

President's Report 2014

Members of the BCFOA,

As we complete another football season in British Columbia, we can see one of challenges and accomplishments.

Once again the BCFC made an effort to operate a Juvenile division and although there was a season, it seems that the idea is losing ground instead of building. I think there are many merits to this league and hope they can turn it around and expand the teams and continue strong. I know we take the opportunity to train new officials at this level and it's a great deal for us. Many members take part in this; these include Larry Rohan, Carey Anderson and Ross Hutchinson who used this wonderful training opportunity to its fullest advantage. Many individual members, and the entire membership as a whole, owe these men their gratitude.

Again, as always, many people work very hard for little or no compensation to make sure this association is a success. Specifically I want to thank all the members of the executive who have been so helpful in what is often a no-win position, as well as all our allocators throughout the province who have perhaps the toughest job making sure games are covered to meet contractual commitments while balancing the need for everyone to get as many games as they feel they can cover. These individuals all deserve to be thanked by each and every one of us BEFORE we second guess the choices they make.

Congratulations to all those who took part in various post season assignments. We have some of the best officials in the country right here in BC, and those selected for these post season assignments have done us proud again.

I maintained last season that a single Education Coordinator was required to oversee and look for opportunities where we could advance our education goals. This has been established for the Canadian Rules officials and from reports I've heard went well, although there seems to be desire to keep it fresh. With such a small group and no major changes to the education structure in Canadian Rules, there is the danger of becoming stale. I will challenge next year's educators to find a way to revitalize the delivery of clinics and evaluations.

It was very disappointing to see the poor support for the CFOA Conference which we hosted in May. There was support from across the country, but the BCFOA membership did not show the support we expected. Although these conferences are a great opportunity to meet other officials, discuss common goals and challenges and maybe even learn something about the craft, we failed to excite members to show up. The organizing committee did a good job putting this all together and getting financial support from numerous sources, including Football BC and the CFL, but we lost a small amount of money on the event, which will have to be made up from our membership.

My thanks to the organizing committee members who worked so hard and did a great job, Dennis Abbott, Bruce Hawkshaw, Jeff Huot, Rick Carter and Nigel Bushe.

When it came to establishing the structure for High School education, we named a single coordinator in Len DeJulius. Working with a rather large committee, Len did a good job in his first year, which was undoubtedly a challenge with some of his committee members' strong personalities and opinions. Thank you Len for a job well done in a very tough year. The High School season was perhaps the most challenging for the past several years. It all started with the teacher's job action closing the schools and causing the cancellation of many games. Some of the cancellations were last minute and led to rescheduling and moving of venues, etc. This obviously caused a huge amount of havoc to the allocator, who did a very good job under these almost impossible conditions. We all have differences of opinion with Mike Westman from time to time, but I think the membership owes him a thank you for his work during this past season. There are not many others whom would be able to do half as well under these tough circumstances.

The education committee started to develop a "Made in BC" mechanics manual for high school football, which I applaud. I know it is almost complete and it is so thanks to members like Tim Lederman, Lee Brien, Mike Westman, Len DeJulius and Al Sleightholme. We will build on this step forward and continue to make improvements for the benefit of all members. It is hoped that this manual will make it easier for all members throughout the province to learn and use the proper mechanics, which continues to be an issue outside the lower mainland.

Once the season got going things settled into a familiar pattern, and leading into the playoffs, a selection committee was established according to the by laws and policies of our association. To be honest, this year's committee was rather dysfunctional. I know Tim Lederman will have a report as well, but I wanted to make some observations myself.

The members of the committee were several that were also on the education committee, although it was good see that members such as Greg Barnes with much experience with this and Richard Chandler, with no experience with this were also included. Firstly, it should be said that all members of this committee deserve our gratitude for the work they did. Members attended a total of 4 meetings and all spent extra time observing games throughout the playoffs to be sure that everyone being considered was seen.

There were undoubtedly problems with the process this year, mostly stemming, IN MY OPINION, from too many egos on the committee without having a strong guideline to follow. There was no real process established early on and all previous "rules" were disposed of. I agreed whole heartedly with throwing out the rules from previous years as they only served to tie the hands of the committee and created some real problems when we got down to the final day, with most of our best officials being eliminated for some reason or another. What was needed however, was at least some expectations and guidelines, but this didn't happen clearly enough. The high school allocator should be an invited guest to this committee and his role should be more as an employee rather than an active participant. There should be an effort to find non working officials to sit on this committee and if they can't be found, they should be created by ruling them out of contention for certain games from the start, not in the third week of playoffs.

I know there is dissatisfaction with the result of the committee choices and that is to be expected every year. Frankly we have too many members who do not understand their abilities well enough and are disappointed each season. Maybe some of us need to be a little introspective and work harder to improve.

That said, we will be having a full discussion about this process today. Some members feel we need to mandate the areas of the province where playoff officials come from, others still have an idea to “rank” officials similar to procedure used in some states. I urge members to be honest and open about their thoughts during this discussion. It is an important conversation that is long overdue.

There are several people who have contributed, and continue to contribute to the welfare of this organization. This includes executive members, committee members, and evaluators, but also includes those members who hold no particular position, but assist new officials with friendly feedback, a ride home, a pat on the back, etc. I cannot name all of them individually, but I want to thank them on behalf of all the members.

Finally, and with great respect, I wish to offer Ken McKinnon a fond farewell as he completes his last year as our treasurer. Ken has taken care of our books and business for longer than most of us can remember. At all times he was professional and honest with us about where we stood. He always offered accurate and professional opinions and suggestions concerning our finances. He has always been a valuable executive member and a even more valuable member of the BCFOA. Although he will still be an active member with us, his contributions as Treasurer will be greatly missed. Both candidates for his position in today’s election will have a tough time filling his shoes. THANK YOU KEN FOR YOUR MANY YEARS OF SERVICE AND FRIENDSHIP.

Thank you to everyone for your support and for allowing me to continue to lead this organization. I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mark Newlove