

TEAMtalk

TEAMtalk SPECIAL - JUNE 2007

Welcome to this TEAMtalk Special.

Scottish Rugby is sending club members this special edition of the TEAMtalk electronic newsletter to inform you of the issues being raised at the forthcoming AGM and as a ticket reminder for the Bank of Scotland Corporate August Tests. Please pass this communication on to as many of your members as possible.

BANK OF SCOTLAND CORPORATE AUGUST TESTS

'Ring fenced' seats are being held for Scottish rugby clubs until 7 July for both the matches against Ireland on 11 August (kick off 2.30pm) and South Africa on 25 August (kick off 5.00pm). Don't forget - clubs are also entitled to commission of 25% on sales. These 'ring fenced' seats will be released after 7 July, however clubs can still apply for tickets up to 31 July.

SCOTTISH RUGBY UNION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2007, Friday 29 June, Murrayfield Stadium, 5.30pm

The 2007 AGM will see the election of a new President to replace Andy Irvine (who has served the maximum two terms) and will also consider nine motions in total. The meeting will not consider the annual Financial Statements nor re-appoint the Auditor as these matters will be included within a separate Financial general meeting to be held on 25 August.

THE PRESIDENT

There are three candidates for the role of President: Peter Brown (Gala), George Jack (Leith) and Jim Stevenson (Cambuslang). The election will take place on the floor of the AGM by way of a secret ballot.

AGM MOTIONS

The motions to be considered at the AGM are:

- Motion 1: Vice President of the Union
- Motion 2: SRU Bye-Laws
- Motion 3: Replacements
- Motion 4: Replacements in Premier 1 League Matches
- Motion 5: Player Eligibility
- Motion 6: Regionalisation of Cup Competition
- Motion 7: Composition of Championship Committee
- Motion 8: Ticket Commission
- Motion 9: National Competitions Rules: Regional Competitions

MOTIONS

1 Vice President of the Union

Proposed by West of Scotland FC and seconded by Cambuslang RC

Rationale

1 At the time of major changes being made in the governance structure of the SRU two years ago it was recognised that there would be a requirement for the structure to evolve in the light of experience. Many of the electorate in the Scottish Rugby constituency now realise that the burden of the role of President needs to be shared. The mammoth task of representing our Union, so ably carried out by Andy Irvine over the last two years, could in itself be a discouragement to the right calibre of candidate deciding to put his name in the ring.

2 All rugby club Presidents or Chairmen in Scotland have at least one Vice President to support them. This spreads a load of management and enables the club to be represented on all occasions required. Why should our Union's governance be different?

3 The "buggins turn" would not necessarily apply in this case as the Vice President would have to put his name forward for election with other candidates after the stepping down of the retiring President. He would have the advantage over other candidates of having been able to prove his worth, but would also have the disadvantage of retribution for perceived failure.

Rob Flockhart, Chairman of the independent Standing Working Party on the Bye-Laws and Governance commented: "The role of Vice President was considered and deemed unnecessary by the Dunlop Working Party on Governance. It was reviewed by the Standing Working Party which considered that the Dunlop Report's view remained the correct one.

"Both Working Parties shared the view that the post of Vice President is not necessary and could only serve to increase the size of the Scottish Rugby Council towards that of the former General Committee. That would not be desirable. The Standing Working Party believes it imperative that it is made clear to all clubs and the other Stakeholders in Scottish rugby that the President can and should be supported by the Chairman of the Council, the Vice Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Board."

2 SRU Bye-Laws

Proposed by Allan Munro, Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Board and Andy Irvine, Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Council and President.

Rationale

In accordance with the recommendations of the Second Governance Working Party, a review of the current Bye-Laws has been conducted by the Standing Working Party on Bye-Laws and Governance established thereunder. The Board and Council have accepted a recommendation from the Working Party and propose them to the clubs to also accept and approve. Clubs have been provided with the full details of the recommendations.

SRU Secretary Graham Ireland commented: "From time to time it is important to review the Bye-Laws in the context of the changes to our game. We are fortunate that under the new governance system we have the Standing Working party to undertake this task. The Scottish Rugby Board was happy to accept the recommendations of the Standing Working party under Rob Flockhart's chairmanship."

3 Replacements

Proposed by Andy Irvine, Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Council and President, and Allan Munro, Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Board.

Rationale

Further to representations received from a number of club for a, it is believed that restrictions regarding the number of replacements would be better covered within the rules of the specific competitions. Arguments have been put forward from clubs within the lower levels of the game, which may only field one fifteen, to the effect that restricting the number of replacements prevents players from getting a game and can lose them from rugby. Equally, clubs at the top end argue that restrictions on the number of replacements limit the flexibility open to coaches to improve standards of rugby and spectator interest. At other levels there is a case for restricting the number in order to protect second and third XV rugby. Allowing flexibility up to a maximum of seven would allow the needs of specific tiers of the game to be taken into account.

Richard McGhee, the SRU Rugby Services Manager, added: "The ultimate aim of this Motion is to allow more people to play the game. If a club only has enough players to field one fifteen then we should allow as many replacements as possible so that more players get at least part of a game. The last thing we want, however, is for a club which could field two fifteens to nominate a first squad of 22 and leave 8 or more players without a game at all. Circumstances are different at the various levels of the game and this Motion will simply allow the flexibility to recognise these differences."

4 Replacements in Premier 1 League Matches

Proposed by Watsonian FC and seconded by Heriot's.

Motion

"To permit a minimum of four and a maximum of five substitutes in all Premier 1 League matches. In line with IRB Law 3 there must be five players in the nineteen or twenty selected who can play in the front row."

Rationale

Safety - Currently we have four substitutes but must have five front row players in a squad of nineteen. Teams are nominating players to cover more than one position and in a number of cases the individual is not a regular front row player - this is a very technical area of the game and the safety aspect is not only of that individual but of the other five in the front row at the scrum.

Allows the coaches to have a greater choice in their selection for games - for example, allowing a specialist scrum half which is unlikely with the restriction of only four substitutes;

As we are trying to present a game at the highest level for the players as well as the spectators, games will be less likely to be affected by an injured player;

Allows a better chance to rotate players and give them a rest while keeping the game at a high intensity;

As we are in the game to develop players, it allows coaches flexibility to try a younger player out at a higher level for a period without a detrimental effect to the overall team;

If we have pro and academy players available to play it will also help in keeping some of the club players motivated who may have been dropped and permit requests from pro team coaches for some players to play part of a game only.

Morris Duncan, President of Watsonian FC added: "This is a matter that has been discussed at the Premier One forum and following consultation amongst the Premier One clubs, we believe that having this number of players will be important for all involved and would not only benefit the individuals who would gain more game time but would also help keep the squad together in the longer term and help promote morale within the clubs."

5 Player Eligibility

Proposed by Andy Irvine, Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Council and President and Allan Munro Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Board.

Rationale

With the development of EU Law and following the Bosman and Kolpak rulings, the number of individuals against whom it is legitimate to discriminate by classing them as 'non-European' is decreasing. It is also becoming more burdensome for clubs to administer the increasingly complicated eligibility rules required by this restriction, particularly at lower levels of the game where any non-European players are unlikely to be professional rugby players. The encouragement of 'home grown'/Scottish qualified talent could be better achieved by proactive means e.g. targeted distribution of development funding, than by restrictive means such as this. Should clubs feel that there is still a need for restrictions at higher levels of the game, these can be incorporated into the competition specific Regulations. It is proposed that the situation be monitored during season 2007-08 and reviewed at the end of the season to establish whether there is a need for restrictions at any level of the club game.

Richard McGhee, the SRU Rugby Services Manager, added: "It could be argued that the continuation of overseas player quotas may have relevance in the professional game, but many feel that quotas in the community game are no longer necessary and are potentially discriminatory. As a game our rules have to reflect changes in European legislation, hence the need for change."

6 Regionalisation of Cup Competition

Proposed by Andy Irvine, Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Council and President and Allan Munro Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Board.

Rationale

The Cup competitions have too often created circumstances in which one club travels the length and breadth of the country only to be on the wrong end of a mismatch. Regionalising the Cup Competitions would limit unnecessary travel time and cost while creating the opportunity for more local derbies and local spectator interest, allowing clubs to generate increased income. The motion proposes four regional cup competitions with the winners of each competition coming together to play the semi finals of the National Cup competition.

Richard McGhee, who acts as Secretary to the Championship Committee, added: "Due to the increase in the number of League matches, the Cup competitions are being played increasingly during the Six Nations period in the season. Playing these games on a more local basis allows the opportunity for clubs to organise fixtures around 6 Nations matches and create more of an occasion in their clubhouses."

Amendment to Motion 6

Proposed by Glasgow Hawks, seconded by Dundee HSFP

Rationale

We agree with the original motion that early rounds of the Cup in particular have created circumstances in which one club travels extensively only to be mismatched with the opposition. Regionalising the early stages of the competitions would overcome this problem - at least in terms of reducing travel time and expenses.

We have attempted to meet the objectives of reducing travel and expense for clubs in the early stages without adversely affecting the Cup as a truly national competition.

In particular we do not accept a regional basis for the later stages of the Cup that would prevent any Premiership club being drawn against any other. If Motion 6(b) is passed we would face a situation next season where –

- No two clubs from the same region could contest the semi-final or final of the top national Cup competition.
- Each region would be guaranteed a Cup semi-finalist regardless of the number or ability of the clubs in that geographic area.

The existing motion is split into two separate parts but these are really two distinct alternatives for next season. If (a) is passed then (b) may also be passed even if it had overall less support than (a).

If (a) is defeated then (b) must be withdrawn which is liable to confuse clubs both for and against the idea.

Notes

The Championship Committee will be responsible for determining how the regional draws are arranged and which clubs play in which area. They may also further divide the regions into smaller geographic areas where this is appropriate to minimize travel. (i.e. in the earlier rounds). In broad terms the amended proposal would mean the following:-

The National Cup open to all Clubs in Premier, National and Regional Leagues and is played at a regional level until the last 64. At this stage the Premier League Clubs enter the competition (national round 1) where they are joined by the regional qualifiers. The regional qualifiers are all seeded to have a home draw.

The 32 losing teams in national round 1 of the Cup go into round 1 of The Shield Competition. The clubs losing out at the final regional stage enter The Bowl (Round 1). The draws for Rounds 1– 4 (the semi-final stage) will be done on a regional basis as far as possible.

The Plate competition will be open to clubs failing to qualify for the Bowl, Shield or Cup. It will be played on a regional basis until the semi-final stage.

7 Composition of Championship Committee

Proposed by Jed-Forest RFC, seconded by Hillhead / Jordanhill RFC, West of Scotland FC and Aberdeen Grammar Rugby.

Rationale

The reason for the Motion is to allow the Premier 2 Forum and the Premier 3 Forum each to have a representative on the Championship Committee. Currently the two for a together elect one representative, whereas each of the five other similar groupings has one representative for the Championship Committee - the Premier 1 Forum, the National League Forum, and each of the three Regional League constituencies.

8 Ticket Commission

Proposed by Allan Munro, Chairman of the Scottish Rugby Board.

Rationale

Further to an AGM decision some years ago, the SRU currently pays member clubs a flat rate ticket sales commission of 5% irrespective of the opposition or demand for tickets. It is proposed that this decision be amended to enable the Scottish Rugby Board to determine the level of ticket commission payable on a game-by-game basis. In practical terms this may mean that commission will be payable at a much higher rate in respect of the less popular internationals and a lower rate in respect of the most popular games.

9 National Competition Rules: Regional Competitions

Proposed by Aberdeenshire RFC and seconded by Alloa RFC.

Rationale

To provide greater local autonomy to the Regional Competitions Committees.

Motions 1, 2 and 8 will require a vote of two thirds of those present and entitled to vote to be passed. The other votes will be on a simple majority.

A full note of all motions, amendments and admission cards have been sent to club officials.

BULLETIN BOARD

TEAMtalk wants to include your club news from around the country, all sorts of helpful news from Murrayfield, the latest from the Scottish Hydro Electric Club of the Month Awards, what's happening in the community game through to elite rugby, including schools, university and women's rugby but please remember - this is your *TEAMtalk*, so your regular contributions are what makes it a success. So why not help shape *TEAMtalk* right now by getting in touch?

All you need to do is e-mail us at TEAMtalk@sru.org.uk with your contributions, or, if you prefer, write to *TEAMtalk* at the SRU Communications Department, Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh EH12 5PJ.

We look forward to hearing from you.