

Draft minutes of NSW Fencing General Meeting 1st September 2011

1. Attendance and apologies

Attending:

Duncan Fairweather – Affiliated member and President, NSWFA

John Chow – Affiliated member and Vice president, NSWFA

Frances Chow – Affiliated member and Secretary, NSWFA

Nigel Cotman – Registered member and Treasurer, NSWFA

Alex Andre – Affiliated member and Ordinary member Executive, NSWFA

Jessika Gauke – Registered member and Ordinary member Executive, NSWFA

David Hoffman – Affiliated member (Coach) and Ordinary member Executive, NSWFA

Oreste Gentile – Affiliated member (Coach), NSWFA

Josephine Snell – Registered member, NSWFA

Apologies:

Beverley Chan

Anna FitzGerald

Harriet Jordan

Michelle MacAuslan

Vincent Newton

Angelo Santangelo

Leslie Witkop

Peter Witkop

2. Proxies held were listed by the Secretary:

Proxy holder	Member name	Class of member	Proxy authorisation on the motion to endorse the proposed Selection Policy 2012
Alex Andre	Joseph Ling	Affiliated	As proxy determines
Frances Chow	Sally Bennett	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	Fiona Budniak	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Jacqueline Budniak	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Padraig Byrne	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Simon Capon	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Charlton D'Allsen	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	Wendy D'Allsen	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	Nick Davies	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Jacobus De Beer	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Lincoln Dekab	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	Scott Evans	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	Bradley Fawkes	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	Soraya Fawkes	Registered	In Favour

Frances Chow	Anthony Gaskell	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Kathryn Glover	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	David Grenet	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Charles Gwynn	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Jason Held	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Samuel Hughes	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Harriet Jordan	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Charles Kidson	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Michael Lamont	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Brendan Laury	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	Alexey Logatchov	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Grace Macalpine	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Luke Mansfield	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Phillip Mansfield	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Kim Moore	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Suzanne Newton	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Vincent Newton	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Maximilian Peek	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Derrick Roberts	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Angelo Santangelo	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Rosaria Santangelo	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	Christopher Thompson	Registered	In Favour
Frances Chow	Andrey Tyshchenko	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Anthony Watts	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Petroc Wilton	Affiliated	In Favour
Frances Chow	Pam Zopf	Registered	In Favour
Duncan Fairweather	Phillip Aitchison	Affiliated	As proxy determines
Jessika Gauke	Anthony Gauke	Affiliated	As proxy determines
Jessika Gauke	Veronica Gauke	Registered	As proxy determines
Oreste Gentile	Carla Ciccarelli	Registered	Against
Oreste Gentile	Laurence Dooley	Affiliated	Against
Oreste Gentile	Saverino Salemi	Registered	Against
Oreste Gentile	Veronica Tseng-Donald	Registered	Against
David Hoffman	Margaret Debenham	Registered	As proxy determines
David Hoffman	Leah Hay	Registered	As proxy determines
David Hoffman	William Hay	Registered	As proxy determines
David Hoffman	Michael Howard	Affiliated	Against
David Hoffman	Dragan Jovanovich	Registered	As proxy determines
David Hoffman	David Jin	Affiliated	Against
David Hoffman	Nadia Rosenov	Registered	As proxy determines
David Hoffman	Dominic Witkop	Registered	As proxy determines
David Hoffman	Leslie Witkop	Registered	As proxy determines
David Hoffman	Simon Witkop	Registered	As proxy determines
David Hoffman	Peter Witkop	Honorary	As proxy determines

3. The proposed policy was discussed.
 - Comments received from Harriet Jordan were read by the Secretary (See Tabled Comments – Attachment 1).
 - Comments on the policy were tabled by David Hoffman (See Tabled Comments – Attachment 2)
 - Comments received by the Secretary by Phillip Aitchison were passed to the Executive for consideration.
 - Oreste Gentile read a number of comments received from members of the Marconi fencing club
 - Josephine Snell read a list of her comments on the policy.
 - The Vice-President provided responses to several of the concerns raised.
 - It was agreed that the Executive would consider making revisions to the policy in response to the comments received.
4. The President moved that the meeting endorse the proposed NSWFA Selection Policy 2012. This motion was seconded by the Vice-President.
5. A vote was taken by the Secretary. The motion to endorse the policy was carried by 47 votes in favour to 19 votes against, with Josephine Snell abstaining.
6. The proposed review of the rankings system was discussed. The meeting agreed that a working group of members with expertise in rankings systems in general and fencing rankings systems in particular be convened to work on formulating an improved rankings system for NSW.
7. There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8:25 pm.

Dear Frances

Please accept my apologies for being unable to attend the meeting: unfortunately I have another commitment at exactly the same time.

I would be most grateful if you could read the following statement of my views aloud to the meeting.

I have read through the proposed New South Wales Fencing Association Selection Policy 2012, and in general I believe it represents an acceptable compromise between those who want a fully subjective policy, and those who want a fully objective, result-based policy. Thank you to those members of the Executive who have spent time developing it.

However, there are two key points I would like presented to the meeting.

Point 1

I do have one major concern with the proposed policy. The final place on the 'A' team is based on results at the National Championships, but is still restricted to the initially identified 'athletes in contention'. However, there might a circumstance in which a high-performing athlete does not have a State ranking – e.g. due to residing overseas, or not competing while recovering from an injury – but who is nevertheless able to perform well at the National Championships. For example, last year Fred Jaccard was the second highest placed NSW fencer in the Men's Sabre, and yet he had no previous State or National ranking. It is even theoretically possible that such a person might win the National Championships – and yet they would be ineligible for selection to the State Team. I do not believe such a person should be eligible for preselection, but I do believe that they should be able to prove their worth on the day of the individual competition. I feel that the absence of this is a flaw in the policy, but one that is quite easily rectified.

If it is possible for amendments to the policy to be proposed and accepted at the meeting, I would like to suggest that someone in attendance propose that the words 'one of the seven athletes in contention' be deleted from point 1 on page 4. This point would therefore read:

The position of the fourth member of the 'A' team will be offered to the fencer with the highest ranking in the corresponding individual event at the competition who is not already pre-selected for the 'A' team.

If it is not constitutionally possible for motions to change the policy to be endorsed at this meeting, then I would request the Executive (should the policy be endorsed) to consider the possibility of making this or a similar change, preferably before the National Championships.

Point 2

Notwithstanding my concerns about the policy, I have instructed my proxy to vote **in favour of** endorsing it.

My reason for doing this is that I understand there is a great deal of uncertainty as to what the position will be should the proposed policy **not** be endorsed. Under normal circumstances, I believe that if a new policy is not voted in then, by default, the existing policy remains in place. However, as the previous Selection Policy has been suspended, the current situation is that selections are being made without a policy, based, I believe, purely on results in the individual event.

If it were certain that this status quo would continue, I would probably be voting against endorsement of the policy as it currently stands.

However, I have been told that it may be possible, constitutionally, for the Executive to reinstate the previous policy, or some other version, without further consultation with the members, if they feel this is preferable to having a void.

I am not at all comfortable with the uncertainty of the consequences of a 'no' vote. I would therefore prefer to endorse the new policy, and work towards minor adjustments, rather than run the risk of a completely different policy being brought in – or reinstated – without further discussion.

Yours sincerely

Harriet Jordan

In Opposition to the newly proposed NSWFA Selection system

25/08/11

Firstly I'd like to acknowledge those that have worked on and drafted the 2012 submission. Having been through this exercise myself, I fully appreciate the time and effort involved.

Following my previous submission for the NSWFA Selection policy, in response to the circulated discussion paper; and reading the 'Collins Report' – The Proper Development of a Selection policy for NSW Fencing, there are a number of reasons why I am unable to support the NSWFA Selection Policy 2012 proposal.

Bruce Collins in his report states: "Firstly, it would be most unwise to ignore the accumulated wisdom and experience to be found in the Australian Sports Commission's guide to selection principles entitled "Getting it right: Guidelines for Selection".

On the face of it, we seem to have significantly abandoned many key principles contained in the ASC document "Getting it Right: Guidelines for Selection" (hereafter referred to as 'the guidelines'). There may be good reasons for departing from these suggestions in the formulation of a selection policy, but to date, I am yet to see them. It is my opinion that the current draft has selectively applied suggestions in the Collins report, and left others unaddressed. The same could be said of this selective application of recommendations as those of the guidelines.

I also believe a return to a primarily objectively based system, as opposed to a blended objective/subjective approach is a regression for the sport and demonstrates we don't have faith in our selectors or Head Coach. Underpinning elements for me in such a system are a trust of the people doing the job (as demonstrated by the results attained by teams chosen under the previous, criticized system) to do what they have been appointed to do. To progress in any endeavour, someone has to trust someone. I think this is the position we should be approaching this from.

Nowhere in the **Objectives** of the 2012 is there a mention of selecting the teams most likely to win. The mention of strongest team can not be accurately prescribed from ranking points alone, that's where subjectivity and selector discretion should be used. I believe this is a fundamental omission. The Collins report states: "The defined objective must be to select the best team of fencers to represent NSW at the Australian Fencing Championships." Having a process as an objective seems counter productive to me. Surely the objective should be to select winning teams, the method for doing so is how the policy is implemented. To quote the guidelines (p16) "*The aim of the process should be to enable selection of the best possible team in line with the overall philosophy/ aim for the event. Consideration must be given not only to how to enable the best team to be selected but also how the selection process enhances the optimisation of performance at the event itself.*"

The guidelines then go on to discuss "**Who should be responsible for determining and implementing the selection philosophy?**

Members of the high performance team, including the head coach or other high performance program leader, are entrusted with the responsibility for all aspects of high performance and will be judged, at least in part, by results at major

championships. As a Getting It Right: guidelines for selection 16 matter of common sense these individuals should have significant input. The head coach, high performance director or equivalent persons responsible for the relevant area of high performance (or junior development) are logical candidates for determining an appropriate.” Implementation and planning responsibilities are further outlined in more detail under C(iv) of the guidelines. In the 2012 draft, NSWFA has not followed this. I fail to see why those who will ultimately take no responsibility for selection or performance of athletes should have the same input as those who will be held responsible.

The 2012 draft ignores the process of **selecting the selectors** (section F of the guidelines), which the guidelines suggest “*is as important as selecting the athletes*”. Section F(iii) goes on to state: “*Specific knowledge of the athletes involved in the selection process will be essential to the selectors at some point. For this reason, appointing the leader of the program (for example, the national performance director, head coach, junior head coach) as a selector should be considered. This may, on occasion, raise questions of bias if this person has established relationships with some athletes and not others, but this should be capable of management with a robust conflict of interest policy (refer to section F[v]). It should also be remembered that the leader of the program will only be one vote on a panel of selectors. If it is decided not to appoint the leader of the program as a voting selector, they should be available at the time of selection meetings in order to provide their specialist knowledge to the selectors.*

It must be acknowledged that, in most sports, it is difficult to find people with the requisite skills and knowledge to be selectors who do not have some continuing interaction with the sport, and therefore possibly with athletes vying for selection.”

Conflict of Interest is dealt with in section F(v) NSWFA’s 2012 specifically rules this out, which I believe is an error. If registered NSW Coaches and NSW Executive members cannot serve on the selection commission, this leaves only athletes and parents/siblings of athlete members. As far as real or perceived conflicts of interest are concerned, there is a strong possibility of conflicts of interest arising from selectors being:

- Anyone with a direct conflict of interest. i.e. any athlete who may be in contention for selection under the policy, or any parent/guardian/partner of any athlete that may be in contention for selection under the policy, as they may unduly influence selection criteria.
- Anyone with any close personal/family relationships with athlete/s that may be in contention for selection as they may unduly influence selection criteria and/or process.
- Anyone with any potential conflict of interest (pragmatically difficult, almost infinite possibilities in a small fencing community) not specifically mentioned above.

When this is considered, virtually no one is eligible to be a selector. I feel the likelihood of a parent/friend/family member to demonstrate bias for/against selection is equal to or greater than that of a coach. The key differential being a coach understands the sport, it’s mechanics, the athletes and their

strengths/weaknesses/nuances. It would be highly unlikely for a parent /athlete to have the same level of understanding. So the 2012 draft suggests we're prefer an inexperienced, comparably uneducated bias over the opposite. I cannot agree with this.

Having objective selection for 3 members of a 4 fencer team is an objective system, **not** a blended one. The results from the contentious blended 2010 system demonstrated that despite resistance, the policy was successful in selecting successful teams for events overall. Why we have ignored the results produced by the criticized 2010 system astounds me. Surely performance and attainment of the stated policy objectives should be the first thing that is examined. The results from selections made under the previous system clearly demonstrate that despite a minority of the memberships bleating about perceived conflict of interest, the selectors in fact completed their undertakings in a professional, efficient and unbiased manner. The teams they selected were as if not more successful than the previous year. This key fact has been completely ignored. So we're actually fixing something that wasn't broken. Why?

Whilst I appreciate a review of the NSW ranking system will be a separate endeavour to be undertaken in the future, the 2012 policy does nothing to address previously identified flaws in athlete ranking due to increased participation, rather than consistent (though less frequent) winning.

David Hoffman

Senior Member/Coach

UNSW FC Delegate

NSWFA executive member