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IMHA Board Policy Regarding Women's 60+ Hockey

At the IMHA Board Meetings over the weekend of the 14/15th October 2017, the IMHA approach to Women's 60+ inclusion in IMHA events was discussed at a great length and a vote was taken with regard to future policy.

The Board has a 50/50 gender balance and the vote was unanimously in favour of a continuation of previous IMHA policy with regard to Women's 60+ hockey, i.e. the IMHA will continue to offer 60+ Women's Masters the opportunity to take part in IMHA tournaments, although the titles 'World' or 'European Championships' for this age group cannot be used as these belong to the WGMA which has FIH approval for their use.

The rationale behind this decision dates back to the IMHA Congress decision in Canberra in 2016, when the women's 60+ representatives requested the right to belong to the IMHA if their National Associations supported this. The proposal was unanimously approved by the Congress and the IMHA had to alter the age groups identified in its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The basis of this proposal was that the women had the right to choose where they wanted to play their hockey since they self-financed their participation in the sport. This right to self-determine in which tournaments they would participate was accepted by WGMA officers at the time. The women were adamant that they wished to play alongside the younger women's age groups.

The thinking was that WGMA had shown no interest in including women's teams in their tournaments and had the IMHA not offered support to these women in Rotterdam and Canberra, they would have had no opportunities to play in wider international competition. Further, with the prospect of a single Masters entity firmly on the FIH, IMHA and WGMA agendas, it was felt that the longer term future of Women's 60+ and all other men and women's age groups would be decided by the new organisation. There seemed to be no possibility of clashes of interests between the IMHA and WGMA going forward.

The IMHA consequently received official requests from England Hockey, Hockey Australia, Hockey New Zealand and the Scottish Hockey Union asking the IMHA to accept their Women's 60+ teams as members of the IMHA, which the organisation was duty bound to accept given the previous Congress decision. These forced the IMHA to include the possibility of women's 60+ hockey within IMHA tournament planning and management. The women's representatives felt, and still feel very strongly, that the change of policy by the WGMA in the run up to the European Championships in Glasgow came about without proper consultation with the official representatives of women's 60+ hockey or the IMHA. Further, that the change in WGMA policy had little to do with the wishes of the majority of the women.

Given the above, the IMHA offered a Women's 60+ tournaments in Tilburg and intend to do so at the IMHA World Cup in Terrassa. This will therefore allow the women the right to choose where they want to play. It is this freedom of choice which is seen as pivotal by the IMHA Board. All concerned parties should recognise that, whatever their opinions regarding this decision, the IMHA has applied due process and the situation has evolved as result of a number of factors, not all of which were within the control of the IMHA Board. The women are now free to decide their own destiny in this regard.

Glenn Paton,
President.

