage more to take up the whistle, especially younger people. This new position will encourage the continuation and development of new umpires and assist the Regional Development Officers. If you have a requirement for umpire courses please contact either Carolyn Llewellyn, South Wales Development Officer, Tel: 02920 882696 or Ann Houlston, North Wales Development Officer, Tel: 01745 582938 or the WHU Development Unit for details on the junior umpire courses. Through the assistance of the Sports Council for Wales an Umpire Development Consultant was contracted for a 6 months period to produce important tutorials and write a 3 year Development Plan. The outcomes of this work are now being considered and being introduced as necessary.

Well, it is now not long to the start of another season and another plea to clubs, players, parents, teachers, to get involved and start providing umpires or even trying it yourself. There is someone near to you who will assist you in getting started and providing you with the right advice. All leagues in Wales are now getting desperately short of umpires and to assist the Leagues the WHUA will make the list of qualified and registered umpires available to them. If you would like to offer your services and join the happy bunch of whistlers please contact your Regional WHUA Development Officer or Colin Crayford, Chair of the WHUA Tel: 01446 746611. All will be delighted to advise you accordingly on what to do.

Colin Crayford
Chair WHUA

CLUB AUDITS

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will have seen reference to the WHU concentrating their efforts on club development. Whilst we currently have Development Officers in 10 Local Authorities we will be aiming to offer some support for Clubs across the whole of Wales and we would be extremely grateful if every club could complete and return the simple form that is available on the WHU website. As an incentive a free DVD and accompanying booklet covering 'basic skills' will be sent to the first 25 clubs that return their form. We are also currently working on a Club Accreditation / Club Model Scheme, which will assist further clubs with their development – further details to be issued so watch this space!

INTERNATIONAL MIXED HOCKEY

Following this years annual match against England it has been suggested that the 'match' be expanded to include representative teams from Scotland and Ireland. The venue for the proposed tournament is likely to be on the South coast of England and if you are interested in being considered for selection please contact the Mixed Manager – Rob Riley - on 07868-744535 or hockey@robandis.plus.com

A MANAGERS LIFE!

There are, as you can see from many of the other reports and articles in the newsletter, many changes and developments within the WHU.

It has certainly been an involved and challenging year for everyone, employees and volunteers alike. Without the professional staffs' dedication, drive and determination, for which we are eternally grateful, and the support, enthusiasm and ardour of our volunteers many of the tasks and performances would have fallen by the wayside. Our thanks go out to everyone who has helped

Over the last 12 months, I have been fortunate enough to work alongside our Head Performance Coach, David Griffiths, as the Senior Women's Squad Manager. Certainly a new role and challenge for me but also one which I was looking forward to until I was told, 'I was in charge and the buck stops with me!'

OK, never one to step away from a challenge and a bit of hard work (actually an incredibly large amount), I took the reins in March and I'm thoroughly enjoying the position. Working alongside the other members of the very professional support team, and the athletes has certainly been an eye opener that I have learnt and benefited from so much. It has given me an insight into the work that goes into the development of our elite athletes in Wales and the commitment needed to compete at this level. It has also provided a fresh perspective to my knowledge of the game, the players and my understanding of international hockey which hopefully I can use in my other persona, as an umpire!

As a squad, we have just completed 3 Test Matches against the visiting Canadian Senior Women and have competed in France at the Senior Celtic Cup, where hopefully, we have built on our performances in readiness for our European campaign next year. So please keep everything crossed and support our Women's and Men's Squads and wish them luck for all forthcoming tournaments.

Karen Evans
Senior Women's Manager

GILMOUR SPORTS

Gilmour Sports will not be holding their Roadshow this year but details of their ever increasing range of hockey equipment are always available via their website or their catalogue which is included with this newsletter. A number of our members will have purchased items from the 'WHU Shop' and you will be pleased to learn that discussions will shortly commence with a view to increasing the number of items available. You can always find what is available at <http://www.welsh-hockey.co.uk/shop.htm>

SAVING CLUBS MONEY!

If you were to ask your club Treasurer if he/she would like to reduce the payments made for insurance, kit, or indeed, any expense the answer is likely to be a resounding **YES**. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find information about the Hockey Sport'ers Club but don't forget that there are other savings to be made. Full details of all the benefits organised for members of the WHU can be found at http://www.welsh-hockey.co.uk/membership_benefits.htm

SPONSORSHIP HELP FOR HOCKEY CLUBS

The Hockey Sport'ers Club benefits package available to all members of Welsh Hockey on <http://www.yourbenefit.co.uk/whu> is a product that can also be used to obtain investment into your club from firms across Wales.

Your members and their families are in the main employed by Welsh based firms, these firms can also create their own fully branded Sport'ers Club website. The website provides savings of up to 60% on items such as DVDs, electrical goods, bikes, gifts, sports goods, tourist attractions and holidays, which enable firms to...

- **Reward employees** – recruit and retain the best people by providing an unrivalled package of benefits that saves employees time and money – with no administration on their part. Over 80% of UK based employers provide additional benefits to their staff.
- **Reward customers** - provide their most important customers with great savings on top brand named products and increase their desire to keep doing business with them. It is the opportunity for local retailers to provide greater rewards than even Tesco and their Club card scheme.
- **Market their company** - generate sales by providing their own consumer or business-to-business offers on the Wales and UK wide Sport'ers Club platform. This will see them promoting their business not just to your members, but also currently over 40,000 other Welsh sportspeople and 650 businesses and rising who are using the Sport'ers Club as a membership and business benefit package.

Using the Sport'ers Club as part of a sponsorship package will greatly enhance what you can currently offer local firms.

The Welsh Sports Association Commercial Unit is on hand to provide the materials required to encourage your members firms to support your club.

There are no upfront costs involved you simply buy a CD-ROM from the WSA, when you have sold one to a local firm. The CD-ROMS cost Welsh Hockey Clubs just £95+17.5% VAT for firms rewarding less than 100 customers and staff rising to £195+ 17.5% VAT for firms rewarding more than 100 customers and staff. The recommended selling prices are £199 and £499 respectively but you are free to charge whatever you see fit.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact **David Cotton** on 02920 649 862 or e-mail david.cotton@welshsports.org.uk .

In the meantime, as you start to gather for the start of the 2006 and 2007 season please remember to promote the Welsh Hockey Membership Benefits package as your club's membership package. To that end please feel free to download the Membership Poster contained within the download section.

HOCKEY RULES BOARD

FIH release 'The Rules of Hockey 2007/08'

The FIH has recently published The Rules of Hockey for 2007/8. Only a few innovative changes were introduced in this set of rules that marks a move to a two-year cycle for their production and publication. This means that these rules cover the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2008 at international level although, as in the past, national hockey associations have discretion to decide the date of implementation at national level.

In some ways, a two-year cycle was already in place because significant changes were not introduced in the periods leading to each Olympic Games and Hockey World Cup. The 2006 rules will therefore apply in the two upcoming World Cups to be played in September and October 2006, but the 2007/8 rules are being published now so that nations who are not involved in these events or who start their playing season in the next few months can adopt them sooner if they wish. (*Editors note: WHU will be introducing the rules with effect from 1st January 2007*)

Two year cycle

Els van Breda Vriesman, President of the FIH, welcomed the adoption of a two-year cycle. "By formalising this cycle, we're acknowledging that it's better to allow a slightly longer period between rules changes for them to settle down and to be evaluated and reviewed. This gives everyone involved in hockey a clearer timetable on which to focus when developing the rules to make the game even more attractive to play and watch," the FIH President stated.

In this context, there are some rules changes for 2007/8. Wolfgang Rommel, Chairman of the Hockey Rules Board (HRB) observed. "We've looked closely at goalkeeping," said Rommel. "We've set out three clear options: playing with a goalkeeper wearing full protective equipment; a goalkeeper just wearing protective headgear; or no goalkeeper at all."

In the middle option, the HRB has formalised what players sometimes know as a 'kicking back' can and cannot do. If there is no goalkeeper, Rommel explains the following procedures. "This really means what it says: the team is playing only with field players. No player can then kick the ball in the circle and so on." This option allows a team, if they wish, to press all their players forward with nobody committed to defending the circle. It also overcomes a previous technicality which sometimes occurred at local levels where there was nobody with goalkeeping kit or if the goalkeeper had been delayed on their way to the ground! Strictly according to the rules, a game could not take place unless there was a goalkeeper wearing protective headgear on the field.

More flexibility

Still on the subject of goalkeeping, the 2007/8 rules permit a goalkeeper more flexibility when defending their goal. They can now sweep the ball away with their hand. "We don't want to make life too easy for goalkeepers but we also don't want to restrict them in petty ways", Richard Aggiss, former national player, coach to Australia and member of the HRB comments. "We're therefore happy for them to push the ball away with their hands or body but we don't want to see them rushing to a ball entering the circle and swiping it to the centre-line with their hand protector".

Aggiss was also pleased to see the clarification now added about how defenders can stop a high shot at goal with their sticks. "Some umpires were being far too strict because the rule could be interpreted that way," he added. "We want to make it clear that it isn't an offence when stopping a shot above shoulder height if the defender's stick is not motionless or is travelling towards the ball. As a player and coach, I know it's virtually impossible to get to the ball and for the stick to be motionless, when you make contact with the ball."

Easier to understand

The rules changes made by the HRB follow from its objectives which include making the game easier to understand. "This objective is easier to state than to deliver. We have to get a balance between many things," Gill Clarke, a World Cup and Olympic umpire and now a member of the HRB, commented. "An extremely simple game may be easier for spectators to understand and then require few skills but would not be so enjoyable and stimulating to play. We also have to bear in mind that the rules apply throughout the game. They apply to adults and children. To young players and veterans. To women and men. To experienced skilful players and to players just starting out in the game. Everyone, whatever their ability and circumstances, must feel that hockey is a game for them."

This means that the work of the HRB is challenging and ongoing. Among other things, it is looking at ways of avoiding crowded defensive circles. The penalty corner is also being scrutinised and is a good example of where the HRB has to strike a balance between something which is skilful and exciting but also safe and not too complicated. There is a desire to see more attacking play while avoiding huge scores and one-sided matches which can be dull to play in or watch. The HRB is also aware that indoor hockey is an important part of the game so will be focussing on it in during the next year or so.

Comments and ideas

The Hockey Rules Board therefore welcomes comments and proposals from throughout the game. It is even the better if ideas are routed through national associations which can add broader comments and make formal recommendations. Communications about the rules of hockey should be addressed to Roger Webb, FIH Technical Manager by email to roger.webb@worldhockey.org or by post at the International Hockey Federation, Rue du Valentin 61, CH - 1004 Lausanne, Switzerland.

This information about the Rules of Hockey 2007/8 is necessarily only a summary and cannot provide the precise details of each rule. Readers are therefore encouraged to look at the full set of rules available on the WorldHockey website www.worldhockey.org

CHILD PROTECTION MATTERS!

During the latter part of last season a substantial number of Club officers attended one of four scUK courses, which combined with the sessions on CRB form completion, enabled each of those officers to be suitably trained in Child Protection matters at club level. Whilst some clubs in Mid-Wales have yet to have a course arranged for them (due to be organised in Oct/Nov) with all other clubs having had the opportunity to send a representative, those that do not have the scUK course 'Good Practice in Child Protection' under their belt should send their rep to the identical course organised by their Unitary Authority. Bear in mind that it is quite possible that having a qualified CCPD in your club may be compulsory by season 2007/8!

CRB forms have been completed on the majority of those attending the courses although a number have yet to return their forms – **if this relates to you, please complete and return the form ASAP**. A list of those who have received CRB clearance and who have attended the training will shortly be provided to WCVA Criminal Records Unit (our umbrella organisation) to enable them to order and complete CRB forms for all those members requiring checks within their club. To clarify a small point which has been raised by a number of people, CRB forms are non transferable and irrespective if a check had been undertaken on them by a different organisation a new form must be completed for the WHU. Similarly, simply by completing a check does not qualify the person as being trained in Child Protection.

We are finalising all the Child Protection documents that will be placed on the WHU website which will enable CCPD's to fill in the gaps on the various documents with their club name, thereby saving themselves time and effort in ensuring their club is compliant. Full instructions will be issued in due course.



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SPORTS COUNCIL FOR WALES

As you will probably already be aware, our greatest sponsor without doubt is the Sports Council for Wales. Including (amongst others) the areas of Staffing, International squads, Development, UK Coaching Certificate, Regional Coaches, Coach Cymru and Senior Academy the funding received is in excess of £400k and we would like to take this opportunity of offering our sincere thanks for their continued support.

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