

**Minutes of the Stoddert Soccer Executive Committee
Meeting on February 3, 2005**

Attendees: Dave Repka, Bob Hartheimer, Jennifer Hillman, Michael Sullivan, Bill Garcia, Roger Mingo, Alistair Gellatly, Dave Sarley, Charlie Myers, Pete Ryan, Kelly O'Dell, Len Oliver, Tom Gross, and Kate English.

I. Financial Update/Assessment

Bob Hartheimer reported that the club's finances are in good shape. The club maintains about \$450,000 as a reserve sufficient to cover almost one season of expenses. Bob noted that he is planning to present quarterly reports this year comparing our actual expenses and revenues to those that were budgeted. He is also continuing to examine whether the league should switch its fiscal year to one beginning July 1 and ending June 30 to better match revenues and expenses.

II. Fields/External Affairs

The Committee discussed at length whether we should be trying to acquire more permanent field space with a club house of some sort and whether we should begin fundraising to pay for such a development. In general, there was agreement that it was a worthwhile long-term goal to try to acquire a field, preferably in the district, that would have turf, lights and some type of clubhouse. There was further agreement that the best way to pursue this was to activate the External Affairs committee, to ask Graeme Bush and Rick Gersten, among others, to serve on that committee, and to ask the committee to come forward with a strategic plan of options for fields. Such options could include partnering with one or more of the adult soccer leagues in the district or a more extensive partnership with Jelleff.

In terms of fundraising, there was a general consensus not to begin a specific fundraising campaign for a project until a more concrete proposal was available, but that our existing fundraising should continue and be enhanced. Dave Repka noted that we are now more explicitly soliciting contributions with on-line registrations and sending automatic thank yous back to those who contribute. Dave is also sending personal letters of thanks to all those who give more than \$100 a year. In addition, the Committee will revisit the issue of open fees for the fall season with a view to building in a small amount of additional fees that would go into a capital account to be available should an appropriate field come available. In order to prepare for such a discussion, Tom Gross will pull together a spreadsheet indicating the fees charged by other local soccer clubs, other DC area sports leagues (baseball, basketball, etc.) and a history of the open fees at Stoddert, when they have been raised and by how much.

III. Open Program

Dave Repka opened the discussion by providing a short summary of the issues that had been discussed at last week's meeting of the Open/Training and Development Committees. The concern was how to better standardize the Open program since so much of everyone's experience and reaction to Stoddert depends on whether you have a good coach and an active division commissioner. It was generally agreed that the league needs to do more to communicate its expectations of both coaches and commissioners. While there is currently much more information on the Stoddert website than we've ever had before noting the duties and responsibilities of both coaches and commissioners, not enough people read it or take it to heart.

The committee resolved that it would be preferable in each of the biggest divisions to seek at least two and possibly three commissioners, with each one taking on certain specific portions of the duties. It was also recommended that we hold a mandatory meeting of the commissioners to review the duties and responsibilities of commissioners, to go over all the things that Stoddert as a league can do to assist the commissioners and all the things that they as commissioners need to be communicating to their coaches. The basic idea of the meeting was to ensure that every commissioner, both the new and the old, understand all the details of how to run their division, have an opportunity to learn from the more seasoned veterans, have the chance to ask questions or offer suggestions on any of the details of fields, rosters, coaches, etc and that they be given some clear direction of the information that needs to be passed along to the coaches. In addition, there should be some discussion of our fields situation so that everyone in the league is knowledgeable and prepared to stick up for Stoddert whenever the opportunity arises and suggestions about how best to keep the rec program fun for the kids. Finally, it was recommended that some discussion of the travel program and how it works would be helpful in clearing up any misunderstandings between the open and the travel programs. E-mails will be sent to all commissioners about the meeting and the chairs of the Open Committee will call each of the commissioners to encourage them to attend.

It was also agreed that someone from the league (Tom Gross, Len Oliver, or a member of the board) should attend each of the season opening meetings with the coaches to make sure that all coaches understand: 1) the support available to them on how to coach; 2) the Monday evening clinics for coaches; 3) the new and improved coaches bulletins with practice plans and ideas; and 4) the opportunity to bring a pro coach to up to 3 practices a season, reimbursed by Stoddert for \$75/hour.

It was also agreed that Stoddert should send a "good will ambassador" from the league to be at the field the entire day of the opening games of the biggest divisions (U-5-U7 or even U-9) to answer any questions about rosters, coaches, field locations, etc. since so many parents aren't sure where or how to find their

team, or their coach or have last minute questions about rosters, etc. Tom Gross will coordinate this effort with division commissioners.

In general, the Committee agreed that we need to do more to provide a “tool box” of support for commissioners and coaches, and to engage in more communication with and about DC Stoddert Soccer with coaches and commissioners. Some of that support could come from greater use of older kids as volunteers in exchange for community service hour credits, with more to be done to advertise our community service opportunities to relevant schools and more information and ideas to be communicated in our coaches’ bulletin and our website.

A suggestion was made to consider changing the U14 and above games from 11 v. 11 to something smaller, 9 v. 9 or even 7.v. 7 given the smaller number of players at the older ages. The idea would be to allow greater number of games against a greater number of different teams with everyone getting more touches on the ball. Others claimed, however, that the size wasn’t the problem in retaining more players. Some of it had to do with needed stronger commissioner leadership. The Committee recommended that the matter be taken up by the Open Committee at its next meeting.

IV. Internal Club Communications

The committee then discussed ways to improve our communications. The general agreement is that our website is much better than ever before; we now need to get people to rely on it often. Len Oliver is to work to post the training and coaching tip portions of past bulletins on the web, along with a library of drills and other similar items. The newsletter will continue to be worked on as well.

V. Referees

The committee then discussed setting a goal for the number of games that will have refs in attendance and ended up resolving that the league establish a goal of 95% referee coverage for U11 and younger and 85% for U12 and above for this season. The committee then discussed what steps to take to reach these goals. Michael Sullivan agreed, working with Mary Smith, to pull together a spread sheet outlining what number and certification level of referee is needed for each age game(both travel and open), what we currently pay referees for these games, what other leagues pay their referees and what bonuses, if any, others are providing to their referees.

It was also agreed that we need to put on a FIFA grade 9 course as soon as possible and do all we can to encourage as many as possible to become certified. Len Oliver agreed to pull the course together, working with Thom Heath. A real outreach effort at the area colleges and with Stoddert parents and coaches needs to be made to encourage more people to referee games, particularly the older kids games.

VI. Travel

Kate English introduced a proposal to create a developmental program for U-8 kids that might be interested in additional training opportunities. The idea would be to run a weekly clinic for U-8's only, with 20 minutes of each hour of the clinic devoted to technique and 40 minutes to small sided games. The goal of the program would be to introduce the idea of developmental soccer in a non-competitive environment and to help identify kids that have a real passion for the game and enough commitment to it to show up on a weekly basis. There would be no tryouts for the clinics and they would be run under the umbrella of Sona's and Karen's developmental clinics. The fee for participation would be at least enough to cover all expenses and hopefully enough to bring in a small amount of additional revenue.

Some members of the committee questioned whether the weekly clinics should be changed to permit more U-8 kids to participate. Others questioned the success of the weekly clinics.

After more debate and discussion, the committee resolved to move ahead with the U-8 "pre-travel developmental" clinic idea for U-8s only and to continue as a separate program the weekly skills clinics for U-9-U12s for any open players who want additional training and experience. Further work is to be done to get the word out about the weekly clinics to all who might be interested by encouraging coaches to encourage their more committed players to think about participating in the weekly skills clinics.

Following this discussion, the meeting adjourned.