

A report to the South Eastern Centre Management and Combine Chairmen.
28-02-2010

As I indicated in my annual report, we need to revise how the centre is funded by its member clubs. This has been brought about by the devolution of the disciplines to their own combines and the advent of Basic Insured Events being permitted from Rugby.

Before we can move on we need to fully understand where we are at present. Prior to me being treasurer the centre had evolved a system of payments, where by a club paid for various items separately, albeit on one invoice from the permit secretary. Permit Fee, depending on the status of the event, Stewards Fee, Gazettee Publication of Regulations, and various amounts for components of insurance. So much for Public Liability, so much for Personal Indemnity, both related to your paying gate, and so much for Personal Accident for Officials and Competitors. A lot of these overheads were set amounts per event, and in the late 90's when Peter and I took over from Timber and Ralph entry numbers were falling. With fixed overheads and smaller entries, events became uneconomic to run. The insurance was the first to change and all the various charges were rolled in to one and a per capita charge for each rider was introduced. As your new treasurer in 1998 I proposed that we do the same with the various fees paid to the centre. Permit Fee, Stewards Fee, TSM publication all be rolled in to a centre levy paid as a per capita charge on the entry. For anybody new to the system, they "think" The Permit is Free, the Steward is Free, the TSM is Free, but as we all know there is no such thing as a free lunch. All these things and more are paid for by our centre Levy.

Just as Ralph had to adjust the centres finances with change of circumstance, then so must I. The per capita system has served us well for over ten years, but nothing stands still, there is constant change around us, and we have to move with that change.

In order to stay competitive with alternative service providers the Directors at ACU Rugby introduced a budget priced insurance package, primarily aimed at the professional promoter. They could not be seen offering this to newcomers, without also making it available to existing clubs. With clubs being in the same position as Rugby with other promoters being more competitive, many have taken advantage of the Basic Insurance package. The down side for us is that the Permit for these events are issued from Rugby and we therefore have no jurisdiction over them at all. We have no authority to impose levies or charges, or to appoint Stewards or any other officials. So far, most of the clubs in the SEC that have taken advantage of the Basic Insurance package have made a voluntary payment to the centre of an amount equal to what they would have paid in centre levy, but I do not believe that this is a satisfactory way to continue. We don't know what events are running, the club should advise the centre permit secretary and get the permit application signed, but how long will it be before this part is bypassed because intransigent centres block and slow down the process. Even if we know the event is on we don't see the signing on sheets so how do we know if the centre return is correct?

When we restructured the centre to make the discipline combines more autonomous we realised that they would need funding from the centre treasurer. Every year each of the combines has received £250 from centre funds to assist their running costs. The

centre has continued to support Inter Centre Events when requested, and to provide replica trophies to Centre Championship winners.

We now need to rethink the funding issues, as there are numerous implications and repercussions just waiting to trip us up if we are not careful how we go about it. My first thoughts are that we let each combine raise their own income by what ever method they choose, set their own budget, and cover their own costs for all the things that the centre pay at present. Each combine then pays an affiliation fee to the centre based on events run or number of competitors. What we need to guard against, is that we (The SEC) are not then classed the same as ACU Rugby, with the combines saying “what are we paying the Centre for? What do they do for us”? We need a credible answer to this question, “what *do* we do for the combines”? At present we provide clubs with a permitting system, stewards, a publication for regulations, and political representation at the National Governing Body. As things progress I can see us providing less of these functions. Speed Event Clubs will be getting their permits and stewards from Rugby, leaving only the trials events getting their permits from the centre, it therefore makes sense that we consider vesting the issuing of trials permits with the Trials Combine. The TSM has served us well, as did the SE Gazettee before it, but those with long enough memories will recall that in the past we have had to move with the times. Brian Goldsmith moved it from it’s home in Swindon to local production, then Andy Wood, latterly assisted by John Brammal, took it on and produce a publication to be proud of, but the electronic age means that we must embrace change. Email communication and electronic entries and payments are not only quicker than the TSM, but far more cost effective. This leaves the centre with only the Political Issues to cover.

My next task is to calculate what it will cost just to provide the Political Cover and general co-ordination of the centre, we can then consider how that money could be raised, but before that I need your comments and input, am I going in the right direction is this what the combines want? Is it what the clubs want?

Roger Brown,
Centre Treasurer,
28-02-2010