

Minutes

Special Meeting of the USA Fencing Board of Directors

January 19, 2012 via Teleconference

Present: Bradley Baker, David Blake, Aaron Clements, Wes Glon, Terry Kwan, Sunil Sabharwal, Jeff Salmon, Laurie Schiller, Jay Strass, Alex Wood, Kalle Weeks

Absent: Bill Becker, David Herr, Mario Rodriguez, Soren Thompson,

Guests: Donald Alperstein, Nancy Anderson, Dan Berke, Kirsten Crouse, Greg Dilworth, Kris Ekeren, Charles Greene, Mary Griffith, Mark Stasinos, Cathy Zagunis

I. General Information and Organizational Items

General announcements

Remarks – Kalle Weeks, President

Ms. Weeks extended thanks to Dan Berke and Joe Salisbury for their work in getting Fencing Time in place at the Portland NAC which made posting of results online in close to real-time possible for the first time at a national event.: We have wanted to bring ourselves into 21st century and make information easily available to members not able to attend our tournaments and have now moved forward to achieve that goal.

Mary Griffith provided commentary on the topic of tournament management software. For the first time, we conducted this event by running FencingTime without xSeed mirroring any aspect of the tournament. Overall, the Bout Committee and Tournament Committee are happy with the results. The experience identified a few glitches, which were managed without difficulty as well as change requests that Dan will address. The Tournament Committee is also looking at Bout Committee processes to see what is not longer necessary but merely a result of using xSeed. The most noticeable delay was the result of a bug related to handling of a medical withdrawal. A work around was found and Dan Berke fixed the bug promptly. It is expected that by Summer Nationals all kinks will be worked out.

People seem to be really happy with live results. The online results page received 6,670 unique visitors averaging 2.46 visits each (excluding bots). The average visit involved loading 6.24 pages.

We went live and announced the link once we were into direct eliminations on first event and it was clear the posting was working correctly. On Saturday we exceeded the default bandwidth limitation. The limit was bumped up by order of magnitude, which is expected to handle anticipated traffic in the future.

Ms. Weeks again expressed thanks to Dan Berke, Joe Salisbury and the entire Tournament Committee.

Concerns around the use of video replay were reviewed. Ms. Weeks has spoken on the topic with Sam Cheris [FOC Chair]. There has been no change to FOC membership as a result of any events that took place in Portland. Some further discussions about proper use of Video Replay is ongoing as a result. Mr. Cheris asks that anyone with thoughts about this matter should be in touch with him or any member of FOC. The FOC will discuss the topic in Salt Lake City. There is an existing policy of use starting in the round of 16 which the FOC put in place for two events: Portland and Salt Lake City. The FOC meeting will take place Friday evening at Junior Olympics.

Ms. Weeks indicated that she has spoken with Wes Glon and Jeff Salmon regarding training and assigning of referees. They will be collecting information and are interested in hearing from people to prepare a report for Board at Junior Olympics. Anyone who would like to raise thoughts or suggest modifications should be in touch with Mr. Glon or Mr. Salmon.

Mr. Glon indicated that many people are unhappy with communication between referees and the referee leadership (FOC), including treatment of athletes and coaches, bias, among other concerns. Mr. Glon expressed that he is open to suggestions to present to Board. The FOC needs to be adjusted or reconstructed for better service for referees and the membership. Mr. Glon would like to put everything together and come up with something better for fencers.

Ms. Weeks indicated that we are approaching the time to start thinking about service awards and requested nominations and suggestions of candidates for three annual awards:

Service to the Sport of Fencing

Service to USA Fencing

Service to Local and Grassroots Fencing

II. Minutes of the December 15, 2011 Special Meeting of the Board of Directors

Motion (Mr. Baker): To approve the minutes of the December 15, 2011 Special Meeting of the Board of Directors.

Second: Dr. Schiller

Motion passed.

III. Report of Action of the November 29, 2011 Emergency Special Meeting of the Board of Directors

Motion (Mr. Baker): To approve the report of action of the November 29, 2011 Emergency Special Meeting of the Board of Directors.

Second: Mr. Salmon

Motion passed.

IV. Executive Director's Report (Greg Dilworth)

Mr. Dilworth deferred the start of his report to allow time for a discussion about fund raising led by Kris Ekeren.

Ms. Ekeren thanked the Board for the opportunity to provide an update on the online fund raising campaign. We are now ready to move forward and kick off the campaign. This will provide the organization with the opportunity to raise funds and the profile of the sport both inside and outside sport. We are working with Mercury Communications Group, who have previously worked with USA Curling and USA Water Polo. They offer both online donations and auctions.

In 2012, USA Fencing will be targeting 3 groups: Board of Directors contacts, a promotion in February for clubs and members, and general donations.

Individualized fund raising web pages for each Board member should be established by February 1st. Board members are asked to coordinate USA Fencing contacts through Ms. Ekeren to ensure that people do not receive multiple solicitations.

Question: What's being done to clean up membership database to assist with this?

Answer: We'll be reaching out to everyone we have current email addresses for. We correct database as much as possible whenever we find errors or outdated information.

Mr. Dilworth continued with his report. Membership numbers are down by about 1,000

members from last year. We are up approximately 100 in professional memberships. Anecdotally, the economy is still hitting folks. Fewer people competing means fewer members. The Office recently conducted a survey of lapsed members. A report will be available at Junior Olympics. A general membership satisfaction survey is being conducted, with a report expected at JOs.

Mr. Dilworth addressed the issue of underage athletes competing in local tournaments. He reviewed the process followed in the Office when classification changes are submitted. When ratings changes are received, they have been certified by division secretary or chair. A key responsibility of local division officers is to confirm that all ratings are accurate. Everyone participating in a tournament is a member and eligible for competition. The Office does not re-verify. In reviewing particular events that have been brought to the attention of the Office and Board, there appear to be irregularities present

Prior Tournament Committee policy has been that:

- Ineligible athletes don't receive classification changes
- Ineligible athletes don't count towards the rating level of the event
- If non-members participate, classifications may be delayed until dues are paid

Members of the Board raised concerns about the non-availability of age information for local officers to be able to perform the required checks.

Mr. Dilworth expressed appreciation to a great Local Organizing Committee in Portland. The tournament ran very smoothly. It was a great experience for competitors. The LOC provided additional awards to medalists and excellent leadership.

It appears that the Junior World Cup in Phoenix will retain status as an official world cup. Commitments of athlete participation have been received from more than five countries, as required by the FIE.

After the phenomenal experience in Philadelphia [FIE Congress] using local people to obtain sponsorship, we are contracting with local firm in Chicago to get funding for the World Cup. Our commitment is a low base amount plus commission. We have \$5,400 at risk if nothing comes from the arrangement. Minimally, we will get the presentation deck used to solicit sponsors. Hopeful with help from the USOC, and especially with 5-6 USOC sponsors based in Chicago, we'll get some sponsorships to help defray our costs.

We have started distributing a weekly newsletter. The primary goal is to provide information and the newsletter is designed to highlight our athlete accomplishments on a week-to-week basis. Our intent is to generate as much excitement as possible leading into Olympic Games.

The USOC website redesign and rollout schedule has shifted from February to late March.

For the Junior World Championships in Moscow, we have reserved a large block of rooms in the host hotel at very good pricing. The rate includes breakfast, airport transfers, and venue transfers.

Dinner is also available.

Mr. Dilworth and the Board engaged in a discussion of the organizational chart and club development. In response to questions regarding staff head count, Mr. Dilworth indicated that it is down 3-4 people from this time last year.

V. Finance and Budget (Sunil Sabharwal)

Financial Reports

Mr. Sabharwal provided an oral report.

The overwhelming reason for a \$200k shortfall is the move of Summer Nationals from Dallas to Anaheim and loss of an anticipated grant from State of Texas.

Mr. Dilworth indicated that we expect larger athlete participation in Anaheim than was predicted for Dallas.

Ms. Weeks noted that hotel arrangements in Dallas had been the responsibility of THS and reminded the Board that we are no longer working with them. The problems experienced with the Dallas arrangements are not related to our current provider.

The Board engaged in a review of documents sent out by GD previously.

Motion (Mr. Sabharwal): To receive the Budget Report as submitted to the Board.

Second: Mr. Clements

Motion passed.

VI. International Update (Sunil Sabharwal)

Mr. Sabharwal provided oral remarks. He indicated that there has not been much to report since the FIE Congress in December. We continue to receive lots of positive feedback from around the world regarding the events in Philadelphia.

VII. Legal Update (Donald Alperstein)

Mr. Alperstein provided oral remarks.

The Mannan letter has been sent out.

A number of parents have taken it upon themselves to patrol tournament results for under-age or over-age participants. Managing these events is largely the responsibility of local people and we need to

make that broadly understood.

We are in the midst of an arbitration with AAA under the Amateur Sports Act. More discussion and detail will be provided in executive session.

The Nike contract has been reviewed and is back in the Office's hands.

We have a disciplinary panel in progress with a further update in executive session

We have received a request for new disciplinary panel. The request is somewhat unclear and in the process of being clarified before it will be brought to the Board.

THS's response in our lawsuit was due today and has been filed, but not yet reviewed.

VIII. Committee and Task Force Matters

Motion (Mr. Baker): To approve the appointment of William Viqueira to the Youth Development Committee.

Second: Mr. Salmon

Motion passed.

Motion (Mr. Baker): To approve the appointments of the following members to the Divisions Best Practices Task Force: Jerry Benson (Chair), Colleen Brown, Allen Evans, Jim Speta, Tom Tishman, Brenda Waddoups, Tanya Brown (Advisor).

Second: Dr. Schiller

Motion passed.

Committee Reports

Executive Director Search Planning Task Force (Terry Kwan)

The Search Planning Group has met over the past 9 months to consider whether and how best to proceed regarding a search for an Executive Director. The Group recommends that a search be conducted, with initial background work to take place as soon as possible and posting of the position no later than March 15th.

The Group, having interviewed and discussed the merits of five firms and two finalist firms did not reach a unanimous conclusion, but by majority vote recommends that USA Fencing contract with SportSearch to conduct the Executive Director Search. Their fee for their services will be \$25,000.

We therefore ask that the Board of Directors adopt the following resolution:

Motion(Ms. Kwan): Resolved, that USA Fencing will contract with SportSearch for the position of Executive Director, at a fee not to exceed \$25,000, and that the Search Committee will consist of the following members:

Sunil Sabharwal, co-chair

Derek Cotton, co-chair

Bill Becker

Aaron Clements

Soren Thompson

Terry Kwan

Additional athlete TBD [Daria Schneider]

Second: Mr. Clements

Motion amended, with consent of movant and second to add “pending completion of additional positive reference checks” after “\$25,000”

A discussion ensued of the Executive Director search process and the selection process of a search firm.

Motion, as amended, passed.

Nominating Committee (Terry Kwan and Alex Wood)

Motion (Mr. Baker): To receive committee reports, as submitted to the Board.

Second: Mr. Blake

Motion passed.

IX. Current Membership Requirements for Clubs

Motion (Mr. Salmon): WHEREAS confusion has arisen over the 10-member requirement of the USFA's Club Membership criteria and

WHEREAS as a result, the National Office has indicated to some groups or entities who may not meet the 10-member rule that they have been accepted as Club Members; and

WHEREAS the 10-member rule is a standing requirement adopted by the Board of Directors, the wisdom and propriety of which are hereby confirmed; and

WHEREAS it is the will of the Board of Directors that the 10-member rule be enforced but that no group or entity be unfairly disadvantaged by the confusion that has existed;

BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

1. That any application for Club Membership received by the National Office after the date hereof shall be granted only if at the time the application is received no fewer than 10 USFA members have identified the applicant as their primary club; and
2. That any group or entity which has been granted Club Membership shall continue to enjoy all benefits of that status through the current membership year, provided and accept that only such Clubs as satisfy the 10-member requirement as of the initial (single fee) registration deadline for Summer National Championships and NAC shall be allowed to enter teams to fence in any competition at that tournament; and
3. That the National Office is instructed to publicize this resolution in a manner designed to assure that all affected Clubs, groups and entities have prompt notice hereof and to take such further actions as are appropriate to its implementation; and
4. That the National Office shall promptly upon receipt of team entries for the Summer National Championships and NAC confirm that the entrant meets the 10-member requirement and shall immediately notify any entrant who does not of the deficiencies in the application so that, time permitting, the deficiency may be cured.

Second: Mr. Glon

Discussion included whether we want such a rule in place, the processes currently being followed , and the goals of the motion.

Motion (Mr. Salmon): To table motion.

Second: Glon

Motion to table failed.

Motion (Dr. Schiller): To reconsider motion to table.

Second: Clements

Motion to reconsider passed.

Motion to table passed.

The motion was tabled and will reappear on the agenda of the Board meeting in February.

X. Strategic Plan Update

A review was conducted of progress towards items included in the Strategic Plan. A more in-depth review will be conducted at the in-person meeting in February.

XI. Good and Welfare

Ms. Weeks asked that all who have interactions with high school students let them know the All-Academic program is back up and running. Thanks to Absolute Fencing, we will again have two scholarships available to students who submit prize-winning essays.

XII. Executive Session to consider personnel, litigation, disciplinary and membership matters

XIII. Adjournment

Motion (Mr. Baker): To adjourn the meeting.

Second: Mr. Glon

Motion passed.