

EMPIRE RFU GU
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
January 11, 2014

Empire RFU GU held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Saturday, January 11, 2014, at 11:30 a.m. The physical meeting took place at Binghamton University in Binghamton, NY. Membership was also able to participate via Conference Call.

ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Renee Ovrut (President), Oscar Prue (VP Operations), Mike Crafton (VP Finance), Kyle Antoian (VP Communications), Steve Molnar (ED Men), Ashley Belline (ED Women), Sean Horan (ED 7s), Brad Kleiner (ED Referees)

Ad-Hoc Members: Gary Heavner (USAR Delegate)

Administrator: J.C. Whipple (Administrator)

Membership:

In Person - Binghamton Men, Hudson Valley Men, Ithaca College Men Morris Women, Old Blue Men Syracuse Chargers Men
Conference Call - Brooklyn Men, Brooklyn Women, Cortland-Homer Men [non-voting], CT Yankees Men, Danbury Men, Gotham Men, Ken-Ton Misfits, Lansdowne Men, Lockport Men, Long Island Men, Monmouth Men, Monmouth Women, Montauk Men, Montclair Men, Morris Men, NYRC Men, NYRC Women, North Jersey Men, Old Maroon Men, PAC Men, Rochester Aardvarks Men, Rochester Colonials Men, Rockaway Men, South Buffalo Men, Suffolk Men, Suffolk Women, Union Men, Village Lions Men, Village Lions Women, White Plains Men

Board Members Absent: John Bradley (ED Colleges)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 11:49 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Renee Ovrut (President) and J.C. Whipple (Administrator) introduced the membership (in-person and via conference) participating in the AGM.

REVIEW OF 2013

Renee Ovrut provided an overview of the EGU in 2013.

- Empire GU Events (Graham Henry, etc.)
- Empire GU player/coaching clinic offerings (June in Rochester / August at Vassar)
- 7s – Olympic Development Academy, NYC team played in England, opportunity for a women's select side (not enough interest).
- College divisions and future with GU (namely we are aligning with USAR's collegiate conference structuring and helping clubs fit into that) – have upstate men and women's divisions. Downstate will just have NSCRO D3 Men's. USAR has collegiate conference policy in effect for 2-3 years now and hoping to move all college clubs to that structure in calendar year 2014, following the majority of downstate moving in 2013.
- Increase of rugby opportunities (number of clubs increase / 7s program expanded).
- Introduction of a Division 4, designed to help foster growth of new teams, or to help smaller clubs grow and flourish, as well as provide an option for more social, and less rigidly organized clubs to develop.
- Old Blue Women – starting with 7s program this summer.
- Addition of the following clubs/teams to the league competitions: Lion Kings (VL alumni team - D4); NYRC D4; South Buffalo D4.
- Requests from three (3) additional clubs/teams regarding entry into the competitive cycle at either D3 or D4, starting in the fall. One team from CT, one from Long Island, and Brooklyn's request to add a D4 team, in addition to their existing D3 team.
- Gary Heavner – Congress Rep to the Board of Directors – elected by Congress. Serves as voice between Congress and BOD, which as a greater function serves as the voice of USAR membership to USAR, as a whole.

FINANCE REPORT

Mike Crafton (VP Finance) provided a Financial Report for EGU for Fiscal Year 2013. Financial Report is attached to this document.

QUESTIONS

Frank Rotovnik (Danbury): MetNY monies – where are they and what is happening with them?

- There needs to be a meeting with the old MetNY clubs – a proposal and vote on what to do with those monies. They are in an account now and nothing has been done with them.

Kevin Holt (Union): The ODA received \$25K and hosting fees of \$19K - where is that money going?

David Pfaehler (Lansdowne): All money allocated to ODA for London? What about Youth?

- For the ODA, EGU contributed \$25K and New England \$15. ODA is responsible to raise \$27K on its own.
- Travel this year for 7s clubs was to Trinidad, London, Las Vegas 7s, World Club Champs (London)
- Only \$5K was allocated to London
- Youth only received \$1K allocation to Play Rugby USA. EGU is not in business of Youth Rugby as there are several state-based organizations running that portion of the game.

Ken Pape (Monmouth): Club forfeits – where is money going and what are plans for it?

- This matter was discussed on most recent EGU Board call – clubs that were forfeited against were asked to submit any financial losses due to hardship. None came forward.
- Any money received from forfeit fines has been deposited into bank account. No plan for money.
- This could be part of new policy moving forward and is always up for discussion.

SR. WOMEN'S REPORT

Ashley Belline (ED Women) provided an overview of the Sr. Women.

“This year was a tough, yet exciting experimental new year involving a new structure and new CR. It proved difficult in scheduling and accommodating all the new teams now that we have combined with NERFU but I also think it was extremely beneficial for Empire teams. It allowed for new competition and a new division (III) which is going to progress the play and competitiveness of Empire teams.”

Following Playoffs in the spring, there will be a review of promotion/relegation of teams through divisions as some have already expressed interest. A round-robin will be played in Spring for D3 teams, hosted by Springfield.

Playoff clubs this year are:

D1 - Boston, Albany, Providence, Monmouth

D2 - Beantown, Burlington, Brooklyn and Charles River

(seeds for Brooklyn and CR will be determined after make-up game on April 26)

Suggestions for the future: instill a women's forfeit penalty for prevention of forfeits in D1 and D2; and continue to push for B-side matches, especially in D1.

SR. MEN'S REPORT

Steve Molnar (ED Men) provided an overview of the Sr. Men.

There was a new structure this year, which presented challenges but has set a foundation for the future. There was a new division (D4) and a restructure of D1. The EGU worked hard to identify clubs and where the best possible division where to place them.

Some divisions will complete their schedules in the Spring. Those divisions will have the opportunity to compete in the National Playoffs, with EGU and New England champions squaring off to determine the Northeast rep (one of eight in the country). The crossover match with New England is to be determined, with Albany as a possible site.

QUESTIONS

Brian Shanahan (Morris): What are the B-side requirements?

- The Home team is required to offer a B-side game. It is up to the Visiting team to accept or decline. In D3 and D4, there are no specific requirements. This is something that can be reviewed on an annual basis and changed, if needed.

Mike Crafton (VP Finance) said at this point in the meeting, that, if elected President, he would propose moving the AGM to late summer, prior to the start of the Fall competitive season. This will help to drive discussion around topics and issues which directly impact the season at hand.

Jorge Quintana (Brooklyn): Why is the playoff structure not consistent in D1, D2 and D3?

- There is a necessity to complete the season with a disparate number of teams in each division. There is a hard-stop date of May 17, and there needs to be a Northeast champion determined by then. Playoff structures are assembled accordingly.

Ken Pape (Monmouth): Is there a reason why teams are having home field advantage taken away?

- The structure and number of teams are different in each division. There will be a review for the next competitive structure between EGU and New England. This is in a better position moving forward, having been through the cycle once.

David Pfaehler (Lansdowne): Is the competitive structure for spring set? Or can new Board change?

- The competitive structure is set. The new Board cannot change.
- D3 might need some review based on schedule / playoffs – agreement needs to be reached

Old Maroon: What is the possibility of a D4 playoffs?

- The intention is to have a crossover this spring between Champions of D4 North and D4 South.

COLLEGES REPORT

Renee Ovrut read a report from John Bradley (ED Colleges), who was unable to attend due to personal matters.

Fall Season Results

- * Upstate Women's DI - Only Univ of Buffalo and Syracuse were eligible, so not a complete conference but played in hybrid with women's D2 and sought at large bids for ACRA. Buffalo lost to Army in round of 16 and Syracuse lost to Norwich in the same round. Norwich went on to win the whole thing. Prospects for at large bids in USA Rugby tourney in spring are unclear.
- Upstate Men's D2 - Niagara University won the EmpireGU title and went on to the round of 16 in Salisbury, MD. Lost a close one to Coast Guard and were eliminated in that round.
- Upstate Women's D2 - SUNY Geneseo won the EmpireGU title and went on to make it to the round of eight in ACRA, losing to Vassar. Geneseo is AQ for USA Rugby's tourney in the spring. Ithaca, the number 2 Empire team, made the best of an at large bid losing by only one point to Notre Dame in the ACRA round of eight.
- Upstate Men's NSCRO - Union won the EmpireGU title and went on to beat Bowdoin in a regional playoff. They then went on to lose a well contested match against Salve Regina in the NSCRO Northeast Regional Tourney.
- Upstate Women's NSCRO - Univ of Rochester won the EmpireGU title and went on to lose a tough match against Roger Williams in NSCRO national quarter-finals.
- Downstate Men's NSCRO - Montclair State won the EmpireGU title and went on to defeat Susquehanna University Mid-Atlantic South Region Qualifier. They progressed to the spring.

Other News

1. No one has stepped up to be college director, as yet.
2. No one stepping up to form new structure, but recommend making new appeal on this and director position after classes are back in session (if not at the AGM).
3. Dues. As many only got the bills at the end of term, I would expect more receipts and questions after the term starts.
4. Referee dues. Assisting NYSRRS in collections.
5. Sevens or 15s for spring? Hearing mixed reports on participation. ACRA, NSCRO, and USAR are all inquiring about conference intentions.

It is the intention of the EGU to move Colleges out to their own conferences, per the direction of USA Rugby. There is a need for leadership in order for this to happen. No College Director means no structure, no schedules and serious issues for the Colleges.

SEVENS REPORT

Sean Horan (ED Sevens) provided a report for Empire GU Sevens.

- It was an extraordinarily successful season for the EGU Sevens. For the first time and EGU Summer 7s Series was held – (15) Men’s clubs and (12) Women’s clubs took part. PAC won the Men’s title, with Brookly capturing the Women’s.
- High School Boys and Girls were also part of the series – (23) Boys and (20) Girls clubs took part. Teams from New England were partitioning for entry as there was nothing similar in their region. In coming years, this series will be expanded for greater reach and inclusion.
- Five NRU teams took part in the series, with Old Blue winning the Northeast. It advanced to the National Tournament and finished third in the country.
- 2014 goals for the Series include initiating competition Upstate and potentially matching the top clubs from Upstate and Downstate against each other. More Women’s clubs are being sought for competition and a committee has been formed to work on identification, outreach and engagement. As stated previously on the High School side, working with New England and building the High School segment is important.
- The Olympic Development Academy had an incredible year. Sean thanked the EGU for its support. The ODA is open to all players – approx (70) attended the tryout with a final selection of (25). Additional players were identified through competition. Four (4) coaches and one (1) manager from EGU volunteered countless hours to the effort.
- The ODA Sevens took part in six to sevens tournaments, including the World Club Championships., where the squad took fifth place overall. ODA was only amateur club in Top 5 at competition – all others were professional sides.
- Same weekend as World Club Champs, a second side went to Serevi 7s in Colorado. ODA had a great showing, going undefeated on first day.
- ODA also attended tournaments in Trinidad, where side won title, beating club from Northern England.
- Two sides attended Las Vegas 7s.
- ODA held a clinic as part of NY7s. Clinics upcoming in Spring and Summer. Goal is to hold at least one Upstate.
- Budget was for \$70K - \$40K from EGU (\$25K) and New England. The balance will have to come from other resources, so there is work to be done.

QUESTIONS

Christina Esposito (Morris): How is Women’s restructure taking place?

- Goal is to have process as easy as possible and that is the goal of the committee in place.

Jorge Quintana (Brooklyn): Is there a Women’s ODA or plans for one? 7s Coaching Clinics?

- There are several Women’s camps around the country, but no ODA in place. The Women have a different structure for the pipeline. There are no specific 7s coaching clinics planned, but that is something to be looked at. Sean will forward George information on the ODA and discuss ways he might initiate for Women.

Pat Maroney (Monmouth): Is USAR being more fair than in past? What is ratio for EDU in ODA?

- USAR leadership met with Premiership with in London. There is more structure in place, which bodes well for ODA.
- As part of the ODA side, there are (8-10) players. As part of EGU support, EGU logo was placed on shorts. EGU received great exposure and discussion on ESPN coverage World Club Champs.

Joe Finnern (Village Lions): Is the ODA managed by EGU? How are players moved on to USA side?

- Sean Horan serves at the Director of the ODA, which was formed through EGU. The ODA is open to everyone and there is a standing invitation for coaches to take part, provide input and implement strategies.
- Sean has weekly calls with Matt Hawkins, head coach of USA 7s. Sean recommends players and they discuss plans.

REFEREES REPORT

Brad Kleiner (ED Referees) provided a report for the Referees.

Rugby Referee Society of New York (RRSNY) is the downstate referee society, covering everything south of the Catskills. New York State Rugby Referees Society (NYSRRS) is the upstate referee society, covering everything north of the Catskills.

Overall, this was a good seasons, but there is a need for more referees. It is the responsibility of all clubs to push for recruiting of new referees.

In the new EGU Policy Handbook, one of the new items pertaining to referees is the requirement of all clubs to provide one (1) person to serve as a referee. That person must be certified as a referee and allocate a minimum of three (3) days throughout the year. The hope is to grow the referee pool as people would become interested in refereeing moving forward.

Referee course will be offered at various points throughout the spring:

- Feb. 1 – Monmouth
- March 1 – Fordham Prep
- March – RPI or Colgate
- March – Buffalo

USA COMPETITIVE STRUCTURE

Gary Heavner (USA Rugby Congress Rep to Board of Directors) provided an overview of the USA Rugby Competitive Structure.

Gary explained that the Congress Rep to the BOD is voted upon by the Congress. Congress is the grass roots portion of USA Rugby and broad view of the game. The Congress moving forward will have less senior reps and more college and youth reps.

Gary is the first person from the East to be voted to this position and will have a large impact on rugby in the Northeast and especially for the EGU.

The country is divided into eight (8) competitive regions – four in the East, four in the West. Our region includes two Gus – the Empire GU and New England. When National playoffs take place, our Region needs to determine one champion.

The new 7s structure will be rolled out in 2015, at the earliest.

The tweaks and pilots within the Competitive Structure that have been rolled out over the past three or four years are in place now (ie Heineken Cup). Winning the league means more that anything else. Plan is to look at one template for the entire country and follow it.

SURVEY OF MEMBERSHIP

A survey has been compiled and will be introduced to membership in the weeks following the AGM. This will help new Board to chart course for future of GU. The purpose is to seek the input of the membership. All clubs are encouraged to drive participation with their members.

GU POLICY HANDBOOK

Kyle Antoian (VP Communications) provided an overview of the development and process which led to the creation of the EGU Policy Handbook. This will be a working document, and is meant to be reviewed and edited on an ongoing basis. The current form of the Policy Handbook is posted on the EGU website and membership is invited to review and comment. The Board will take suggested edits under advisement and vote on any changes.

VOTE – BOARD POSITIONS & USA RUGBY CONGRESS REPS

For the voting portion of the meeting, attendees in-person cast paper ballots. Attendees via conference call emailed ballots to J.C. Whipple.

PRESIDENT

Mike Crafton (Bayonne) was the only person on the ballot for President. Mike stated he was withdrawing his candidacy so that nominations could take place from the floor. He also encouraged all those on the ballot for other Board positions to do the same.

Mike Crafton (Bayonne) was nominated by Renee Ovrut, seconded by Sarah Rutman.

Being no other nominations for President, Jim Robinson (Hudson Valley) cast a single vote.

Mike Crafton elected as President.

VICE PRESIDENT - OPERATIONS

Steve Lewis (Old Blue) declined to withdraw candidacy for position.

Being no other nominations for VP Operations, Jim Robinson (Hudson Valley) cast a single vote.

Steve Lewis elected as VP Operations.

VICE PRESIDENT – COMMUNICATIONS

Bryan Smith (Old Blue) withdrew his candidacy. Nominations were open from the floor.

Rob Mayers (Old Blue) was nominated by Steve Molnar for VP Communications, seconded by Steve Lewis.

Being no other nominations for VP Communications, Jim Robinson (Hudson Valley) cast a single vote.

Rob Mayers elected as VP Communications.

VICE PRESIDENT - FINANCE

Matt Winard (Gotham) and Kyle Depew (Old Blue) both withdrew candidacy. Nominations were open from the floor.

Matt Winard (Gotham) was nominated by Christina Esposito for VP Finance, seconded by Joe Longo.

Being no other nominations for VP Finance, Jim Robinson (Hudson Valley) cast a single vote.

Matt Winard elected as VP Finance.

ED MEN

Ken Pape (Monmouth) withdrew his candidacy. Nominations were open from the floor.

Ken Pape (Monmouth) was nominated by Oscar Prue, seconded by Steve Molnar. Scott Marinich (Danbury) was nominated by Frank Rotovnik, seconded by Jim Robinson). Following a discussion, Scott Marinich decided to withdraw his candidacy and offered assistance to Ken Pape.

Being no other nominations for ED Men, Jim Robinson (Hudson Valley) cast a single vote.

Ken Pape elected as ED Men.

ED WOMEN

Billy Nichols (Old Blue) withdrew his candidacy. Nominations were open from the floor.

Sarah Rutman (Morris) was nominated by Christina Esposito, seconded by Oscar Prue.

Being no other nominations for ED Women, Jim Robinson (Hudson Valley) cast a single vote.

Sarah Rutman elected as ED Women.

ED SEVENS

Sean Horan (Old Blue) declined to withdraw candidacy for position.

Being no other nominations for ED Sevens, Jim Robinson (Hudson Valley) cast a single vote.

Sean Horan elected as ED Sevens.

ED COLLEGES

Open Seat – no candidates.

ED REFEREES

Appointed position. Brad Kleiner will continue to serve in this position.

USA RUGBY CONGRESS REPS

A vote would be held for one (1) rep and one (1) alternate from Empire GU to the USA Rugby Congress. Nominations were open from the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE

Mike Crafton (Bayonne) was the only person running for the Rep position.

Being no other candidates for Congress Rep, Jim Robinson (Hudson Valley) cast a single vote.

Mike Crafton elected as EGU Rep to USA Rugby Congress.

ALTERNATE

Renee Ovrut (Village Lions) and Ken Pape (Monmouth) were running for Alternate Representative. Renee and Ken both made presentations on their candidacy and then left the room and call, respectively.

Following a brief discussion, Gary Heavner said that it should be considered to add a second alternate position. He detailed the inner workings of Congress and the importance of networking, establishing relationships and learning the process.

A motion was made by Gary Heavner (Old Blue) to add a second Empire GU Alternate Rep to USA Rugby Congress. Seconded by Steve Molnar.

Motion passes by a vote of 13-7.

Being only two candidates for Congress Alternate, Jim Robinson (Hudson Valley) cast a single vote.

Renee Ovrut and Ken Pape elected as EGU Alternate Reps to USA Rugby Congress.

NEW BUSINESS

Mike Crafton (President-elect) gave a quick overview of his plans as President. He said he would empower the respective VPs and Directors to provide leadership in their specific verticals and work with the membership to apply new and meaningful policy. He also said the Board would be meeting less frequently, only when large-scale votes were necessary – approximately three-to-four times per year.

On the topic of AGM, Mike said he would propose moving the AGM to late summer, so discussion and policy votes would be more applicable to the timeline and start of the Fall competitive seasons.

VOTE ON NEW CLUBS

Three (3) new clubs have applied for membership to EGU:

- Old Blue Women
- New Haven Men
- Ithaca College Women (social)

A vote by the membership was held to grant membership to EGU. Votes were cast for the slate of proposed new member clubs.

The new members were approved, 20-3.

Clubs are admitted under a Probationary period, which ensures that everything is in order. Board will evaluate standing after one (1) year and then vote on full member status.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Nick Anzalone (Brooklyn) asked about the relationship between EGU and USOC / USAR, and also if there was any work being done with the proposed stadium in Queens. Sean Horan (ED 7s) replied that he speaks weekly with Matt Hawkins (USA 7s Head Coach) and also keeps in contact with the Olympic Center. Gary Heavner stated that USAR identifies all new stadiums being built in America and works with developers to include Rugby field specs.
- Dr. Victor Lopez presented an update on his study surrounding injuries associated with Rugby 7s. He thanked EGU for its support.

In 2009-10, Dr. Lopez was part of the first publication to identify rugby-related injuries. The analysis was performed at local sevens tournament, tracking incident rates.

Over a three-year period (approximately 15 tournaments), the study found that Head and Neck injuries were occurring locally at 5x the rate of those at HSBC 7s worldwide. Men experienced a higher rate of head and neck injuries, while women experienced ankle and knee injuries at a higher rate.

Dr. Lopez stated that this study is at the forefront of this analysis and two abstracts have been accepted by the American Orthopedic Society.

There is great value in this study and it will continue to benefit all levels of rugby through identification, evaluation and prevention of Rugby-related injuries.

- Gary Heavner said it was appropriate that the membership recognize and thank the outgoing Board members for their dedication and service to the Empire GU. A round of applause was held for those members, including:
 - Renee Ovrut (President)
 - Oscar Prue (VP Operations)
 - Kyle Antoian (VP Communications)
 - Steve Molar (ED Men)
 - Ashley Belline (ED Women)
 - John Bradley (ED Colleges)

ADJOURNMENT

Being no other business, there was a motion and second to adjourn the AGM. The meeting was officially adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J.C. Whipple
Administrator

	2013 - Actuals	2013 - Budgeted
Beginning Balance at 1/1/2013	\$ 36,064	\$ 36,064
*College Fees Collected	\$ 15,600	15,600
Senior Fees Collected	\$ 76,663	72,000
Total Annual Income	\$ 92,263	\$ 87,600
Total Accum Income	\$ 128,327	\$ 123,664
Expenses		
Senior Women	\$ 1,500	\$ 8,000
Senior Men (Incl ODA)	\$ 26,500	\$ 20,000
Subscriptions to The Rugby Site	\$ 4,000	\$ 10,000
Paid Admin	\$ 16,375	\$ 15,000
Trophies	\$ 323	\$ 1,000
Admin Travel	\$ 6,551	\$ 4,000
Admin Costs	\$ 2,659	\$ 2,000
Ambulatory	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,700
Youth Development	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,000
Hosting	\$ 19,817	\$ 10,000
Total Expenses	\$ 80,025	\$ 73,700
Ending Balance	\$ 48,302	\$ 49,964