

BRITISH FEDERATION OF PEDAL CAR RACING



BRITISH PEDAL CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Minutes for BFPCR Committee Meeting of 30th January 2005.

ATTENDANT: Bob Robinson, Jeremy Featherstone, Liz Hawkins, Simon Gare, Antony Hawkins, Chris Featherstone.

APPOLOGIES: Bill Gratrix, Roland Jones, Bob Budge, Dave Relton.

1. Before the agenda was addressed, Bob Robinson emphasised the need to openly discuss the recent events concerning the primarily forum based arguments amongst committee members. The problems involved were somewhat emphasised by the fact that at this committee meeting only two teams were represented, they being Welsh Ardvaark Racing and Great Central Racing.

The primary cause of the current discord was agreed to be the problems of forum and email discussions, rather than face-to-face discussions. However, some of the concerns expressed by Bob Budge were also addressed.

Chris Featherstone outlined some proposals to change the operation of the committee and some constitutional issues. These were broadly thought to be a good idea, although it was noted that constitutional changes cannot be ratified until put before the AGM.

The list of suggested changes are detailed elsewhere, with reasons and the conclusions that were reached. Of key importance was that suggestion that once the agenda is published, the committee should not discuss the proposals until actually at the committee meeting itself. Also, it was suggested that some topics should be put on the general discussion forum with polls to indicate (but not be binding) to the committee how people might feel about these topics. However, it is strongly suggested that any comments should only be sent to the secretary (by PM, email or phone call) and not discussed in the public forum.

Bob Robinson agreed to deal with all constitutional matters in the future. The constitution will be altered once the agreed proposals were received by him following this meeting but will need to be ratified at the next AGM.

Bob Budge has decided to resign from his position as Vice Chair on the committee but stated in messages to various members that there were no hard feelings and that he hoped to continue to enjoy racing in the coming year. The committee stated its appreciation for the work Bob has done, and will continue to do. Bob Robinson expressed the wish to talk once more to Bob Budge before the election of a new Vice Chair.

2. Status and Confirmation of 2005 Races.

Bob Robinson emphasised the need for races to run on time, particularly if on a Sunday, due to juniors having to attend school on the following day.

Chris Featherstone suggested that a weekend scrutineering pass might be possible for weekend races, such as Preston, to make sure that the race on the Sunday did not start late. It was agreed to ask Gary (Scurtineer) for his opinion on whether this was deemed workable.

Similarly Simon Gare noted that it would speed things up if the lap counting equipment could be left on site overnight – this comment comes into the next section.

Castle Combe – Chris Featherstone confirmed booking of this (has spoken to CC within the last few weeks). There is a question of sufficient conage to lay out the ideal track and the possibility of using the Federation cones will be looked into. Also various questions need asking with regards to setting the track up on the Saturday night.

Thurmaston – Simon Gare will enquire about how this is progressing but no problems were expected.

Margam – Roland gave verbal assurance to the committee in a previous telephone call that this would all take place as usual. Bob Robinson expressed concern about debris on the track in 2003 but it was noted that this was not a serious problem in 2004.

Further concerns were just that, whatever the nature of the lap counting, teams needed to have regular and frequent updates of the scores at all times.

Preston – Antony Hawkins stated that the deposit had been paid for this event.

Blackbushe – Jeremy Featherstone confirmed that the owners had us booked in but he would ring to check this in the near future.

Cuborough – Jeremy again confirmed this had been booked and would run as usual

3. Lap Counting:

Concern was expressed at the slight confusion following the last meeting, and the money that had been put into this system which has not yielded the required results even after two years.

The committee unanimously agreed that manual lap counting was not a practicable long-term solution and that the sport should proceed to try and implement that automatic system.

The committee agreed to give Neil Carter the money required (£176.50) for the new boards. Simon Gare very kindly offered to donate this money for this purpose, for which the rest of the committee expressed its thanks.

Simon also agreed to talk to Bob Budge regarding the acquisition of mats to enable the loop to be semi-permanent and easy to install at any race track.

It was agreed to implement this by the start of the season but that manual lap counting would still be required until the system was thought to be reliable (probably after Margam as it needed to be tested in the wet). Once again it was impressed that even with manual lap counting updates needed to be frequent and obvious to all teams.

Bob Budge currently has the semi-auto electric system and is in the process of checking and refurbishing this.

4. Marshalling.

Bob Robinson expressed concern that marshal cover was not always as good as it could be and particular that marshals are essential in the dark hours of the Margam race.

Jeremy Featherstone stated that it would be very difficult to get non-racing Swebbelli explorers to the races this year for this purpose. Bob Robinson suggested Jeremy should talk to the South Berks scouts about Blackbushe marshalling and also that some teams could be placed at key positions in the pits to keep an eye on the track.

5. First Aid Cover.

The committee agreed that St Johns was probably essential for the Margam race, but that at others there were probably plenty of qualified first-aiders amongst the teams.

Chris Featherstone expressed concern about wanting to know, as a race organiser, that sufficient cover was guaranteed to be on site at all times. Jeremy Featherstone agreed to contact Callum to ask him to be present as chief first aider and check his availability.

In addition to this, the committee agreed that a section should be added to entry forms indicating if teams had qualified first aiders amongst them, so the organiser would have a list of some people at the race who were qualified (this would not be binding in any way).

6. Method of Reliable Brake Testing.

Gary Richards has proposed a simple system to test the braking ability of cars in scrutineering. The committee welcomed this idea and agreed to its implementation but noted that, in theory, not all cars needed the same braking force (technically it needs to be proportional to the combined driver/car mass to give the same deceleration).

It was also noted that no absolute ruling on this can be implemented for this season but that it will be an extremely valuable exercise to gather information from this equipment this year, with a view for setting a required braking level for 2006.

7. 2006 Calendar.

Simon Gare outlined the proposal for a Peterborough race. This would take place at the Peterborough festival, and therefore is likely to be in the first or second week of June.

Bill Gratrix had previously agreed in principle that the Margam date can be moved with enough notice. The committee suggested that it would be ideal if Margam can be moved to the Preston weekend.

Antony Hawkins proposed running an event in Sheffield instead of Preston, due to its proximity to his home. This would possibly be a double-header.

The committee agreed that ideally, the season should remain at six weekends of racing and so that Peterborough would effectively replace another event. Chris Featherstone suggested that he would be happy in principle to organise Castle Combe (if successful) on a bi-annual basis.

The committee agreed that a committee meeting must be held during the season, once some of these issues have been considered, to get the 2006 calendar organised.

8. Racing Infringements.

These were discussed and Simon Gare suggested that the rules set previously had been used to good effect in 2004 but that they should be continued with and re-iterated.

These are generally a spoken warning, followed by a lap deduction for a repeat offence, at the discretion of the chief marshal but that severe infringements (such as incorrectly worn helmets –or worse, lack of a helmet in a car) can lead to immediate loss of a lap. Such infringements would also require the car to be stopped until such problems are sorted out.

9. Chaperoning of New Teams.

Although in some ways this has already been happening, Neil Carter and Jeremy Featherstone emphasised the need to ensure the friendly hand of welcome is extended to all new teams and that these teams can be appropriately placed in the pits nearby willing teams. This particularly important at Castle Combe, where there is likely to be four or more new teams racing.

10. European Championship.

The committee expressed regret that the date of the Europeans has come through too late this year for many teams to arrange to go. Swansea teams were keen, but would need much more notice of the date. Likewise, one of the other teams has already organised another trip for that weekend.

At the moment, Antony Hawkins is the only driver known to be keen but information and requests for volunteers will be posted on the website ASAP. The committee agreed that it would be a great shame if a British team couldn't reciprocate this year for all the trips Karbyk have made over the last four or five years.

On 2006, there is the possibility for this to be in Holland, as they wish to start Pedal car racing over there. At this point we suspect the French know nothing of this idea so Antony will be emailing them once Chris gives him the address.

The committee agreed that the state of the 2006 Europeans needs significant clarification by the middle of the season at the latest.

11. Proposal for a lost cost formula.

Bob Robinson suggested that the fundamental reasons for this proposal needed discovering as a priority. It was noted that unfortunately, there was no one present at the meeting who had an explanation of the reasons for this proposal or the rules.

The general feeling was that the biggest obstacle for new teams was building a car in the first place and that a better solution might be the borrow/buy option for people who see this as a problem. Similarly, the kit car idea was meant to help those teams who did not think they had sufficient skill to build a car.

Bob Robinson expressed concern about overloading the championship with so many formulas. There are currently: PC1, PC2, PC3, PC4, PC0, PCF, PC1 div1, PC1 div2, PC2 div2, PCF, Northern series, Southern series, Sprint series – that's 13 different things to win – or 39 podium positions!

The committee also agreed that even a "good" car is only as good as the driver, and vice-versa.

Bob Robinson also expressed concern that cars built to a lower formula might deem them “substandard” and therefore be restricting to the teams and possibly cause a safety issue. He suggested that if the principle is to give a better chance to teams with less skilled engineers then the divisions are there for them.

However, the committee agreed that as the proposal was unclear at this point it may well be subject of discussion at future meetings.

12. Proposal to run the Championship as a “best of” series.

Bob Budge proposed this and in a written statement suggested:

- a) having to do all the races limits our ability to stage extra races.
- b) 100% favours the teams who have the enthusiasm, time, money and drivers to do all the races fully prepared rather than the fastest team.
- c) Perhaps the fastest team should be champions rather than us worrying about a venue not being supported.

Jeremy Featherstone noted that up until this point the primary aim of the Championship was encouraging more teams to race more races.

Bob Robinson agreed that the cost of travel may prohibit some teams doing a lot of races and dropping one result probably wouldn't affect the overall championship result anyway.

Simon Gare therefore suggested that this might not all apply to all ages, certainly the financial side is more restricting to junior teams. He proposed analysing the last season to see what the percentage of attendance was strictly by class (looking at pure PC1, pure PC2 etc.). He did express concern about a team being allowed to drop a bad result, as this is all part of the competition. However, this then implies teams having to nominate which race to drop, or even being not allowed then to attend a race.

Bob Robinson agreed that the money side of things may be much less of an issue to the pure adult teams.

Chris Featherstone expressed concern that dropping a result would theoretically automatically lower attendance at races which are already on the verge of losing money.

Antony Hawkins suggested that the Northern and Southern leagues were effectively “best of” championships for teams not wanting to travel large distances. He also stated that looking at dropping one race result would not have made a difference to any of the significant positions in any of the Championships in 2004.

Bob Robinson suggested this was an ideal candidate for a website forum vote, with all views sent to the secretary and NOT aired publicly and emphasis made that the vote is not binding to the committee.

13. Proposal to award major trophies at the AGM.

Antony Hawkins suggested this due to the hour or so delay following the Curborough sprints before the presentations and then the lack of enthusiasm and ceremony once they do happen.

Bob Robinson suggested that the last race or two don't count. But concern was expressed about when this was tried before and became dangerous.

Bob and Simon Gare both stated they thought that not awarding the trophies at the race would be a bad idea.

Jeremy Featherstone suggested that Curborough could be a simple 5-hour, but that when previously suggested, the forum had voted massively against this.

The committee agreed to try and make the awards work at Curborough by finding more bodies to help out with the compilation of the results.

14 & 15. Promotion leagues and divisions.

Bob Robinson and Jeremy Featherstone have already been considering this and Pedal Car News carries a page on each different championship. There will also be much clearer information about these for each race.

Chris Featherstone suggested that these pages of information should also be "drip fed" to the website news over the run up to the Championship starting in April.

16. Proposal for one-team one-vote in the committee.

This is covered in the new guidelines proposed in a separate document.

On this specific issue Bob Robinson made the point that the AGM is the chance for each team to be represented on the committee and that if they chose not to then they probably aren't therefore worried if any team has a large presence on the committee. The AGM elect the committee to run the sport for them.

17. AOB.

Antony Hawkins sought to clarify the statement regarding re-discussion of previously discussed topics. To some extent this is also covered in the other document. His suggestion was that when a topic comes up for discussion in quick succession, the minutes and reasons put forward previously should be considered first, before any further discussion takes place.

Jeremy Featherstone announced that Pedal Car News now has a sponsor in the form of Steadman Associates Limited which covers the cost of printing and consumable. The committee expressed its appreciation for this.

18. Next Meeting.

The next committee meeting will take place on the evening of the 23rd July after the first Preston race. Probably at Waddecar Campsite. This will have the primary purpose of organising the 2006 calendar.

Meeting closed.