

## HAMPSTEAD & WESTMINSTER HOCKEY CLUB

*Please reply to:-*  
**35 Wimbolt Street**  
**LONDON**  
**E2 7BX**

Tel: (Home) 0171 739 9110  
(Work) 0181 906 5533

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S Barlow Esq  
English Hockey Association  
Silbury Boulevard  
Milton Keynes  
MK9 1HA

**BY FAX 01908 241106**

Dear Stephen

### **NHL Management Committee**

In response to your News Circular, we have discussed the two main questions on which you seek our views.

#### **Overseas Players**

We have traditionally as a Club welcomed overseas players especially those from Australia and New Zealand usually in London on work assignments and would therefore be reluctant to see any restriction.

However there are a few dissentient voices when it comes to those who only live here to play (and who presumably are being exclusively paid for the privilege). However we can foresee a difficulty in enforcing a restriction on such players, who could easily be offered an honorarium that could pass as non-Hockey related employment.

#### **League Structure**

This issue was far less clear cut. The "no change option" (i) was closely defeated on poll by Option (ii) namely 12; 12; 12, with Option (iv) in third place. There was little support for Option (iii). With Option (iv), opinion was divided between the two sub-options (a) and (b) as we were unsure what the so-called semi-national Leagues would amount to (and not just in relation to the degree of travelling and the expenses that might arise).

Three lines of opinion developed during our discussions and I do not know if they will be helpful to you but here they are just in case.

First, the current two League structure seems to work well, with good quality within the Premier that teams from Division One find hard to match (evident this year, even with the

pedigree of Beeston for example). Certainly it is our experience that there seems within Division One to be an even spread of strength from, say, fifth to nineteenth with no certain favourites, on form at least, for any fixture involving these teams.

So, there is a feeling that "if it ain't broke don't mend it". This may lead on to the second point, which is that if there is pressure to adopt a unified structure with the Women under the EHA umbrella, why should the Men necessarily adopt the Women's structure? This is not chauvinistic but why does their structure appear to start as the opening assumed position for deliberation and negotiation? In our opinion, Division One would not this year easily split into two and were it to do so, there would be several clubs who would be on the cusp of relegation, not particularly merited by their form and results.

Those who expressed the preference within our camp for Option (ii) did so on the assumption that there would be a call for change and if so wanted 12 teams rather than 10 even though the costs would increase with 11 away fixtures guaranteed.

The third point was that which Peter Boizot was eager to promote and this had a measure of support, namely a Premier and Division One of equal numbers and then beneath, a North and South basis for a nationally based (if that's not a contradiction in terms!) Division Two, as with Football's Div 3 North and Div 3 South of many years ago. Peter actually prefers 10 per league, to allow for a few "friendlies" (as of old) whereas, I have to say, the players' preference remained 12 per league.

There was again a clear call to promote playing League games on a Saturday, which our players believe still is the real wish of the players. If a cohesive league is the rightful wish of a League sponsor why not on a Saturday as much a Sunday? Did Sunday play not begin at the behest of a sponsor, which no longer bothers? Clubs can manage Saturday fixtures when Cup competitions get under way: can they not *really* accommodate a Saturday League?

I hope that this will be of assistance: apologies if it rambles on, or is just too long.

### **National Indoor League**

We would not want to participate in such a League.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely



**D. I. SMITH**