



WELSH HOCKEY UNION UNDEB HOCI CYMRU

NEWSLETTER August 2003

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIRPERSON'S SEAT!

In last years newsletter I promised you that the operations and management of the Union would be the subject of constant change over the years to come. Well we have been true to my word – in the last 12 months, numerous changes have occurred and I can assure you that many more changes are in the pipeline.

Without doubt the biggest change has been the decision to re-establish the Union as a Company Limited by Guarantee. Until now the Union has been an unincorporated body.

For the vast majority of members the change of status will not be readily apparent. Competitions will continue as before, development activity will continue as before and international activity will continue as before.

So, why the change? There are several sound reasons, but by far and away the greatest reason is that it will provide all members and the officers of the Union with a level of legal protection not available to an unincorporated body. Regrettably this country is following the American trend with compensation claims being sought more and more often and major financial awards being granted by the courts. Several sports governing bodies have suffered and some have even been made bankrupt.

Legal claims can be made against the unincorporated governing body itself and against any of its members and officers, with no restraint on an individual's financial responsibility. In other words you and I could lose our homes and our savings in the event of the Union being legally challenged. This is clearly a most undesirable situation, which will be addressed by the re-establishment of the Union as a Company Limited by Guarantee. In future you and I will only have a liability of £1 in the case of the Union being wound up.

The new Company will be established from 1 September 2003 and will probably being formally called 'The Welsh Hockey Union Ltd.' The recent AGM confirmed these arrangements and established an interim Board of Directors with a brief to establish the new Company and report back to the new Company's first AGM in January 2004.

The following 10 persons were elected as Directors:

Anne Ellis (who was also elected as President)
Margaret Edwards
Colin Crayford
Alison Cook
Mark Peary
John Turton
William Barletta
Ian Ord
Director of Hockey (Chris Brewer)
and myself.

**For all the up-to-date
information please look
at the WHU Website at
www.welsh-hockey.co.uk**

At the time of writing (late July), the interim Board has met once and has:

- Set up a small 'Task and Finish Group' of Directors who are reviewing the structure of the Union below Board level – their initial report is expected at the next Board meeting in late August.
- Set up another 'Task and Finish' Group of Directors who are charged with considering the rules and bye laws of the new Company.
- Agreed several changes to the draft Articles of Association to address comments made at the AGM.
- Agreed a regular programme of meetings through to Christmas.
- Appointed the Director of Hockey as the Company Secretary.
- Appointed myself as the Chairman of the Board.

Over the next few months, I am sure that the members of the new Board will be spending many hours in debate and decision-making! The discussions at our first meeting, suggest to me that there is a distinct willingness amongst the Directors to ensure that the new Company is very much set up to in a manner that will address Welsh Hockey's needs in the early 21st century.

Clearly establishment of the new Company cannot be the only focus of our attention. All the day-to-day functions of the Union must carry on and this will undoubtedly be a challenge for the professional staff and volunteers alike. I would consequently take this opportunity in advance to thank them for their support – I sincere hope that the change in the Union's status will not add to their burden too much!

I hope you all have a great season, both on and off the pitch, and that we can all work together to ensure the future of Welsh Hockey.

Alan Rookes
Chairperson

Umpiring

All clubs and players should note that any umpire they ask to control their games must be a member of both the Welsh Hockey Union and Welsh Hockey Umpires Association to ensure civil liability insurance cover is maintained.

FIH Rulebooks

Please note that rulebooks for 2004 will not be available from the FIH's UK distributor, Colin Crayford until October 2004. At that time please contact him at 24 Rheidol Drive, Cwm Talwg, Barry, CF62 7HB to order your copy.

Anti Doping Code

As you will have probably read in the press recently, a number of drug cheats have been found out with lengthy bans rightly being awarded.

The Welsh Hockey Union is determined that the drug taking problems associated with a number of other sports will not be reproduced in hockey.

A new Anti-Doping code has been approved which is available from either your Club Secretary or the WHU website at www.welsh-hockey.co.uk

Don't forget that when you apply for membership of your club you are also applying for membership of the WHU, which means that you agree to be bound by the Code!

GILMOUR SPORTS

**ADIDAS, DITA, GRAYS, KOOKABURRA,
MAZON, MERCIAN, OBO,
SLAZENGER & TK**

We have all the new ranges from all the top brands and would be delighted if you could join us at any of the locations listed below for our annual Hockey Shows

<u>DATE</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>TIME</u>
TUESDAY 16th SEPTEMBER	<u>PLAS COCH</u> <u>SPORTS CENTRE</u> (NEWI) WREXHAM	5.00 PM to 9.00 PM
WEDNESDAY 17th SEPTEMBER	<u>WHITCHURCH H.C.</u> based at WHITCHURCH TENNIS CLUB ST FRANCIS ROAD WHITCHURCH CARDIFF	5.00 PM to 9.00 PM

International Squad Coaches & Managers

The tenure for coaches and managers is normally for two year periods with some of the current arrangements due to expire in September 2003.

If you are interested in applying for any of the positions (all detailed on the WHU Website) please forward a letter of application (**marked Private and Confidential**), CV (to include full details of experience and qualifications) and details of referees by 22nd September 2003 to:

Alan Lints
National Performance Director
Welsh Hockey Union
80 Woodville Road
Cathays
Cardiff
CFD24 4ED

E-mail alan.lints@welsh-hockey.co.uk

Full job descriptions are available either by contacting Alan Lints at the above address, by telephoning 07866-496516 or through the website.

Managers and Coaches currently in post are invited to forward a letter of application only.

♥♥♥ A(nother) Plea from the Heart ♥♥♥

A lack of communication is something every business can be accused of and Welsh Hockey is no different. However we can only send information out when firstly, it is received and secondly if address details are held! Unfortunately a substantial number of people change their address or telephone number during the year without telling us so the message is PLEASE let us know when you move or change home, office or mobile numbers!

Some 65% of clubs receive regular electronic information from the WHU office advising them of anything from International matches to hockey related items appearing on television. If you have never received any such information it is probably because we do not have an e-mail address for your club. It does not have to be your Secretary, simply someone who is willing to pass on e-mails to their own club members. I can guarantee that no more than one e-mail will be sent per week so the task is not exactly onerous and you also get to find out what is happening a lot quicker!

Please check to see if your club receives e-mails from the WHU and if it does not let us have the e-address as soon as possible.

Friends of Welsh Hockey

Roger Caddick has been running the very successful 'Friends of Welsh Hockey' for a number of years and if you would like to become a member and in doing so help Welsh Hockey as well as yourself please contact either Roger direct on 029-2036-2860 or the WHU office.

July Winners

£60 S W Williams, £30 Ken Howells, £15 J MacDonald, £15 R T Welsford

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

This year has seen many changes within both Coaching and Development. In September 2002 the WHU launched a new coach education structure which has proven be very successful with more than 300 newly qualified leaders currently working within dragon sport schools and local junior club sections. The willingness of our experienced coaches to qualify as tutors was also put to the test again and I am delighted to say that we now find ourselves with more than 50 tutors based all over Wales resulting in Coach Education courses being delivered locally.

There are still a few big challenges that lay ahead of us on the coaching front. There is a need to ensure that our current coaching qualification is transferable with other home countries schemes and it is to this end that we are now in the process of working with Scottish Hockey to produce updated resources. In addition WHU are considering qualifying tutors as NVQ assessors and a decision will be made by September on this issue.

Following numerous suggestions and requests WHU are also considering implementing a hockey teacher's award, which will be live as of January 2004.

Several coaching conferences and workshops have run this year. Without doubt the biggest highlight was the visit of Ric Charlesworth (Australian Olympic hockey coach) who under took a two day workshop as a result of a visiting coaches scholarship by Sports Council for Wales.

Youth Development:

Following Bethan Walsh gaining the accolade of World Youth Promoter, development has moved from strength to strength with a youth panel now meeting on a regular basis. Easter this year saw the introduction of the first WHU youth conference, which was attended by 11 hockey activators who gained coaching, club development, dragon sport and junior umpire training. This was followed up by a youth hockey exchange between home countries where skills circuit ideas were swapped and a small Welsh contingency attended England Hockey youth conference. Youth efforts were rewarded with England and Wales winning the "world global best exchange" in July 2003. Bethan Walsh, Sally Raitt and Andrew Seiman will now attend the world global youth marathon in Amsterdam in August where they will share their youth development experiences with the rest of the world. I know that they will do us proud! All eleven hockey activators have been awarded with a FIH leader's certificate in recognition of their good work. Remember guys, this is only the start of youth development – I know where you all live, there is no escape!!!!

Local Development Officers:

Another significant change has been the move from Regional officers to Unitary Authority Development officers based in targeted UA's throughout Wales. There are currently six officers all of whom have gained partnership funding through the Local authorities and Sports Council for Wales Women and Girls fund.

These officers are:

Cardiff – Jackie Mudge	Carmarthen – Rae Ellis	Flintshire – Glyn Davies
Swansea – Lyndsay Cole	Vale of Glamorgan – Chris Marriott	
Wrexham – Claire Burrows		

There is an additional Partnership with Powys being negotiated, which will commence in September 2003. The work of the officers has reaped instant rewards with more than 70 new teams being established in year one alone. I would publicly like to thank the officers and the sports development department's line managers who work tirelessly to continue to development hockey within their area, I look forward to an even more successful year two. No pressure!

If you are interested in getting involved in hockey within one of these areas there are established hockey forums that meeting quarterly to implement plans in each of the areas. All support never mind how small can make a difference. Contact the Welsh Hockey Union for more details.

Club Development

This year has also seen significant changes within the girl's clubs structures with the introduction of regional girls U 13, U15 and "badgers" leagues. It is intended that these will continue next season and will be lead by WHU competition co-ordinators. Entries for the girls U 15 are due in September with the competition co-ordinators being:

South – Chloe Guy Mid – Sarah Powell North – Claire Burrows

In summary the new competitions for clubs this season are:

U 11 girls league – South commencing Oct. 2003

U 15 girls leagues – North, Mid and South commencing Oct. 2003

U 13 girls leagues – North East, North West, Mid, South East and South West commencing Apr. 2004

Badgers Leagues – North and South commencing Feb. 2004 and in Mid Sept. 2003

The co-operation with the already well-developed boys structure also needs mentioning. The boys clubs will now also move to play at U 11, 13, 15 and 18 for next season, this will ensure we are developing players within 2 year age groups. I must commend the South and North Wales boys committee on their forward thinking and look forward to working closely with both North and South Youth committees next season.

In addition the South Wales Boys Co-ordinator Chris Despres has also agreed to run a girls U 11 South league next season, which will cater for the increase numbers of girls coming through the system from Dragon Sports hockey leagues.

COLDS and CORES

The final element of change sees the restructuring of Centres of Local Development and Centres of Regional Excellence to ensure that talent identification of athletes is made as early on as possible. Standardised criteria for selection have been established and U 15 boys and girls Development Centres will take place in September and October this year. Again the change of age group is to ensure that all players have as many opportunities as possible to realise their potential.

I would like to finish by thanking a few key people who have tried to keep me sane during what has been a busy yet exciting time – Anne Ellis my line manager and Councillor, Abigail Wellsford my admin officer who will return to UWIC in September to complete her PGCE (I will miss her coffee!), the Sports Council for Wales and in particular Ian Blackburn for his support and patience and last by no means least all those volunteers who have attended meetings, run competitions and supported development throughout the year. Without your contribution hockey would fail to move forward. I feel very fortunate to be in the position of National Development Manager and will sign off with a quote from Lee Iacocca "Management is nothing more than motivating other people". So here's hoping for even more willing hockey enthusiasts keen to be part of an exciting time within Welsh hockey!

Debbie Austin

Cup Final Weekend

For those that don't look at the Welsh Hockey Union Handbook that closely please note that the Cup Final Weekend will be held a week later than usual on 8/9 May 2004.

Rule Changes

Don't forget the new rules that come into force on 1st September 2004. Full details are available from the FIH website at www.FIHockey.org

2003/2004 Cup Competitions

Details of the various Cup draws are available at www.welsh-hockey.co.uk

VETERANS HOCKEY

Men's Veterans Hockey is booming in Wales

But, we want ALL OF YOU - clubs and individuals – across Wales - involved

Stay active ◦ Get active ◦ Have fun ◦ Meet old friends

Would you like to play in inter-club games at 40+?

Are you interested in playing for the Welsh Veterans Social sides?

Are you interested in:

- Over 40s Internationals
- Over 50s Internationals
- Over 60s Internationals

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!!!!

You don't get old playing hockey, you only get old when you stop playing hockey!!

contact Bernie Wheeler at the_wheelers@talk21.com
or 01834-891218 (H) 01834-891443 (O)

Welsh Hockey Website

If you would like to see any information published on the WHU website please send it to

webmaster@welsh-hockey.co.uk

Full details of

Welsh International results
Contact information
Int. Playing Records (Men's)
Links
Anti-Doping Policy
Coaching courses
Youth Section

Calendar
Competitions
Registration forms
Development
Child Protection Policy
Bulletin Board
Free Classified adverts

Events
Club news
News section
Euro results
Umpiring
Circulars
Downloads

and many more can be found at the site as well as further developments being in the pipeline

It is your website for your use and is only as good as the information provided!!

Some of you may recall Stuart Bromley, most recently of Cardiff HC who, at my request, has forwarded the attached article, which goes to show that there is hockey available throughout the World! If anybody wishes to contact Stuart through e-mail please let me know.

*"My story starts at Sophia Gardens, Cardiff and the Welsh Cup final. A 2-1 win for **Cardiff HC**; the team of antipodeans!!? Having already accomplished the unthinkable and knocked out the mighty **Whitchurch HC**, we had to pinch ourselves to believe we've actually won it. We now have qualified to play European competition in some far-flung East European country. Rumours of Athens as an Olympic warm up competition were rife!*

However, my celebrations were mooted somewhat as I knew a bigger adventure awaited me. For six months I had to keep quiet in order to preserve my income. I had not been able to tell anyone at work or in the close-knit Cardiff community. My new life was about to begin.

August 2002. My 2-year-old son, Bayden, wife, Tamara and I arrived at Kuala Lumpur International Airport following a 2-week holiday in Penang. We had sold up totally; a 4-bedroom house in Barry into storage and sold. Our entire lives into 2 trunks! We were unsure what to expect or to take with us as space was of a premium. This, however, meant no hockey stick!

*Six months earlier I had secured a job at **Garden International School** in KL as a teacher of PE. This appointment was the opportunity of a lifetime but meant that although I had been part of an excellent and fun packed squad, the trip into Europe would not be for me. Hockey on the other side of the globe beckoned. But how do I get in, what are the teams? The answer lay in a shrinking world and modern technology.*

*Prior to departing Cardiff I had been investigating hockey in Malaysia through Chris Brewer at WHU and a number of Internet sites. Chris put me in contact with Iskandar Rashdan, an umpire he'd met sometime before. Iskandar was keen to meet me at my hotel, as their league programme was about to start. GREAT. "One season into another", I thought. The next six weeks were spent playing friendly games at **Pantai Hoki Stadium**, venue of the women's '98 Commonwealth final. This is an excellent water based pitch which you just don't get access to at home, playing outside of NHL.*

*The team were called **Malaysian International Shipping Corporation** (MISC HC ?!?!). One of Iskandar's neighbours and most of the squad worked for the company, as is the norm here.*

Hockey in Malaysia is structured very differently to the local club and six month seasons of the UK. Here teams are funded by corporate backing with employees and contracted players playing for teams in an intensive league system. There is not the same affiliation and loyalty for your club as at home. At the National League level there is no promotion / relegation from regional leagues as all teams play in one division for a corporate sponsor with the number of entrants varying each year. Players are contracted from state, development, sports school squads, the National Junior League or National Team (although these players tend to be away on tours and tournaments for most of the year) whilst the armed services enter their own sides each year.

*For the rest of us mere mortals there are leagues around most major cities in Malaysia although a few are state based where the state is sparsely populated or jungle clad. The structure in KL is well organised as you'd expect for a capital with 4 divisions played each year. However, these are played sequentially and not concurrently with KL Div. 4 first in January. The exact scheduling is also subject to some irregularity as the whole system is designed to fit around the national side to avoid conflicts; an interesting reversal of priorities to that at home. Promotion and relegation issues do run annually although sides can still 'apply' to join higher / lower divisions as with the league side I am 'pre-seasoning' with at the moment, **PricewaterhouseCoopers** (PWC). PWC last year won KL Div 2 and have the right to play in Div. 1 this year (around Nov – Dec.) although the coach is yet unsure whether to take this 'option' and go for KL Div. 2 (Aug – Sept) again as many of his young players 'attracted' the attention of 'bigger' franchises in Div 1, the promise of working with national coaches and the selection 'advantage' this brings no doubt affecting their moves.*

The disadvantage of this set-up, as I experienced, is that the league programme is intensive and squashed into approx. six weeks of weekday evening games, usually two a week with a six – twelve week build up of warm up and selection friendly games for interested players. You may only play in one division a year as passport numbers and contracts are signed, so once you've stepped onto the field for a league game you are committed for the year.

Therefore the rest of the year tends to go to waste. This I found hard to get used to. Indeed until recently I hadn't picked my stick up for six months let alone fire it up in anger!!!

*My saviour came in the shape of the **Royal Selangor Sports Club**. This is a private club with Tennis, Rugby, Cricket, Football etc. sections and a very expat type institution. They play friendly fixtures all year round twice a week, tour to Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Thailand etc. and have a very useful league side.*

*This seemed perfect and so with support of a teaching colleague (Tennis player) I submitted an application to join. After some four months we finally had been 'approved' and I ventured down to the **Tun Razak Hoki Stadium** 5 minutes from my house. The pitch here has just been re-laid and is a joy to play on with wide areas of the sideline to warm up on, international seating and a magnificent mosque as a backdrop. No more abrasive wind swept school sand based pitches for me, just hot, humid and a spectacular water base pitch.*

*As previously mentioned I am now approaching 'pre season' for KL 1 or 2 with PWC and playing 'socially' (Tiger beers are always available pitch side after the game from a cooler filled with ice, reminiscent of being back at University) for **Royal Selangor** where enjoying yourself is more important than performance. All this provides me with the opportunity to play up to three times a week on international standard pitches in warm weather and excellent venues.*

Finally if this is not enough to think Hockey is alive in Malaysia but I only have to pick up either of the countries best two selling newspapers and hockey, specifically the Men's National League and Milo / Admiral sponsored Junior National League, to find in depth analysis and match coverage, on any day of the week!

Stuart Bromley

Sponsors & Corporate Supporters Club

Without doubt a lot of what the WHU achieves is through the continued generous support of its sponsors and Corporate Supporters Club.

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I would like to take this opportunity of thanking each of our sponsors and supporters and would ask that whenever possible you return their support by utilising their services.

UMPIRE SNIPPETS

The summer has been one continuous hockey season for a number of umpires and technical officers. Since the beginning of May there have been a number of senior international matches, international youth tournaments, Junior Academy international matches, a mixed international match, tournaments in Canada, Prague and Cardiff and European club competitions. In total Wales provided a total of twenty umpires and technical officials to these events. Who said that the summer was out of season??

The 2004 Rules of Hockey book will be available in early October for implementation of the new rules for International events from 1st January 2004. However the FIH has allowed each National Associations to decide when these new rules shall be introduced in their country. The WHUA has recommended that as most of the changes relate to improved wording Wales should implement the new rules with immediate affect from 1st September 2003 for all hockey played in Wales under the jurisdiction of the WHU. The only real changes relate to the following:

1. The lifted ball is now considered only on danger over the entire pitch including the ball going into the circle;
2. The bully will now be completed when the sticks touch once;
3. The one step rule by the striker at penalty strokes has been removed and now reads that the striker must be behind the ball and within playing distance but the action of striking the ball is exactly the same as previous with the ball being flicked with no drag flicks being allowed;
4. The umpire at a stroke does not need to ask both players if they are ready but now blows when both goalkeeper and striker are in position.

The shape of the stick has been slightly amended as now the maximum bow on a stick when laid down with the playing side on the ground must not be greater than 50mm. The mandatory experiments introduced in January 2003 when the ball need not be stopped before the first shot at goal at a penalty corner and a defender using their stick at any height safely to protect their goal will continue.

Following the success of being the UK's distributor of the rulebooks in 2002/03 the FIH has requested that we continue to undertake this work. Therefore if you require a rulebook please contact Colin Crayford, Chair of the WHUA, who is acting as the UK distributor of the rulebooks again this year. Colin can be contacted on either Tel: 01446 746611 or by email at: colin@crayford.net but please wait until early October before contacting him and do not wait until December as he is going away for a few weeks around Christmas. The FIH website contains additional information and answers to frequently asked questions on the rules for both outdoor and indoor for those interested. The web site address is: www.FIHockey.org and it is being continually expanded and updated. Also look at the WHU website where the WHUA has a section dealing with umpiring matters.

In an effort to support umpiring two new awards have been introduced this season. The Dragon Award will be available for young people up to the age of 13 years, which will train them to umpire Mini/Dragon Sport hockey and the Foundation Award for those interested in becoming an umpire. This award will train umpires from 14 years how to umpire mini and club games. Please contact your local WHUA representative who will be able to assist you but failing that contact Colin Crayford or Carolyn Llewellyn Tel: 02920 882696 for more details of these new exciting awards. Requests can also be forwarded via your Unitary Authority Local Development Officers and full details will also be available on the WHU website at www.welsh-hockey.co.uk

Well, it is now only a few weeks to the start of another season and another plea to clubs, parents, and teachers to get involved and start providing umpires or try it yourself. There is someone near to you who will assist you in getting the right advice. All leagues in Wales are now getting desperately short of umpires. If you would like to offer your services and join the happy bunch please contact your Regional WHUA Secretary or Colin or Carolyn who will be delighted to point you in the right direction.

Colin Crayford
Chair WHUA

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE DIRECTORS REPORT

Olympic glory, gold medals, Athens 2004. This conjures up all sorts of thoughts. For some Welsh hockey players this could be reality. Sarah and Michelle Thomas (not related) have already played for Great Britain in May this year on a tour to South Africa. One month later, George Harris made his GB debut in Canada. Several others including Rhys Joyce, Simon Organ, Paul Edwards and Graeme Egan are also in contention. Sadly for last years Welsh Captain, Zac Jones a knee injury is preventing him from proving his worth.

Both Olympic training squads will be revealed after the European Cup at which our Welsh Women will be in competing in Barcelona from 1 – 15 September. For the men their non-appearance in Barcelona has made it harder to stake a claim for Olympic representation, however both Men's and Women's GB team leaders were in Cardiff for the Celtic Cup.

The Celtic Cup proved very successful for the Women, grabbing the scalps of France and Scotland and narrowly loosing to Ireland 2 -1 on the first day. This is a huge improvement on last year when they lost every game. The senior women under the expert guidance of Head Coach Margaret Medlow are looking extremely athletic and some quite rightly would say "lean and mean". Their three first round wins in a tournament in Canada against class opposition means they are a force to be reckoned with and we await their results in Barcelona with eager anticipation.

The men showed their lack of match practice letting in crucial goals as the matches wore on. However the initiating of 8 new caps that are all athletic and show good basics means our future is in good hands.

The results of our U21 Men and Women whilst at the Junior Celtic Cup held in Dublin were indifferent to say the least. It was a huge disappointment for our U21 women who failed to qualify for the 'A' division after replaying the rained out tournament this year in Prague. However several new players were "blooded" and Head Coach Pam Richards and her management team certainly used every medium available in pre match preparation and post match debriefs to try and outsmart their opponents.

Biggest movers this year were the U18 Girls and Boys under Head Coaches Chris Marriott and Ian Ord who improved on last year's rankings. The girls finished 4th and missed out on a medal by one goal. Our boys in Poland learned a big lesson by "counting their chickens" against Switzerland. In a match they should have won to take them into the medal round they lost 2-1, after leading 1 nil with 8 minutes to go. They punished the Czechs to take 5th place.

So, the good, the bad and the inspirational!

The good; a huge improvement in fitness, nutrition and core skills. (Forget the fries!!)

The bad; not converting enough penalty corners (practice does make perfect)

The inspirational; Team leaders having complete faith in the youngsters and the senior pros not taking anything for granted and sharing their knowledge

C'mon the girls in Barcelona – you've done all the hard work!!

Alan Lints

Safety on and around the pitch

On a number of occasions comments have been received regarding the danger to leisure centre staff when players continue to warm up using sticks and balls when the staff are still clearing away football goals, watering hoses etc.

This is obviously of great concern as a continuation may result in hockey being banned from the facilities concerned. Please make certain that before you start warming up anybody not involved has vacated the playing area.

YOUTH REPORT

Another busy year, starting with a successful FIH World Youth Day in October with a skills circuit and 7 a side matches, the U11 were able to play with the best when playing against the Welsh Senior Academy. The WHU continued to support the Youth of Wales and with the appointment of Debbie Austin (National Development Manager) projects commenced included the National Youth Conference in April. 11 young people met in WIS, Cardiff and undertook many different workshops including, umpiring, Community Chest information, Dagon Sports, junior club development... Definitely a successful project and in producing 11 new youth activators we are working for this project to become an annual event with youth activators at different levels – watch this space! The activators were immediately sent out to work taking part in Dragon sport for the summer term – coaching and umpiring – everyone had fun with their own teams of 7-11 year olds and at times the coaches got more competitive than the players and had to be reminded that this tournament was focused on development!!!

To keep us busy the next event was the FIH Youth Marathon which lasted for a whole weekend in May with the theme of 'Exchange' events being held all over the world. Wales played their part by firstly attending a youth event in Cannock with England learning from their neighbours Dan Jones, Sally Raitt and Debbie Austin. Continuing with the theme of exchange we conducted skills circuits gathered from all the home nations on the Sunday with Dragon sport players, youth promoters and parents. Our efforts were rewarded by FIH for the overall 'best World exchange' with us receiving a new digital camera as a prize.

The Youth Forum have met on the Internet throughout the year and will be looking to have their first physical meeting before Christmas when we will be looking to focus on two projects annually. To conclude this season the youth made an equipment collection at the Senior Celtic Cup and will be forwarding these onto Uganda to help with their out reach project into isolated communities. Sally Raitt and Andrew Seimann were the lucky activators chosen to attend the 2nd World Hockey Festival in Amsterdam (the first being in Hobart in 2001), which ran along side the Men's Champions Trophy. Wales were well represented as in addition to the activators, myself, Ann Ellis and Alan Lints also attended. Both activators had to make presentations to the group of 40 young people from over 25 countries and although neither was chosen for the final both did Wales proud. The week was not only about making presentations but was also about learning from the workshops conducted. We started with a workshop on how to organise a hockey camp run by the Bovelanders brothers who have organised camps all over Holland. Next we had Norman Hughes (FIH Continental Dev. Officer) and our very own Alan Lints who focused on umpiring and coaching, finishing the session with us organising our own 5-a-side tournament. After a day's break sight seeing it was back to work with marketing and communications. David Burt (FIH) managed to fit us in and we promoted all aspects of an imaginary tournament to be held in 2004 (FIH Youth World Cup). We followed this with a discussion on Junior Club development and ended the day with a behind the scenes view of the Champions Trophy with the Vice President of the Organising committee. I presented the last of the workshops with an insight into the FIH Youth Panel and invited all promoters to become a member. The week ended with the crowning of the new World Youth Hockey Promoter (a title passed on from myself) who is Carien Roberts from South Africa.

As you can see we are working hard and wish to continue. The Pen Pal project is still running and is open to all who wish to be involved and linked to people all over the world. If you or someone you know could make an effective youth activator (must but outward thinking), check out the new info on WHU website - <http://www.welsh-hockey.co.uk/whuyouth.htm>

Bethan Walsh (bethan_hockey@lycos.co.uk)

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