

# JONO

For SI President in

# 2020

Jonathan Spielberg for  
Softball Ireland President  
VOTE on the 30th November 2019  
at the SI AGM

Before I go through any of the specific ideas on my plans on how to improve Softball Ireland, it is important to take a step back and look around

at the amazing, yet dwindling, Irish Softball Community and the importance of the moment we are in right now. We make up an eclectic group of strong-minded individuals all wanting to do what we think is best for the sport, and we are aging. We are an older group of players each year with fewer younger players joining our ranks. The greatest problem at the core of our membership is apathy. An older apathetic Softball Ireland population is the first thing I will try and address by engaging our members and engendering volunteerism. Putting forward any plans without support from Softball Ireland's membership would be a useless expenditure of effort and we can't meet these problems with the same solutions we've tried in the past. It is time to engage with the public to recruit new members to the sport and get softball talked about, we will need volunteers to do that.

## Development of new and current Regions and Intervarsities

### *Developing the Fastpitch Discipline as a Region*

Despite the successful launch of the Fastpitch League earlier this month, the **Fastpitch Region** never went through the process, or met the requirements, of being a development region; never mind a full region, and it should revert back until it goes through the necessary steps as any other region would be required to do. That does not mean that the work that has been done already cannot be built upon, but with a larger diverse sub-committee.

With SI's guidance and oversight it will achieve whatever goals it sets out along with meeting some necessary administrative needs. Saying that, the FP Region needs to publish and set out its goals and what it hopes to accomplish. Some of the goals could be:

- *Gain 50 percent of its members from outside existing slow-pitch softball players/teams.*
- *Promote greater female participation than a 50/50 ratio.*
- *Have a Spring/Summer league outdoors.*

Some immediate steps will be to setup the Region similarly to the way Softball Leinster was setup most recently back in 2011:

- Create a sub-committee of 5 or so volunteers with one-member reporting back to SI Council (members currently on the Fastpitch Committee can be part of this).
- Get existing clubs involved and signed up. Regularly schedule season and games.
- After getting a website, post the Region constitution and byelaws.
- Make sure there is transparency for the Fastpitch members including a list of committee members and give notice of when they'll hold the AGM meeting.

### ***Developing Softball Munster Connacht as a Region***

It has been more than 5 years since Munster Softball lost its Regional status and despite that teams like the Galway Tribes have managed to grow and prosper in that region. I will propose setting up **Softball Munster-Connacht (SMC)** as a developmental region. The plan could be to hold three mini tournaments with at least 4 SMC teams along with visiting teams playing games on a single day. Possible locations could be in Galway, Limerick, Cork and some other areas around the Munster and Connacht areas. Each tournament day could have a business league component on the Friday before helping teams to recruit new players and promote the sport in the area.

### ***Creating an InterVarsity Support Sub Committee and promote Softball at Universities***

There has been a long standing laissez faire attitude towards administering and developing the **InterVarsity programmes**, but now there is no Softball being played at any of the various schools and Universities that traditionally had co-ed softball clubs and teams who made up the IV tournaments. Some of the most talented younger players coming to our sport in recent years have come from UCD or going further back UL and neither have a Softball Club. Historically UL had one of the largest Softball clubs with some years having 3-4 teams-worth of players. SI needs to take an active role in developing and reintroducing Softball to the Universities and setup direct communication for support for whatever each school needs.

### ***Creating an Open Day Blueprint, Equipment Support and Business League***

**Softball Leinster** and **Softball Ulster** are well established regions, but SI will need to work with those regions to help them grow. Coming up with a best practices' strategy working in conjunction with SL and SU on what has worked for them in the past for will be an important step. Having a centralized location for equipment storage for all SI members to access will be an important part of that plan.

Running training sessions regionally in conjunction with local Business Leagues will also be an important way to reach new members, while giving SI a Revenue stream to put back into capital purchases for sports equipment and still help the Regions meet their goals and plans.

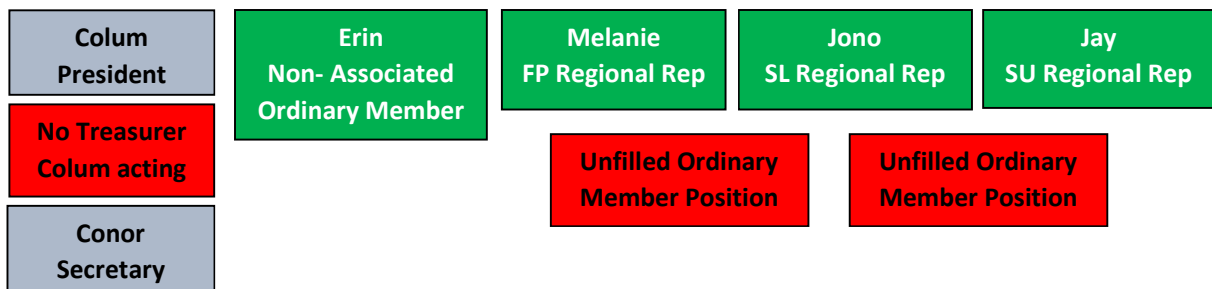
## Transparency and Communication Improvements

Admittedly, there have been some communication improvements in the past few years, but our inability to recruit a SI Communications Director to the SI Board for at least three years. Our inability to recruit a Treasurer this past year and the limited number of volunteers to take on SI Council ordinary member roles is also indicative of the same problem; a lack of desire to volunteer.

There needs to be a drive to recruit volunteers. Ordinary members, a new treasurer and whoever else that will be needed to run sub-committees and achieve the goals that we set out. A larger SI Council with sub-committee working groups singularly focused on areas like Communication or Competitions all reporting into the SI Council will make the workload lighter in general and it will be easier to get things done. When one volunteer has something unexpected come up in their life, there will be someone else to pick up the slack.

A larger SI Council is also more democratic and allows for more voices to be heard, ideas to be introduced and helps foster pride throughout our organisation that has been missing in recent years. We currently have a small group of like-minded individuals running our National Governing Body and while everyone is volunteering their time and wishes only for the best for the sport, it cannot hurt to fill out some of these empty spaces.

### 2019 SI Board Members: (The SI Board can have up to 9 members)



The first thing on my calendar for January 2020 would be to hold a **BSI Congress** and a **Softball Ireland Regional Open Meeting** with committees from all Regions and their members to meet and discuss the ideas coming out of the various SI working groups. The merger with Baseball Ireland might be the most important change to our organisation in over a decade with Softball and Baseball working together for the first time since the Irish Baseball & Softball Federation dissolved in 2005.

**The BSI Congress** would take place in the morning and would focus on what sort of benefits that both Softball Ireland and Baseball Ireland can do together that will benefit both organisations.

BSI Congress topics can include but are not limited to:

- Umpiring Development
- Little League Baseball and Youth Fastpitch development
- Business Leagues
- A top-down Website Development strategy and Marketing plan
- Grant Applications for both organisations, together or separate.
- Most importantly – just putting people from both disciplines together, putting names to faces and shaking hands.

The SI Regional Meetings for all SI members would commence afterwards and this will be an ideal place to review some of the results of the Slowpitch and Umpire development working groups and have other members share their ideas as well, letting SI know where they'd like to see the organisation's time, money and resources be focused on in 2020 and beyond.

### **My Priorities and Calendar for the start of 2020**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
BSI Congress/SI Regional Meeting	January 2020	Setup the first BSI Congress and a SI Regional Meeting with all members of all regions invited.
Form Sub Committees	December 2019 through February 2020	Sub-committees will include; Softball Munster-Connacht (SMC); Inter-varsities; Fastpitch; IOST; Communications; Business League.
Release SI Calendar	February 2020	A full calendar of all events, including SI, SL and SU tournaments. Rules and Dates for Brian Walshe SOS Blitz, IOST and SINCC
Open Days	March 2020	In conjunction with the regions, SI will look to develop a robust Open Day plan that will cover all Regions – both developmental and established.
The IV's Redux	4 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	With a little luck we hope to be able to facilitate the first Intervarsity Softball Challenge in three years.
The Brian Walshe Start of Season Blitz	18 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	The Brian Walshe SOS Blitz has traditionally been the best attended tournament each year and because it has been run as a fundraiser for the National Teams it has been a bare-boned event. Let's raise the bar while also raising more money!

In closing, we have a lot of work ahead, but some awe-inspiring opportunities as well. I've given a lot of ideas here and am not convinced there aren't a whole lot more ideas out there. I don't expect to work in a vacuum and will need and ask for your input along the way. We are in a good position to make Softball a top-tier sport here in Ireland over the coming years, but without a change we may see the sport continue to dwindle in relevance and membership. I don't want to see that happen - ***I cannot let that happen*** and that is why I'm running for Softball Ireland President. I hope I can count on your support and attendance on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November at the SI AGM at ALSAA Sports campus.