

BUTBA Chair Report - 2014/15

The last couple of years have been challenging for the committee and the tour. Last summer it was announced that tenpin bowling had lost its BUCS sanction, due to insufficient entries into the Championships. BUCS require an entry level of at least 300 bowlers; we had between 130 and 160 entrants for the three Championships before the sanction was withdrawn. The loss of the BUCS sanction posed questions at the time that we had no answers for – how would clubs be affected, and by how much would entries into the Championships suffer with less funding available from universities?

One year later, the situation is clearer. Student participation on the BUTBA tour has fallen, and the Championships had a much lower entry level than any previous Championships. This could be because of a couple of factors, such as the delay in publishing the entry forms due to the working group and subsequent discussions on the format, but the lack of funding available to clubs has contributed to this year's disappointing Championships entry levels. Ex-student numbers have also fallen on the BUTBA tour, but ex-students are not affected by the BUCS sanction, so this is something else that needs to be looked into urgently.

In October 2013 BUTBA entered into an affiliate with the BTBA, with all BUTBA members automatically becoming affiliate members of the BTBA. The understanding was that affiliate membership was open to all student and ex-student BUTBA members (although this was changed to ex-students who had been out of education for no more than two years), and there were only minor differences between affiliate and full BTBA membership. However, a vote of the BTBA Executive Council in February terminated the affiliation as some on the BTBA Executive Council felt it was wrong for affiliate members to participate in full-sanctioned BTBA leagues and tournaments. Talks are ongoing within the BTBA and between the BTBA and BUTBA to come up with an alternative partnership.

It is not all doom and gloom though. We now have more clarity about how to move forwards and rejuvenate the tour following two years of fighting to remain part of BUCS and guesswork after the sanction was withdrawn, and despite the failure of the BTBA affiliation there are those within the BTBA who are actively working for greater co-operation with and inclusion of university bowling. We had our first attempts at organising and running the BUTBA Championships and Ex-Student Championships, and we can improve and grow both tournaments in the future. We have introduced the excellent Pinfeed newsletter to provide a regular round-up of BUTBA news, and we now have a draft series of short documents to replace our infamous Constitution and a proposal to revive the Cup.

The foundations are in place, and now we know how clubs and bowlers have been affected by the loss of BUCS sanction an effective plan for the future can be drawn up to regain our BUCS sanction. While I am disappointed by the position BUTBA are in and that during my time as Chair I and the committee have had to deal with a lot of uncertainty and unprecedented situations, I am confident the tour will start to grow again and will be competitive, exciting and fun for everyone, and I am sure you will all join me in giving the new Chair and committee every confidence and support.