

## PRE-EGM STATEMENT FROM JUDDY KATIE RACHEL PAUL AND STUART

The EGM has been called due to committee actions after the Aces Ardingly show resulting in a proposition that the Committee has been unable to function within normal boundaries. No evidence of any rule breaches has yet been disclosed although some details about the Ardingly investigation were released in the calling notice. To provide balance to the narrative already disclosed we thought it would be useful to provide some more information on Ardingly prior to the EGM. This will hopefully give members a more objective frame of reference when making a judgement on whether the committee acted outside of normal boundaries when voting at the upcoming EGM.

It is important to point out upfront that the EGM has been called about committee process and has not been called against specific committee members. The EGM calling notice is clear that it is about process not personalities and this has been confirmed by the Independent Chair's assessment. There has been no committee split decision making and no 5 vs 4 grouping. The 5 of us are simply those committee members that are content to explain committee decision making and processes and that we disagree with the proposition that the committee is unable to function without an EGM taking place. It would be a flawed assumption that the 5 of us were responsible for the decisions relating to Ardingly and the other 4 were against those decisions.

**Ardingly.** The only specific claim made in the calling notice for the EGM has been the alleged maladministration of an investigation into Ardingly; although no actual rule breaches have been highlighted. It is important to note that this process remains ongoing due to the EGM, and no final actions have yet been taken; actions referred to in the EGM notice were put to appeal prior to the request for EGM support being sent out. The initial notice of an EGM from those involved with Ardingly, threatened the EGM unless the committee stopped investigating and those involved resign immediately; rule breaches were alleged without any specifics or evidence. The committee reviewed what happened and then, as now, most (the 5) of us are content that the process was appropriate. There was an independent investigation by 2 experienced members (both HJs) that provided the facts and by the time an EGM was called we had already agreed to put the initial decisions made by the committee to appeal. We even went a stage further and were in the process of establishing an independent review panel (of 3 impartial HJs to review committee actions) to help mediate the situation.

Following Ardingly, information was received by the committee that the administration of the show, was well below the standard expected of a BFA sanctioned tournament with an unusually high level of admin errors, poor organisation and possible rule breaches. There was no allegation of misconduct and no £50 fee paid, but it was decided that it should be formally investigated by experienced IOs anyway in case any potential misconduct was uncovered, and to ensure impartiality due to the fact that the TO is a current committee member. The IO report confirmed the allegations to be fundamentally correct; a number of clear rule breaches were identified but the evidence did not show that this was intentional (so not misconduct), and the IO report specifically recommended that disciplinary procedures should not be pursued.

In the presence of a large list of errors and problems but in the absence of a clear disciplinary case the committee discussed what approach to take based on the evidence that was provided (noting the committee is charged by the constitution to enforce the BFA's rules, policies and procedures). A minimum of 5 committee members is required for a binding decision and the original decision was taken by a group of 5 that did not include anyone who had competed at Ardingly, but it did include 2 committee members now supporting the EGM. The outcomes decided by this group were as presented in the EGM calling notice. These outcomes were then presented to and then challenged by the Chair at a subsequent meeting before the individuals concerned were notified of the committee's intent.

The replies received by the parties affected, provided the committee with a clear opportunity to review the initial decision and we collectively agreed to put the outcomes to appeal; due to the proximity of Champs by this time, all were informed that progress would be suspended until afterwards. Whilst coordinating the appeals, which the committee had decided should be put to an independent review panel (rather than the committee marking their own homework), we were informed by those involved that if the committee were to continue with this process and we didn't

all resign then they would call an EGM (30 Aug). Further progress on the matter ceased at this point as the committee attempted to mediate the situation, albeit unsuccessfully, as the EGM was declared once the threshold for signatures had been reached.

What happened at Ardingly was not a couple of isolated mistakes but a whole catalogue of errors prior to, during and after the show that demonstrated a lack of care bordering on contempt for the membership that was genuinely exceptional. Most shows will encounter problems and many TOs & judges will make mistakes and the committee are not in the habit of taking action against anyone who makes a genuine error, we ordinarily just point them out and use them as learning points, we are all volunteers after all. As an example, there were the same extraordinarily high number of C2 errors at Scorton on 8 Nov 21 (78) as Ardingly (73), (avg is 10), but these were nearly all related to the new clean run rule that had just been introduced; this was taken as a learning point, a new C2 was devised to reduce errors and this was introduced a week later. We have also had recent incident reports about HJs not understanding the rules, and other shows that have breached rules in terms of their organisation and the committee have taken no significant action. That the committee did not take any significant action in other instances (an e-mail is normally sufficient) is not inconsistent or partial, as Ardingly was so unique in the excessive number of mistakes and rule breaches that occurred. The committee decided not to take disciplinary action but took administrative actions simply intended to improve future standards. This wasn't about picking up individuals for making mistakes; it was about protecting the integrity of the BFA and ensuring the membership are treated fairly and respectfully when they enter and pay for BFA sanctioned shows.

This process, as well as another recent complaint made to the committee, also highlighted the fact that there is actually no defined procedure for the handling of incidents brought to the committee's attention and no clear rules to follow in order to deal with a complaint where there is no clear misconduct.

**The Constitution & Rules.** The most relevant part of the rules for those attending the EGM will be the BFA Constitution; the most important part is section 3.3 which details the specific purpose of the committee: 'The Committee is responsible for setting, amending, **interpreting** and **enforcing** the BFA's rules, policies, guidelines, codes, procedures and so on including but not limited to those related to discipline, sportsmanship, tournaments and **complaints**.' There are no specific rules for the handling of complaints; the Disciplinary Procedures at Section F only detail the process for handling complaints where a charge of misconduct or gross misconduct is made and where disciplinary outcomes (membership bans or suspensions) may be required. Which is why the committee had drawn up a proposal for a less confrontational complaints process for resolving lower-level issues without the need to make misconduct allegations or put down £50, for consideration by the membership at the next AGM.

As we head into the EGM we should bear in mind when emotions start to run high, that no dogs have been harmed, nobody has cheated, nothing catastrophic has happened; but this is also about process not people.

We hope you will all engage constructively and honestly with the EGM process and keep kindness and politeness as guiding principles; please vote on the facts and evidence presented and if everyone votes for what is genuinely in the best interests of the BFA then none of us can lose and we can all go home knowing we have done the right thing.

Juddy, Katie, Rachel, Paul and Stuart