



AFL Europe

2016 AGM

Minutes

Lisbon, Portugal

9 October, 2016

Minutes taken and documented by Benjamin Durance

Agenda:

1. Introduction
2. Election of Assembly Chairman and Secretary
3. Ratification of 2015 AGM minutes
4. Chairman's Report
5. AFL Update
6. Financial Report
7. AFL Europe Commission Resignations and Appointments
8. Umpires Update
9. Event's Review and applications for future events
10. Talent Update
11. Recent Changes at AFL Europe
12. Proposed Changes to Articles of Association
13. Ratification of Associate Members
14. Country Reports

Meeting open at 9:27am

Attendees:

- Alexey Andryushin (Russia)
- Jonas Loven and Ryan Davidson (Sweden)
- Lisa Wilson and Jason Hill (England)
- Ivan Ivos and Ivan Molnar (Croatia)
- Mark Woods (Germany)
- Michel Van Eijk, Stephen Dillon and Maurice Verbakel (Netherlands)
- Shane Hill (Umpires)
- Bruno Nugnes, Matt Hewitt and Armando Colombo (Italy)
- David Valente (Portugal)
- Alban Schieber, Thomas Urban and Berengere Portal (France)
- Cyril Marsault and Maria Falkesgaard (Denmark)
- Pat Leavy (Ireland)
- Ben Durance and Alex Hay (AFL Europe Executives)
- Chris Dow, Oliver Howard, Greg Hutton, Ciaran O'Hara, Heidi Shakespeare, Morten Melhoj, Josip Kravar (AFL Europe Commission)

1. Introduction:

Chris Dow (CD): Welcome and congratulations to Croatia and Ireland for their amazing victories.

2. Election of Assembly Chairman and Secretary

CD: Oliver Howard is nominated for Chair of the General Assembly. No one else running, so Oliver Howard elected Chair of General Assembly. Ben Durance nominated for Secretary, no one else running so Ben Durance elected Secretary of General Assembly.

3. Ratification of 2015 AGM minutes

Oliver Howard (OH): Ratification of 2015 AGM minutes which were circulated to all Members before the General Assembly. Moved by Michel Van Eijk from Netherlands, seconded Jason Hill from England.

4. Chairmen's report:

CD: This will be my last Chairman's report. Moved family back to Australia and thank you very much for your time. Took over job from Gerard Murphy. Based my time as Chairman on the values structured, united, respected. The past 4 years I believe we have adhered to those values, although I understand the last 6 months have been tumultuous. The past few years we've been supported by the AFL more than ever. I'd like to thank all of those in the room who have supported me throughout my tenure. I look forward to continuing my support through my base in Melbourne and do all I can to assist AFL Europe. Giving it my best and I've made errors but I've learnt from them and want to thank everyone in the room for their help and support. It's with great pleasure that I step down with the organisation in good shape for development and growth in the future.

5. AFL Update:

OH: We are in close contact with Grant Williams (Head of Community & International Development) and his team at AFL House. They have been big supporters, and a great help. Grant came to London

a few months ago and we had a very productive brainstorming and strategy session. It's positive to know that AFL Europe and the international expansion of AFL is a strategic focus for the AFL. Pleased to share with the AFL Europe community, on a confidential basis, the new strategy for AFL overseas with 6 pillars 1. Participation 2. Talent 3. Broadcast and Digital 4. Matches and Events 5. Partnerships 6. Governance. There is a plan and a focus for AFL moving the game here forward. Thank you to Grant Williams for sharing that and letting us know their strategy.

6. Financials:

Greg Hutton (GH): Covered in three parts; 2015 accounts, 2016 accounts, commercial.

2015 Accounts

GH: Running through of the accounts and breaking down each line and explaining it to the room. Net profit and loss of the events. Grand Final Lunch 2015 delivered a solid financial profit, small profits at Champions League and Fitzpatrick Cup. Small loss at ANZAC Cup.

Running through the line by line break down of the 2015 accounts which each person in the room has been given a copy for their reference.

Turned attention to Pat Leavy's independent Auditors report.

Overall net profit of £2,400 at the end of 2015.

Any questions or comments on the 2015 financials? All good.

Focus now on the 2015 balance sheet and running everyone through this. Comments or questions on 2015 before moving on to 2016? No comment.

2016 Accounts

GH: it has been a difficult year in a number of ways but more so in a financial sense. We are going to be open and transparent and we are shocked as a Commission about what has been uncovered. What has been uncovered is a very large 2016 loss. AFL Europe now needs a large cash injection of 51,000 to operate for the remainder of the year.

Steve Dillion (SD) - Netherlands: Let's get the elephant in the room out there now instead of the putting accusations out there.

CD: I can summarise that we will have a significant loss in 2016. Let's have no names mentioned and get through the financial report. We will discuss the recent staff changes at AFL Europe in detail later on the agenda.

OH: Move to accept the 2015 accounts. Moved by Shane Hill and seconded by Thomas Urban from France.

Commercial opportunities

GH: Geo-advertising opportunities and the 2nd annual grand final lunch.

OH: when we talk about commercial opportunities we mean attaining funds and returning these investments to the community through subsidised event fees and better tournaments.

7. Resignations and Appointments:

OH: Thank you to Michelle Morgan for her years of service as she has since moved on and home. Her drive, passion and clear mind have been huge assets on the Commission during the past few years and Michelle will be missed.

CD: Would anyone like to make a nomination for Chairman?

CD: I nominate Oliver Howard, seconded by Josip Kravar. No other nominations so Oliver Howard is elected Chairman of AFL Europe.

OH: I am pleased to appoint Chris Dow (passion, continuity, experience and a strong link to the AFL in Melbourne), Greg Hutton (financial control and tireless work to improve the commercial growth of AFL Europe) and Heidi Shakespeare (fresh ideas, and brings a diversity to the Commission with her years of experience in sales, marketing, branding and sponsorship) as Commission members for a two year term.

8. Umpire Update:

Shane Hill (SH): Good to see everyone in the room. Appointment of first ever umpires to the International Cup from the help from Adam Davies. Round of applause for those selected. Umpire pathway in place which has come to fruition with the selection of those to the International Cup. We are still struggling with the recruitment of umpires. I urge you to positively encourage umpires in your local leagues. Lots of opportunities to develop umpires.

Really pleasing at European Championships as we accredited 8 more umpire coaches. If you want any information, please come and talk to me.

Recommendations to members are that we need to start looking at umpire first programs. Recruiting umpires from different sports much like we do for players. Hearing from number of leagues that there are a few people disrespecting umpires who are not Australian. Regardless of their culture we are not accepting of this at AFL Europe.

That's the most of it and I'll circulate the report later.

CD: thanks Shane and great work from the umpires yesterday

9. Event Review:

OH: Some great events this year. Champions League numbers increased in 2016, European Championship number a bit down from last event, and the Euro Cup had 15 men's and 7 women's teams.

Josip Kravar (JK): Champions League very good thing, boys from Netherlands do a great job. I want to see it happen there again next year. Euro Cup is good but I want to see it next year that we plan forward and know who is hosting for the following year at the AGM.

SH: I want to talk about qualifications for tournaments for a moment. For example, at European Championships squad max is 30 and may deter some smaller teams from entering. Should the maximum squad be smaller?

OH: That is just a maximum squad size, not minimum. Countries can send smaller teams, so I think we can put any deterrent based on squad size to perceived not actual.

Lisa Wilson (LW) - England: Why weren't Denmark and Sweden here for the men's Euro Cup yesterday?

Morten Melhoj (MM): From Denmark our point of view it is a case of financials. Almost double the cost to travel to Portugal from Denmark. Major hold up was the cost from us.

Jason Hill (JH) - England: Should we have Euro Cup in the same year at European Championships? Should we move them apart? Try and ease the financial burden of having two close costs. I don't want to see just Ireland and GB representing IC.

OH: Agreed that we want to see as many teams as possible attending every event, but realistically some countries just can't afford both. At last year's General Assembly we discussed the issue of having both Euro Cup and European Championships in the same year and agreed that we would do it this year.

Alban Schieber (AB) - France: We discussed the same in 2013 after Bordeaux. We need to put measures in place.

JK: Two months is not enough time between events.

Maria Falckesgaard (MF) - Denmark: We have a really small league. We can't play internal matches throughout the year. Taking away Euro Cup you take away all the games that Denmark play.

CD: Jason Hill's point about changing the timings is the area we need to address. Clash years we need think about changing things up.

LW: Do you get the engagement you need or do you only get a select few?

SH: having a quarterly conference call to address these items.

Mark Woods (MW) - Germany: Strategically aligned thing. Grow the game not just who wants to host it. Costs us an absolute fortune. I don't see the alignment with the AFL's plan that you mentioned earlier.

Ciaran O'Hara (COH): How do we accommodate the weakest link? That is what we try to achieve. You're right we haven't had a strategic alignment.

MW: Bonding it over a long period of time.

COH: What we need to develop at meetings like this is that strategic direction. If the strongest link is the host nation, then how do we accommodate the weakest nation.

Ivan Molnar (IM) - Croatia: What are the concrete plans for the strategic plan.

Maurice Verbakel (MV) - Netherlands: You (AFL Europe) are the closest link to the AFL it needs to come from you.

Steve Dillion (SD) - Netherlands: Lets create a sub-committee to create our 5-year plan. Have a time frame of 3 months for the committee and get a calendar sorted.

OH: I will follow this up afterwards via email inviting volunteers to join steering committees that will report back to the Commission.

LW: Do we not need to wait for the new GM to be elected?

COH: We need to democratise AFL Europe to ensure that all member countries are heard.

LW: The GM needs to understand that this is a volunteer run organisation, and that they need engage with the community.

OH: Let's put in place a committee and make sure that we can engage and bring ideas to the group, and execute on those ideas. I will send out email next week to get this off the ground.

COH: We need to ensure that we dictate how the office works and make sure that the GM engages with the community.

JH: We need to ensure that the Commission sets the strategy for the GM to execute on a day to day basis.

COH: We as a community lost our way and ensure that we are talking together and continually developing as a community.

Armando Colombo (AC) - Italy: We as Italy completely agree with the strategy.

OH: Is there anyone in the room who wants to host next year's Euro Cup.

Ryan Davidson (RD) - Sweden: Sweden have put their hand up to host 2017 Euro Cup, please speak to Ryan Tucker in regards to hosting.

AS: France would also like to nominate to host the Euro Cup and will send to Alex Hay.

MW: As would Germany.

COH: We've just heard 3 nominations for Euro Cup (Sweden, Germany, France), lets perhaps look at scheduling and putting a plan in place for the next three years and get some certainty in the community.

SHORT BREAK

SD: Just wanting to confirm that the Champions league is in Amsterdam for the next 3 years?

ALL: Yes, agreed.

OH: Given France has a presentation prepared, we will allow them to present their case for hosting Euro Cup 2017.

Thomas Urban (TU) - France: Presenting proposal for Toulouse for Euro Cup 2017. Cheap flights from multiple spots around Europe. Trains from Paris and daily flights. We can perhaps help Andorra get a team up. The stadium is close to the airport, and trains accessible to the hotels and playing fields. Thomas could host AGM at his office. One part of my mission would be to work on the Euro Cup as my professional work. 6 playing fields, we also have a gymnasium with 16 change rooms. We also have lights available and a 500 seat stand, with a brand new facility built last year. I can work full time on the organisation of the event and I have another 4 staff which can assist. We have a brand new club for the after party and this is something that we can hire. My objective is to negotiate prices with the hotels and to have everyone included hotel in their fee, looking at around 25 euro per night. The budget is looking at 55,000 euros based on Bordeaux.

JK: I want to address a way to keep the fees as low as possible, and a way to benefit the host nation. I am interested in the finances as we need to ensure less fees for us, but there also needs to be benefit for the organisers.

OH: I agree, we need to be putting the money at a low fee point and attract as many participants as possible.

AS: We need to find a model to keep the fees as low as possible.

OH: We will need to work with the host nations to find a sustainable budget.

GH: Absolutely, we need to be mindful and have a strong budget and be aligned.

LW: Is there scope to do some kind of sponsorship for AFL Europe to offer the community?

COH: It would be difficult if we are giving funding or assistance to one nation over another. With the budget that we have it is unrealistic for the next year.

SH: This does raise the question of whether our focus as an organisation is on growing the game at the local level or if we are here to run tournaments. I would have thought our focus is on growing the game.

COH: In my opinion it is both, but perhaps it is time we conducted another strategic review.

OH: We need to work to find additional revenue streams to assist member nations.

COH: What we need to do is get back to a situation where we are fundamentally growing the game and participation and not at performance.

JH: Completely agree, we need to drive up the community and participation, we need to grow from the ground up so that we can in the end raise commercial awareness.

COH: In regards to grants we need to be very clear on the validity of grant applications and where they need to go and who will benefit most.

GH: There is a lot of work going on in the background around Commercial and that is the money that will be able to be put back into the community and we're open to looking at options. We need to be sharing this knowledge.

JK: Let's help Germany to put a proper plan together to lower the fees and help make this a reality.

OH: Can we all agree that next year's Euro Cup will be in France?

JH: We need to look at the subcommittee to propose a date for 2017 Euro Cup. And due to IC17 this will effect the AFL London dates for 2017, so we need to have a think about the date and it may need to change.

COH: We need to create shared services which can use across the entire AFL Europe community.

JH: Exactly, you find the best practice and then share with AFL Europe to use across the continent.

MW: It's hard to see the benefit and support available from AFL Europe.

SD: Promoting the game for me is investing in the game and actually using funding to develop the game at a grassroots level, not help pay for 16 flights. I think we're asking for structure and guidance from AFL Europe.

Heidi Shakespeare (HS): Does anyone have a 12-month target or strategy, and has this been shared. It would be interesting to understand those objective which we can cater to.

JH: There is probably case for sharing all this information so that we can align the 7 odd mutual points that are similar to each nation.

COH: Our strategic plan should align with the AFL but it needs to be European and suit our continent. We need to start talking to each other again. Let's share with each other and make these plans a reality.

OH: ***We have agreed that Toulouse will host the 2017 Euro Cup*** and we will work with Sweden and Germany to host the 2018 and 2019 Euro Cups.

JH: We should talk about hosts for European Championships as well.

COH: We would like to host in Ireland.

JK: We would also like to host in Croatia.

10. Talent update:

COH: We are very Ireland centric, and I encourage you to look for athletes who are extremely talented athletes. This way we can promote athlete transfer. The reason Ireland is an easy investment for the AFL is that they get a direct ROI and get players into the game. If you guys can identify elite athletes in your own communities, that's how we can grow our Talent outcomes. Maybe one of the sub committees that we need is to share information about clubs from Australia and get players to Australia.

JH: The women's talent is quite transferable and gives us a real chance to get players to the elite level. Excitingly another English girl has been picked up by Carlton.

Ben Durance (BD): We have a slight window to achieve talent gains while the gap is close with Australia, but as time goes on the gap will grow.

SHORT BREAK

11. Recent Changes at AFL Europe:

OH: I want to speak about what has transpired at AFL Europe in recent weeks. In September the Commission made the decision to end Megan Hession's employment. This decision was not taken lightly. Without going into the exact details a divisive feeling in the community was fostered, there was a lack of communication and transparency with the Commission, commercial targets were not being met and we felt that our community connection and furtherment was being effected. Over the course of the past year we had a number of formal and informal discussions and tried to mend any issues, but unfortunately we did not see any improvement. Megan brought a number of good values to the job, but ultimately we felt no option but to end her employment.

CD: We initially wanted to counsel through the situation, and we had a call to work through it and ask Megan whether this role was right for her, and gave her a week to think about it. Instead she pushed the nuclear button. I wanted to have a caring discussion however it turned external and it was such a breach of faith and we agreed that we cannot go on. And honestly, I think we did the right thing.

OH: I'd like to add that Sarah Ongarello also left in the following weekend and were disappointed that the circumstances led to her leaving AFL Europe.

COH: As our community commissioners we probably aren't fully transparent but this decision was unanimous. She went above our heads and put our relationship with the AFL in jeopardy.

SD: To make the first comment, we now understand what transpired and why you made the decisions you made however the way that you handled the communication to the wider community thereafter was amateur, we basically heard from Jason Hill.

JH: It was a perceived lack of transparency, and I apologise for sending that email and jumped the gun slightly and need to agree to future transparency.

CD: Our timelines were to advise Megan of the unanimous decision of the Board on the Friday and make an announcement to the wider community on the Monday, and that was a huge error. The reason for waiting to Monday was to give Megan a chance to speak with us on the content of communication to the wider community should she wish. It was all about respecting Megan.

COH: We are a small organisation however there was a compassion towards Megan which meant we didn't want to damage her image.

OH: We understand that these departures came at a busy and difficult time with upcoming tournaments to deliver, so immediately implemented Alex Hay as Interim General Manager, supported by Ben Durance. A huge thanks to Ben and Alex for their tireless work in the interim period – you will all agree that yesterday was one of the best AFL Europe events ever. We are now turning our attention to the process for finding a new General Manager. The job spec is online, and we want to get as many applications as we can for the role, from both Australia and internationally.

CD: We have redone our budgets for 2017 and we have had to adjust our plans, and by the end of 2017 we should have worked our way through it.

COH: That GM position can be anywhere in Europe. Australia House will operate as the Head Office. We are open to that position being anywhere in Europe.

CD: The AFL were very supportive of the financial position that we find ourselves in.

Berengere Portal (BP) - France: Is it your view that all of the volunteers may be brought into this conversation as I have heard whispers that people may not want to be involved any further. How do we turn it around and get a positive feeling out there again.

RD: If we're going to turn it around I think we go on with the development of the sport.

CD: We were naïve to think that it would stay in house for 3 days. And Jason was right to send his email and ask questions. Let's reset, we have fresh blood and I will go out taking responsibility for this.

LW: There has been no negative implications so it's really not effected anyone.

COH: It would be great to have feedback and a full review.

SD: There needs to be structure, community, leadership.

12. Proposed Changes to Articles of Association:

JK: My whole idea coming onto the Commission, was that the community felt distant to the Commission, and it was a negative picture. I see a gap in the articles of association. At the AGM the chairman decides 3 members then the community has 3 members, I think it's not good for the community, I propose 4 community members and 2 elected Commissioners by the Chairman. And make an amendment where we can have more than one member from a certain country, and that way we can cover the continent better. The other idea is that we keep the Commission the way it is and have a subcommittee. I am afraid that in the future that we can have someone come in and choose commissioners without any form of process.

OH: I think this whole idea comes back to the issue that you guys don't know enough what we're here to help with. In my time on the Commission I have not once seen a vote split between elected and nominated Commissioners, it simply doesn't happen like that. We are all impartial with a focus on what's best for the growth of the game.

COH: I believe that there is a need for reform. The reason we chose 7 members at the start is that it's universally recognised as best practice.

OH: We must remember that we rely heavily on a grant from the AFL, and they rightly expect some control on the workings of the organisation. We should not make any panicked decision to change structure of the Commission. If the AFL feel like they are losing touch with us, then they may take control.

COH: Can I suggest we appoint a sub-committee to look at constitutionalising the business and whether the structure needs to change in terms of the Commission structure. But at the same time we need to avoid a knee-jerk reaction. When in a panic we make bad decisions.

IM: Although AFL are funding us, we do not see the results of this and we do not see the results of this. We look after Austria and C. Republic out of our good will.

COH: There is a political reality here. We need to show the AFL the ROI on the investment that they have given us. Yes, the community is not getting given funding directly by AFL Europe, but we need to justify developing this. AFL Europe's role is to think about the growth of the game generally, and all funding is attributed in this endeavour.

CD: What we saw yesterday was an unbelievable manifestation of the past 6 years.

SD: We need to foster growth and I think that needs to be the premise of AFL Europe.

JK: I am not concerned about the people on the Commission now, I know them and I know that they are good people. But we need more security for the Commissioners that in the next 10 years there'll be no issues.

COH: There is no bogeyman here. We will need to put this to a vote next year. Perhaps we need a sub-committee to look at this. I think Josip should chair this.

HS: If we are setting up these sub committees we need to be extremely careful about the deliverables and the expectations on what will be delivered. Have some dates and accessible information.

OH: We will circulate a contact list and create a master list to share with everyone for communication purposes.

13. Ratification of Member Nations:

OH: We need to go through all of our affiliate members and ratify them in line with our articles. A wider question is whether we need to continue having a distinction between the Affiliate and Full Members? This can be considered by the committee reviewing the structure of AFL Europe.

Austria – Passed Netherlands, Second England

C Republic - Passed Netherlands, Second England

Portugal - Passed Netherlands, Second England

Russia - Passed Netherlands, Second England

Wales - Passed Netherlands, Second England

Jerusalem Lions - Passed Netherlands, Second England

14. Country reports:

Michel Van Eijk (MVE) - Netherlands: This is a great starting point for conversations.

OH: We asked for all Members to send their Country Reports in advance of the meeting so that we could circulate a booklet. We only got two replies. We need you working with us to get this type of content going. And have a booklet of information to hand out.

AS: France: 10 clubs. 3 Cups running. French Cup in December instead of September. Our goal is really to get a team to the IC.

COH: Irish Report: Our entire executive stepped down and we are being run by the clubs hence no report. We started running carnivals and it's been a huge success, each club hosting one game.

David Valente (DV) - Portugal: Managed to get a team up for the Euro Cup. Trying to establish another club in the Nation. Trying to start to work with Children. We have some hope for the future.

MVE: Netherlands: We are a one club nation. Organised a league with a draft and then played a match round with the players. Worked really well. Played 16 game days, including going over to play with other teams. Champions League host again for 2017.

JK: Croatia: 7 clubs, 2 women's clubs. We have been expanding at one club per year. Bigger expansion than expected in women's footy. TV station covers every league game.

MF: Denmark: 5 men's clubs and great support from Sweden with 2 clubs and 1 women's clubs, and another starting up. Quite a big skill level differential of the players, so looking at the league structures. We don't have a league due to the numbers. Recruiting via High Schools. Looking to potentially join IC as the Crusaders.

JH: England: 28 teams, split into three comps. Girls in London became 18 a side. Every club is growing and the girls especially. Two University sides and two more coming in. Youth Footy started up run by Lisa Wilson. Looking at girls being drafted to the Women's AFL (Both Aussies). The worry is if the 9's dies with the 18 continues to develop. The London pool is pulling the skills outside of the city and how we can keep developing the 18 a side game.

RD: Sweden: 8 clubs, one women's team and another coming. Instead of training we've been playing and it's been vital to keep people in the game. Pushing women's footy. Stockholm kids going well. We think we can get another 2 women's clubs up next year. Trying to get recognised as a Sport in Sweden – would access huge amounts of funding. Goal 20 clubs and 1500 active members.

Alexey Andryushin (AA) - Russia: Issues with access to public funds and community.

OH: Thanks to Pat Levy who has done our auditing for years and who is finally stepping down, so a huge thanks.

Thanks to everyone and for the open and honest conversation.

Meeting Close 1.22pm

Minutes signed off by:

SECRETARY of the Annual General Assembly

Print Name: Ben Durance

Signature: 

Date: 27 January 2017

CHAIRMAN of the Annual General Assembly

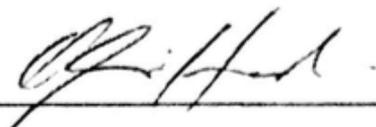
Print Name: OLIVER HOWARD

Signature: 

Date: 27 JANUARY 2017

CHAIRMAN of AFL Europe Limited

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Signature: 

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