

Playing Director

After being elected last year and going straight into my first Board meeting there was, as you could probably imagine, a rather thought provoking journey home afterwards contemplating the remit ahead. By about October the questions finally slowed to a trickle on why I chose to stand, although this questions is easy provide the answer the reality of making 'things' happen is often a different scenario.

Before going into an overview of my remit I would like to thank everyone at the Office for all their hard work that they put in. Being able to understand the pressures from both sides of the fence now it is very evident that both sides do have the sport, the regions, the clubs, the National programmes and most importantly the Coaches and Players interests at heart but it is inevitable that with all these stakeholders to 'please' at times it just cannot be done. In addition to this both Steve and Mark have put in a tremendous amount of time and effort to ensure that their commissions are now moving ahead in there development and it is a testament to their hard work that their remits are well organised and looking to the future.

I think it is also important to state that since the London 2012 announcement there has been various speculation on the National programmes. These are very much still part of the EVA's performance programme and with the addition of the GB team we will be able to offer a pathway from schools and grassroots through to the Regions, cadets, Juniors and ultimately onto the National and GB Team. This pathway is where the performance element of the Association meets the development element and this is where we need to work together to make this link seamless with all parties pulling in the same direction. We have very definitely entered a new era for Volleyball in England and the UK and we must grab this once in a lifetime opportunity to give the sport the recognition it deserves.

Fortunately within Volleyball there is a community with a 'can do' attitude and we need to embrace this, get more people involved to drive the sport forward. For this to happen in the time frames over the next 6 years our strategies need to be robust but above all we need to have an open mind to change. Change is good and we need to all work together to increase the base of players, coaches, referees, administrators and other volunteers so that the sport can grow. Also on this subject we need to open to the fact that as volunteers, people come and go and we have to fight hard to get the right people involved and keep them as well be realistic that we need to think about the future and succession planning. We have all seen it in my guises; the principal person takes a back seat or reduces the time that they can commit and suddenly that aspect of the Volleyball community withers and often does not recover for many years. There are many people within our community that can make a tremendous difference if they were either asked or felt that their support would be welcomed.

The National Teams have been consistent again moving forward in their developments and the work that all the Coaching Staff and the Management teams have put in is, again, very gratefully received with another year of putting literally all their free time into it. Over the last 2-3 years it is evident that all the hard groundwork that has been put in is beginning to pay off. We still have a long way to go but none the less we are reducing the performance gap.

Finally I would just like to add that although it can never be the same as Setting, over the last 12 months this role has further confirmed to me once we are all in unison with the rich resources within our grasps we can take this sport fully into the Olympics at the same time as creating a solid development and competition structure that will enable us to sit at the top table of World Volleyball long into the future. Ambitious maybe but we have to go for it.

Richard Dobell
Playing Director