



FENCING
VICTORIA

Fencing Victoria Advisory Council Meeting

Date and time: Tuesday the 17th September, 2019; 7:00pm, State Fencing Centre Nth Melbourne.

Apologies: Harry Huang (Tizona FC); Pieter Leeuwenburgh (VFA), Helen Smith (Dragons FC)

Attending: Frank Barret (Phoenix FC), Angela Dobson-Block (Phoenix FC), Jenny Shaw (Whitehorse Chevaliers), David Hubbard (Swordfighters) Michelle Bolwell (MFC), Monika Simon (MFC) Norbert Riedl (Swordfighters), Julie Burbidge (MFC, Secretary FV), Kayt Spano (President FV)

Conflicts of interest to note for this meeting: none advised as at 10 September

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Issues with AFF Coach Accreditation requirements and process (proposed by Phoenix FC)

Discussion began with recognition of the issues/difficulties experienced this year with the process for accreditation. Angela suggested more variety is needed in the activities/options available to meet criteria for accreditation. The current activities or choices available are also geared towards the elite athlete/coaching level; the AFF criteria needs to be weighted more towards general coaches at state/club level. Angela and Kayt both emphasised that the largest proportion of national coaches in Victoria; that Victoria is also the State with the largest fencing community; that Victoria needs therefore to exert that influence in the AFF to bring balance to the coach accreditation criteria and process. so, it affects Vic coaches). Norbert asked for examples of how the variety of activity could be expanded or what changes are sought. Angela gave some examples:

- rebalance the point value for first aid certification which currently isn't weighted very highly but requires maintenance by the coach (used to be 4 yearly, now annual);
- assign recognition value for coaches who are also actively competing fencers: this should count towards recognitions of a coach's currency of knowledge/skills.
- Assign value for coaches who also hold a position in club administration and management, on the basis that AFF recognises equivalent training or activities undertaken by coaches in their workplace (ie beyond coaching fencing) so the role of a coach in sustaining a club, in addition to their coaching, warrants recognition, especially as directly related to sustaining fencing in the club and community.

AFF needs to give greater recognition of the role of the coach in clubs, not just focus on activities or involvement in the high-performance programs. The accreditation also needs to be achievable each year for regular level 1 club coaches, not just for those coaches involved in high performance programs.

Angela noted the AFF has been largely unresponsive when asked about what more can be done to encourage level 1 coaches to maintain or expand their accreditation.

Kayt stated these issues around accreditation are on the agenda for the next AFF presidents' forum meeting, 16-17 November, and pledged to raise these points of discussion in that forum.

Kayt asked for a written list to be sent to her in advance of the forum (by Melbourne Cup day).

Norbert also noted that it is timely to raise this matter now with the AFF given the majority of new members on the AFF board.

Angela further queried the role of the State Development Manager in the process as well: sought clarification on what the SDM is doing to support Victorian level 1 coaches. Kayt noted the SDM role is 1 of 2 roles within FV (and now managed independently of AFF); that a new contract for the SDM role, with a revised focus was being finalised for implementation in 2020.

2. Changes to the Level 1 coaching course

As part of efforts to improve the Level 1 coaching course, a proposal was put to the meeting that current level 1 coaches be invited to work with trainee coaches to assist these for a few hours (throughout the year) and, in addition, to have the trainee work with a level 1 coach, away from their normal supervising coach, for 5 hours. This is currently not happening. Neil Hick has been consulted and recommends the proposed approach. There are currently a large number of trainee coaches (maybe as many as 30) who could benefit from this approach.

3. Reviewing and updating the FV Star Club system

The revised draft/working document for the FV Star Club system was presented at the meeting and feedback sought on all aspects, but especially the benefits of being a star club.

Kayt asked what rewards and benefits are valuable to clubs: Frank noted the insurance and half price club affiliation as major benefit and of value.

Kayt suggested the subsidy may be remodelled to operate in a similar way to the AFF project funding, especially if a club activity for which funding is sought will be directly aimed at getting fencers started or integrating new members.

Kayt also suggested FV can also assist clubs to apply for external funding grants. Jenny Shaw mentioned a grant Whitehorse had secured to pay for Lisa L to coach at a school but needed assistance to identify a suitable school. Kayt suggested Pieter L can broker coaching arrangements with school.

Clubs are asked to provide feedback on the revised Start Club document to the FV Secretary within the next 2 months.

Michelle raised a related issue regarding improving conversion of the school's league fencers into club fencers and questioned why this has been so difficult to achieve.

Angela pointed to the obligatory character of the school programs and their seasonal nature to explain why so few schools' league fencers go on to join a club and continue fencing.

Kayt noted that a scholarship initiative was tried in 2019 and that this has brought some increase in continuity from school to club involvement. The connection to clubs has also been spruiked regularly at schools' competitions by Jasper to encourage school participants to pursue participation further at club level. Kayt noted that FV doesn't have direct role in the organisation of the schools' league but only contact through the coaches. (Monica queried which coaches are involved and these were confirmed as Pieter L, Ned Fitzgerald, Imogen, Aleksey, Tim L, Laura Goodin and Lisa Lagergren) Kayt also noted that not all schools in the league receive coaching.

The meeting also discussed the relative numbers of foil and épée in schools competitions, noting a preponderance of épéeists, and the need for a larger venue for competitions. Kayt and Norbert responded that FV and Sports and Recreation Victoria are in discussions to secure a larger venue.

Kayt reiterated FV's willingness to receive any ideas on how to improve conversion rates from the school fencing participants into club fencing.

4. Request for club summary 'blurb' for FV website

Kayt relayed the request from Robyn Hunter to receive a 'blurb' from each club to be put on the FV website. Robyn requires these by the end of the year if not sooner.

5. Volunteer arrangements for FV events

The meeting discussed the ongoing difficulties in securing adequate volunteers to run events.

David Hubbard suggested FV could implement a pro-rata or quota system for clubs to provide members as volunteers for events, in similar manner to the provision of referees. Recruiting parents of fencers was also raised as an option but Jenny Shaw reminded the meeting of the difficulties inherent in this method as parents are generally 'time poor'. Kayt highlighted the implementation of the new online volunteering system set up by Deb Gough had worked reasonably well to enable clearer task allocation and the capacity for a volunteer to nominate for set hours of availability. However, the system has faltered a little and arrangements are still largely being left to Kayt or others to recruit and direct volunteers on tasks and times.

Monica suggested FV could research and identify a suitable volunteering community organisation to assist and Kayt and the meeting thought this a good idea.

David Hubbard queried whether the need to hold a working with children check was acting as a deterrent to prospective volunteers but Kayt reiterated the need for FV to uphold its WWCC policy and ensure that volunteers involved in events with children complied with FV policy and State laws on maintaining a current WWCC.

6. Frequency of FV Advisory Council meetings in the year

The meeting considered whether there should be more or fewer Advisory Council meetings in the 12 months between FV AGMs (May to May each year). Most thought it would be advantageous to hold more but recognised this was unlikely due to the difficulty in scheduling the meetings with a viable attendance; 3 - 4 meetings still seems to be the optimal number (including the AGM as one of these). As 4 clubs and FV executive members were represented at this Advisory Council meeting the meeting had the option to revise the number of meetings.

Kayt proposed December 2nd as the date for the next Advisory Council meeting and this was accepted; with a further meeting to be held in February prior to the Junior National Championships and the Arnold Classic.

7. Any other business:

Kayt reported on preparations for the Arnold Classic (20-22 March 2020) and the benefits this event brings in raising the profile of Victorian and national fencing to a wide and diverse audience. Monica queried whether the Arnold Classic had resulted in new members joining fencing; Kayt responded that this isn't known and is difficult to quantify. Kayt proposes to invite members of the Veterans category in particular to participate in the fencing events.

Kayt reported on a 'sister club' program being established between certain South Australian fencing clubs and Victorian fencing clubs.

Kayt advised that the Club Challenge competition dates had to be rescheduled due to North Melbourne informing FV that the downstairs area at the State Fencing Centre will no longer be available on the original dates as planned. A tentative new date is for 8 December; confirmation of this will be sent out by FV Communications.

Monica asked that the 2020 be finalised and released as soon as possible; Kayt indicated the calendar would be available imminently and noted also that the only national competition currently scheduled for Melbourne was the 2020 Junior Nationals.

Angela sought confirmation about what tasks or paperwork clubs needed to complete for 2020. Kayt highlighted the Play by the Rules Member Protection online course to be completed as a requirement for 2020; Angela asked for the links to the course to be sent out or made available on the FV website.

The meeting closed at approximately 8.30pm.