

THE BRITISH JUDO ASSOCIATION

Report on the Open Forum Meeting Saturday, 19th October 2002 – The Thistle Hotel, Hagley Road, Birmingham

1. Welcome by BJA Chairman

Mr. Densign White opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the first Open Forum. He announced that the Board of Directors had proposed one Resolution which was going to be withdrawn, this being the resolution regarding the Dan grades. Mr. White stated that the Association was going to review the Dan grade situation and had decided to look at some specific points before bringing them into the AGM.

(Resolution – Proposed by the Board of Directors

- a. *The Board of Directors proposes that the normal maximum number of non-competitive promotions within the Dan grade structure is restricted to three.*

In exceptional cases, a fourth or subsequent non-competitive promotion may be granted by the Board of Directors for;

1. *World Class Status as an individual competitor*
2. *World Class Status as a Coach / Manager*
3. *Outstanding contribution and distinguished service)*

Mr. White gave a short presentation on the proposed reviews of the BJA structure and stated that the Open Forum will give the opportunity for members to provide input and that if this is successful, it will take place at different venues at different times throughout the year. The whole project will take at least half a year and if anyone had anything to contribute they should feel free to write to Mr. Densign White and the Chief Executive, Mr. Scott McCarthy. Mr. White continued that the Association needs to make changes and adapt to the changing environment to attract new and younger members and to become more attractive to the existing members. We, no doubt, have structural areas to address. The Association was not afraid to tackle difficult situations and will make decisions that are hopefully to the best future interests of the BJA.

The focal areas to be concentrated on are:

Memorandum of Articles
Associated Bodies e.g. BJC, BJSA
Financial Stability

Memorandum and Articles and Bye-Laws are currently very weak which do not reflect the BJA 2002 situation. This has been identified by the Little John Fraser Report and Solicitors. Little John Fraser who audited the BJA found there were some serious weakness in the way the Association has been managed. Over the summer a lot of work has been done to try and re-write the simple documentation. In the end, Company solicitors advised to start again and to write a new constitution for the Association.

The result of the changes will be incorporated with the Memorandum and Articles and placed before an Extraordinary General Meeting next year.

The Board of Directors, Chairman and other Directors elected. This format might not be most effective. Issues with affiliated bodies, political issues to be addressed also. This will be addressed on a priority basis looking at various models and will try and find one that matches the BJA. One of the ideas being discussed is a larger more representative Board. We have an Elected body and also a Management unit.

The Staff 6 Directors (High Performance, Development etc), Chief Executive appointed to be more professional to carry out public relations, fund raising activities and coaching and these are urgent matters. Current structure needs to be reviewed carefully. We will need widespread support to continue this review and this was also highlighted in the Little John Fraser report. Some areas are very well off, whereas the Association is short of cash and we still have continue to pay areas a rebate.

Financial Situation There is the need to address this area in the future. We need to reach a single grade where we can all move forward from. We have some financial issues – reserves are very low and have been low for many years. We are not in a good position to absorb any surplus expenditure and although we get money from the UK Sport Council, the money is to support the elite. Donald Steel has implemented strict financial controls but BJA needs to become independent from the Sports Council. We have to find other ways to generate income from the Association to grow.

All these areas need to be looked at and the Board plans to implement these changes immediately and hope to finish by March 2003. We will draw support from legal advice and also support from a wide range of individuals.

Mr. White then opened a Question and Answers session.

Finance

Mr. John Lawrinson asked how much debt were we in?

Mr. White replied that we did not have any reserves. Mr. Scott McCarthy said we owed some money to the English Areas of about £50-70,000 which will be paid off over a number of years.

Web Site Development/Communications

Mr. Dave Julian said that there was nothing on the Worldwide Web relating to the Association.

Mr. White stated that this was being prepared and that the web site needs to attract young people, specifically the 16 year olds. We are encouraging people to use website by updating it regularly, make it more attractive and in doing so hopefully spend the large sum of money (approx £100,000 per year) spent on postage, stationery and printing elsewhere.

Alan Stanbra stated that he had great difficulty trying to get through to head office on the telephon for 2 weeks to get in touch with the office and he highlighted the fact that people who have no computer had no choice but to use the phone.

Mr. White said there was a limited number of staff who were working very hard and that this issued will need to be addressed.

Eddie Awford – stated that he had a lot of dealings with head office and had had no problems with the telephone system he felt that the problem was with the person using the phone. The calls are always dealt with very professionally.

Junior National Championship

Bill Kelly asked why the age group A & E banding at the National Junior Championships had been changed?

Mr Limrick (National Competitions Commission) We have not taken it out, there is still an event in the band. We have separated from Crystal Palace to take of the pressure on the team. There are reasons for downsizing the event. The venue ran out of food, they could not cope with the volume of food required, the number of volunteers has reduced, causing shortage of resource and until BJA has a better funds we cannot afford a bigger venue.

John O'Brien said the concept of idea of venue is excellent but he would hope that the Association is not as short of money for postage. He said one of the complaints for years is that people's perception of Judo is that we go to the tournament, all we see is a lot of people in white and blue suits and unless we spend some money in that area, competition is not a mainstay of judo.

Chris Eldsale – with regard to the moving of Band A, I wrote and asked for the reason behind it to be explained. The reasons given here are not the same as my response from Mr Limrick.

Mr Limrick replied: The commission is concerned that competitors are taking a considerable number of time to go home. We have looked at various suggestions for reducing the time of competitions

such as changing length of competition from 5 – 3 minutes but it is also felt that reducing contents time will not actually demonstrate value for money.

Mr Leigh Davies said the thrill for the juniors competing at the Nationals is being part of a national event. Some of our children will always have long distances to travel those from Scotland for instance. By splitting the event all you have achieved is making coaches, referees and competition officials having to work two weekends and travel twice.

Peter Holmes said that consideration should be given to a child having to spend a full day competing – it is not good for the child. We are trying to please everybody the best idea would be to go to the National Indoor Arena however the draw back to the arena was cost and possible loss of atmosphere.

Mrs. Lesley-Anne Alexander - The Junior National Championships is one of the few directly run BJA events that make profits. 40% of the competitors, enter in the A & E bands. Surely dropping these age bands will mean the Junior National Championships will make a loss. Also Finances were not the only reason for running the event, it is for the children to take part in a National Event. The Directors cannot overrule a decision made at an AGM.

Dermot Heslop – technically speaking, the event is reduced by 40%, in reality, this is not the case it would be closer to 15%. Scotland, Wales and North West do not take actual squad for the 10-11 age band. Dr. Dee Jennings has made it clear that it is not in the child's best interest to compete in an arena and stadium for that length of time at that age. A British Open Young Mens & Young Womens Open Championships would start next year to include the 17-18 age group.

Bill Kelly – It looks like Scotland, Wales and the North West sent a team to this age banding last year from the newsletter as they won medals.

Leigh Davies – the biggest problems of the BJA (increasing both membership and international medals) could be solved by concentrating on Judo in primary schools. Some say that the idea of a 10-11 year olds age Band at the Junior National puts too much pressure on them to win. But we are not looking at the average 10-11 year old, we are looking for the sport talented ones, ones that can cope with.

Last year 145 entered this age band, they all attend a primary school and by giving them a National medal we would be encouraging them to stick with our Sport as they move on into secondary school. We must concentrate more on encouraging Judo in primary schools as a main objective of the association.

John O'Brien – following from Leigh Davies about children in the schools, I agree. People forget the private sector. The amount of children doing Judo in the private sector is tremendous and they are the ones who will go to Universities and if we can get judo there it would enhance the level and interest of the sport.

Les Davies – I am a member of the British Schools Judo Assn. The BJA do push a lot of the children within the school. There are many coaches that go into the schools and the Education Authority and give them more support. If they coincide together we can go a long way with the children.

George Kerr – I spend approx £7,000.00 per year attracting juniors to my club. To attract large numbers of juniors into your club and do it professionally we need to have the organisational structure to do it because we do not have a lot of professional judo teachers in the country. Maybe we should have a seminar about teaching people how to run the club, a free phone line to the club. Parents should be invited to the events and belts maybe given for each grade. What we should try to do is to try to find how to structure the team, have a seminar and invite someone to teach us how to do it. You have got to have organisational structure to be able to train kids. You need to know how to advertise your judo club, how is it so successful, what do you do, how to attract kids in, kids should be made to feel judo is fun and not all about competitions, nominate 'player of the month' trophy.

Anne Lucas – Our club currently has 16% of the junior population of the town (40 members). The nearest BJA is 30 miles to the west, 30 miles to the East. We have children from the age of 5-16 and now have one or two senior members. The Club is out of town and we started the club 2 years ago when about 20 % of the town came to enquire about judo. We do not have money, we do not enter the children into competitions unless they want to go, we encourage them. We are a little club stuck

out of the centre, trying to gain youngsters to give them discipline, self control and fun and we have an Open Day which is free. Two younger members drop leaflets throughout the town. You cannot say that every club has to be run professionally. We do not have money for large advertising, no buses out of town after 6.30 p.m., there are no street lights, dark narrow country lane and children come in to have fun. We are spreading the Judo word.

John Lucas – we are in the unusual position of being able to have 3 players, 1 older, one BJA and one from the Judo Nationals. We are not talking about something as to whether or not children should take part in the Judo Nationals or Junior Nationals. You do not have to change the situation where you start someone at 9.15 a.m. You can run the whole competition within the space of one or 2 hours.

Phil Hudson – works as a judo instructor in a sports club. We can all become involved provided we get appropriate training. We are losing a potential customer base by not becoming involved in this.

Mr. Peter Blewett – said that BJA is losing a lot of money because the school and a lot of private companies are doing school judo for one or two terms only and the kids have no where to go apart from the local judo clubs. There is no income receive from these children who are not affiliated members

Gordon Mortimer said that the British Junior Open Championships for Young Men & Young Women was introduced when he was the Chair of the Competitions Commission back in 1997 and this event was hosted at Willesden Judo Club.

Mr Heslop - The Competitions Commission felt that if anybody wanted to run a tournament that had British in the title they needed to get permission from the National Governing Body. It was felt that the Association should organise the British event.

Gordon Mortimer stated that Willesden Judo Club had had permission given at least 4-5 years ago

Mr Leigh Davies asked given that the event was already very successful, why do we want to change it?

Mr. White stated that it was the National Commission who wanted to change this and they will be running the competition next year.

BJA Ranking Events System

Peter Holmes – stated that he had seen by chance a document outlining a change in the BJA Ranking Events. The document stated that the events would be reduced to four. Mr Holme was concerned at the both the content of the document and the fact that he had only received a copy by accident. As the administrator of the ranking system for the last 10 years he should have been involved in the consultation process.

The ranking system was not introduced solely to make the sports but also to show up and coming players how they are progressing. Some players use the ranking system to get minor amounts of sportsmanship. Could Mr Heslop provide any further information on this and explain as to the very short time span allowed for consultation.

Mr Heslop replied that an announcement is to be made on the 1st November as to what sort of consultancy and how many people have had copies of this. If you want to go into this you need to talk to players, coaches, competition officials.. Consultation was cut short and the speed of consultation is a reaction to the need. We are now at a situation where Scottish Open was cancelled due to lack of entries never heard of before. The North of England Championship used to be an outstanding event with lots of national squad players entering. We have 13 ranking events taking place at the moment its too many, some of them are not of high standard. When we changed into ranking events system something was lost.

Peter Holmes – you do not have to enter 12 events, you only have to enter three events. If you want you can tell your top players only to enter The Welsh, Northern Ireland and Scottish ranking event, If you do away with ranking events, you will lose a lot of senior competitive players who use the ranking system as a way of judging their progress.

Udo Quellmalz - The ranking events last year is not of the same standard it must be competitive for the top players. If you have less tournaments, the tournaments you do have will have more value.

Alan Stanbra – asked how many volunteers are working on events. He stated 5/6 years ago that the Council asked the Board to do something for volunteers and he put together a scheme. It is still there and came out as a first item on the agenda for the Council Meeting. Over the years, we have brought good ideas but nothing gets done about these. He stated it was said that last year there were too many competitions. He felt there were too many events and it was all about expenses. It was difficult to decide which event to book against the other. It was stated that events dates are written down in advance.

Changes to the BJA Structure

Jenny Kent – In the Chairmans introduction he mentioned a new Management structure – with the idea of a larger committee – this is generally inefficient. Also the members would object to their right to elect members of the Board being interfered with.

Mr. White – We will still have our elected members on the Board. We are seeking to give representation to other Areas e.g. Scotland, Wales and maybe we want to involve the British Judo Schools Association. One of the complaints we have had from them is that they feel that there are a lot of things happening that they are not aware of and have not had input into if they attended Board meetings they could be part of the discussion even though they wont have a vote.

Mr. Awford referred to the Directors from other Associations getting involved in the decision making of the BJA, including BJC, Wales and Scotland. He said that last at last years AGM there were questions and concerns about the financial relationship between the BJA and the Home Counties Federations. When can we look at some sort of income to come in from them?

Mr. White said that we do get monies from the British Judo Council.

Mr Awford asked - What would be the relationship between the BJA and the Scottish & Welsh Association under any new ideas?

Mr. White said the relationship is the same.

Mr Awford asked how the Home Country Federations were doing financially?

Mr. White said that he can only reply that they are struggling.

Mr. Alan Rickard stated that he was concerned with the fact that the Association was bringing into the Management Committee, Scotland, N. Ireland and Wales. Again, he said, it looks like England which has got most members with some English Areas larger than the Home Countries were not having the representation at Management levels of the other minor groups.

Mr. White said that it you looked at the position of the Board, majority of it are English and he mentioned the BJC, Scotland etc just by way of ideas for discussion.

Simon Hicks – talked briefly about the makeup and the way the Board is elected and running of the Association. He said we need to have a look at the way in which the Board is composed. Every member of the Board should be knowledgeable in the areas of the expertise and be elected accordingly. Board member should be elected on their merit to fill a particular post.

Alan Stanbra - About 5 years ago, he mentioned that a job description should be available for each Director who is elected. He said nobody has taken any notice of this.

Mr. D. White pointed out that the Directors are also all volunteers.

BJA Preliminary Club Coach Award

Kevin Charlton – asked why are the premium qualifications being phased out?

Mr. White stated that the Association was trying to raise the standards and encourage coaches to move to the Club Coach Awards. He continued that they were concerned about Preliminary Coaches teaching classes alone.

Kevin Charlton – what is coming across is the fact that BJA is taking something away that they already have.

Mr. White said that people should try to improve themselves, the Preliminary Club Coaches have had a couple of years notice that this was going to happen and the Association to give them more time had postponed the deadline to January 2003. To give them an extra year to upgrade their qualifications.

Kevin Charlton – We plan to run a course in November 2002 but what about the coaches whose grade does not enable them to take the club coach course.

Mr. White – if the grade is an issue speak to Mr Dermot Heslop about coaches getting non-competitive promotions for the required grade.

There was then many general comments about the contradiction of raising standards whilst giving grades out.

Mr White pointed out that he was not responsible for the non-competitive grade situation. It was something that was voted for by the members at an AGM, and if anyone is not happy about this, a resolution should be put through at the AGM next year.

Terry Atkins – We need a higher standard of coaches and they should learn the trade and work their way up. It seems like they go up to the senior levels straight away without gaining the expertise and knowledge.

Mr. White said the development of the next grade is to go up to club level. If somebody who is a Kyu Grade can apply for the next grade in 2 years. He did not feel there was any reason why a blue belt could not wait 2 years before taking a club coach course.

John O'Brien – wanted to endorse several members of his club that hold the Preliminary Club Coach Award. Why remove the it, we should have a starting point and Preliminary Club Coach Award is a good starting point.

Mr. White said the Award is not being taken out, but you cannot teach a class alone unless you are Club Coach.

Dave Julian – *said that they had the same system in Lincolnshire and they are part of the Midlands. His main concern was for the Junior Girls – 2 clubs are coming out of the BJA Because of the licence fees, less people are teaching judo. Why are they paying £50 per year when they join both Associations and get more. We need to promote and push the Education Authority. In 1999, IJA conference, this was brought up and how Judo was a 3rd class sport. Everybody should work together, coaches do not want this club because they do not like it, etc. The only people who can change this are the people in the room.*

Roger Bostock – said the coaches were all volunteers. All we get now is internet? Where is £50?

Pressure on BJA Officials

Jill West – said she was concerned about the increasing workload on volunteers, coaches, timekeepers, etc. BJA are loading them with too much work and they are not able to coach the kids. The fun of running the club is going out and the Assn has got to look at the jobs everyone is doing, in particular, the Coaches and they should give them as much as support as they expect to get from them.

Mr. White asked Jill West to elaborate more on this point of what exactly was putting extra pressure on coaches and officials.

Jill West said that if the coach is not qualified the parents get angry and want to know who is going to pay for the coach training. She said officials at competitions were leaving because of the politics involved and the pressure has increased on coaching, examinations etc.

Mr. Malcolm Collins stated that there are too many competitions and you will see the same referees, same people and volunteers. We are wearing them out and we should have control from the National Governing Body. We should note the value of volunteers and thank them for all the help that is needed.

Mr. Bill Kelly – said that as a coach, he did not feel loaded and if you take on other duties you will be under pressure. Maybe clubs should be restricted entering a certain number of players into a competition unless they provide an official.

Ms Karen French said that if clubs were requested to send an official when entering large amounts of children to competitions it would alleviate the problem of not having enough people to man events. (as my experience in the gymnastic world)

I feel incensed that some coaches measured their success of the club only in the number of medals they obtained through competition. And that they don't see that giving their students a more rounded view of all aspects of the judo world, whether it is in officiating, refereeing or by learning Kata as important and as meaningful as their input.

Jill West – In response to Mr Kelly's comments about taking on too much work pointed out that without Officials such as herself and others who run competitions and referee as well as Coaching the competitive clubs would have not competitions at which to send their players.

Mr. Bill Kelly stated that he was a coach and but that his club did produce officials who work in other areas of officiating and he had not meant any offence to the officials who do have a many different roles.

Mr. G Kerr said that if you have a small club, it was up to you to run the club, providing coaching, etc. and that if you are able to just coach, you are lucky. Most clubs coaches have to do everything. It is only a question of doing your best.

Mr. Ray Tople said that he wanted to bring the position of referees into discussion. They are at a very low ebb, and the National Refereeing Commission were finding it difficult to recruit referees. The abuse on referees had got worse, when on so many occasions the coaches (mainly parents), abuse the referees and the other competitors who in most cases are children. We have the best referees and it is not possible to take them off and replace with others.

Mr. Bill Webb agreed with Ray Tople about referees, stating that we do not have enough referees. He suggested that coaches be used as referee and that they should not be isolated from referees and to work together.

Mr. White said that a referee has a minimum qualification and there should be no requirement for coaches to referee at some events.

Mr. Peter Holme stated that 2 years ago we persuaded top coaches to become referees and it lasted just 3 months. There were too many competitions.

Mr. John O'Brien said that he had every sympathy at the abuse referees received. He had experienced coaches shouting abuse at them at the BJA Competitions. He agreed that coaches should act as referee as they do in France, with no problems.

Mr. Gordon Mortimer stated that every year for the last 10 years, coaches have been invited to the National Referee Course and only 3 to 4 turned up. The course is very useful, covering how the rules are interpreted, etc. and why the decision is given by the referee.

Simon Hicks stated that there was a general feeling overall, that there are too many competitions and too little officials and if this is agreeable, he felt the general committee should take responsibility for the number of competitions. There should be a closed season and it should be determined by the Management Committee who should lay down the rules for clubs to follow.

Mr. Graham Turner – 2 years ago, a pilot scheme was operated in the Southern area to get people in to refereeing at the junior end. A syllabus was produced and issued with only 2 people applying.

Ms. Sheila Hearsey stated that you she had an on-going legal issue where negligence against a referee. She said the point about too many events being run is a very good one and this has been going on for many years. She pointed out that in Ontario, they did not sanction events that clashed and she saw no reason why they should have 2 major events on the same weekend with minor events at the next weekened. The events should be split.

She also stated concern that some coaches working in private schools were doing a marketing job for their own coaching services and were in some cases over grading children who when moving into main stream judo clubs are getting very dis-heartened at their perceived loss of grade and give up judo. It should be regulated or you will lose the kids from the school.

Mr. Les Davies – stated that they had a coaching seminar in the Midlands area and have a huge number of coaches come to that course, with people like Ray Topple giving seminars on refereeing. A complete range of things were covered in that course, and he asked if there was such a thing with any other areas. He suggested that the areas should compare notes on the many activities that are going on.

Kata

Mr. Les Davies said that as one of the Kata coaches, most people should know that there is a magazine to help coaches. He said at the last Kata course he ran, there was only one student for the 3 hour session. They can attend 3hours per month in Kata at his club. He said if you do not follow up as coaches, it is not helping us to help the Board. How many people are interested in the Kata courses. – we need more help in the Midland area. He said that some months ago he spoke to the South African coach at High Wycombe who will have the South African Kata Judo Championship this year. They had 184 pairs, 60% of these were children. People cannot have interest in Kata if they don't know about it.

At this point Mr White closed the Open Form and introduced Mike Chamberlain from Sporting Equals who was there to see Mr White on behalf of the BJA formally sign the BJA's Racial Equality Charter.

Mr Chamberlain explained that Sporting Equals had been around for the last 4 years and is part of the Commission for Racial Equality. They had been working with the Commission and Sport England for some years working towards achieving standard equality. Every Sports Governing Body has been told they have to achieve standard by end of March and judo was ahead of the game.

Mr White & Mr Chamberlain then formally signed the Charter.

The Open Form Closed at 13.00hrs.