

## **Report to 2022 AGM from the Chair**

*Aksel Bech 29 September 2022*

It has been a hectic year and I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on some of the highlights and learnings that it brought.

Your present WLA Executive Committee (WEC) stepped up at the Special General Meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 -after an earlier AGM where no one stepped up for any role on the WEC and thus threatening any sanctioned play for the present year and without oversight of any club or school league nor any Rep seasons.

I think it is fair to say the WEC found running the WLA a tougher challenge than we might have hoped, faced also with the absence of sufficient Ops volunteers and antiquated support systems, making it difficult for those volunteers that do step up.

### **Finances**

We do not have Minutes from the 2021 AGM available nor audited accounts so our Treasurer (Joelean Mayall) had the retrospectively work with the Auditor to complete this for the past financial year in order to maintain our Incorporated Societies status (a period where the present WEC were not in office) and then also complete the present 2022 year's audit in time for the AGM now (where we were in office for half the period only).

I would like to acknowledge the mammoth effort and significant time that Joelean has put in to her role -and with a new integrated system that back-ends to Xero, we trust much improved and automated accounting processes are now in place.

When reviewing the financials you will note that the present WEC attempted to break-even; basically we inherited with a healthy bank balance so felt the focus should be on getting players back on grass during and post-Covid rather than adding to the coffers. We achieved that (less the financial impact of the prior WEC's decisions to invest in the WLA trailer & run the U15 Girls Districts Comp fee-free).

### **Thanks**

I also make special mention of Moshe who stepped up to fill the many gaps that were there without sufficient Ops volunteers, including Moshe supporting the Club-hosted league, his governance input at WEC on systems, IT management, social media platforms, policies and as an invaluable support to me as Chair.

I note with gratitude that when we unexpectedly and at short notice had two separate League co-ordinators resign for High School League and the Girls Rep programme, it was Moshe who stepped up to see these through.

Whilst more fell to coaches and managers than was ideal, the reality that nearly 100 U15 and U18 Rep players would have had their opportunity to compete cancelled had Moshe not stepped up and organised these -no small task.

Michael (Gandalf) was the face of WLA at many events as well as hands-on for the High School Boy's League; Gandalf embodies the spirit of volunteer commitment to Lacrosse and I am grateful he stepped up to the WEC as President for the past year.

I also acknowledge Joshua who on our WEC provided many useful insights as well as officiating oversight, and hands-on involvement as an official in the High School League and running U15 Boys Rep programme.

Key volunteers in Ops roles I also want to single out are William Chisholm as instrumental in hosting the U18 and Senior Men's Nationals at Te Awamutu, Lee Baker for H&S, Ursula as always on the officiating side, Kathi for overseeing equipment, Dean for his continued support of girls rep programmes (and his personal support to me as I come up to speed on all matters lacrosse) and Leon Green for on-boarding us to Friendly Manager player & club integrated management system.

I am proud of what we collectively achieved -and the opportunities for players this created. To see how well WLA teams have performed at Rep level, nationally and internationally, is pleasing -but better than that are the greater numbers getting involved at club and school level, loving the game of lacrosse in the Waikato.

## **Learnings**

Not all ran smoothly and we had issues arise in particular in the Boys programme and with the semis/finals draws in the High School League. I acknowledge there were issues and in the latter instance we were forced to make a "least worst" decision on the basis of equity as we judged it. Learnings and improvements that have resulted from that are:

1. Require clear separation of roles (League Co-ordinator/Director vs Head Coach vs Coach vs Manager); all roles required need to be filled for league or comp to go ahead. Players and parents need to understand (and WLA be brave enough) cancelling of leagues or events if insufficient volunteers available to fill all roles.
2. For High School League, appoint separate Girls and Boys League Co-ordinators; to many differences and tension points to run two leagues together. *NB: see 4 below.*
3. WLA to approve draws (alongside budgets) along with any changes; this is not to be a delegation "at sole discretion" to League Co-ordinator/Director.

4. Explore at AGM with Members their appetite for a paid contractor to co-ordinate all leagues as well as provide basic admin support to all aspects of WLA. This will come at a cost and thus would require either an affiliation fee to WLA or increased League/Competition costs in order for WLA to be financially sustainable. Your present WEC is recommending that the incoming WEC consider this initiative -and Members are invited to give their input at AGM or directly to the new WEC by email

## **NZL**

Our relationship with NZL continues to have tensions; we were unable to find resolutions to these including affiliation fees (amount and who pays) as NZL as an organisation were in my personal opinion too internally focussed on gaining their feet as a new NSO (national sports organisation) following the merger of women and man's sides of the game; I continue to believe that whatever answers take us forward will be found by holding hands and moving forward together -NZL appear determined on a "black box" approach and ask all RSO's to patiently wait whilst they find the answers in isolation of their members.

I hasten to add that on a personal level, all interactions I have had with NZL Board Members have been polite and constructive -it is clear everyone involved has the interests of lacrosse at heart- so hope remains.

## **Friendly Manager**

I am delighted that we managed to "go live" with the new Friendly Manager integrated player, league and competition CRM -that backends to Xero and allows for club and equipment management, all in one integrated system. This should greatly ease workload for all involved -and see the end of double or triple entering the same data in to google sheets.

## **Ops volunteers**

I finish my report with a caution: we need more volunteers to run the game. The introduction of Friendly Manager and perhaps a paid Admin position will help -but the reality is that volunteers are required Ops roles that MUST be filled for all the leagues to run. WLA has relied on a small number of volunteers burning out doing everything - and parents of players thinking that coaching or managing their own child's team is enough will find their kids not having a High School League to play in or Rep team to trial for.

We have worked hard to put in place systems and processes that make for a more sustainable WLA. But we still need volunteers at all levels and I urge for people to step up to the roles required. *With my thanks*

