

**MINUTES
IN-PERSON EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Courtyard Iowa City University Heights, Iowa City, Iowa
Plus others via Zoom
Saturday, March 26, 2022
8:30 a.m. Central Time

Present:

Bruce Baumgartner, President, Chairman
Joan Fulp, 2nd Vice President
Kerry McCoy, Secretary
Van Stokes, Treasurer
Veronica Carlson
Mike Juby
Mike Macchiavello
Nate Engel
John Stefanowicz
Rob Cate
Craig LaMont
Steven Thorpe
Mallory Velte
Rich Bender, Executive Director, ex-officio
Les Gutches, Chief Operating Officer
Gary Abbott, Director of Communications
Laura Peeters, General Counsel
Pete Isais, Events Director
Tony Black, State Services Director
Cody Bickley, Director of National Teams High Performance
Steve Fraser, Director of Donor and Alumni Relations
Megan Ball, Executive Assistant

1. WELCOME

President Bruce Baumgartner welcomed the committee, and noted that he would be making adjustments to the order of the agenda items.

2. USOPC UPDATE – Rick Adams, Chief of Sport Performance and NGB Services

Rich Bender introduced Rick Adams, noting that he has been a long time supporter of wrestling. Rich noted that it has been an unprecedented time for the USOPC, with the challenges of the pandemic as well as having to conduct the Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo and the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing only a few months apart.

Adams thanked the Board for their efforts as volunteers on behalf of wrestling, and noted that the Olympic movement was not possible without the contributions and leadership of volunteers.

He also praised the USA Wrestling leadership for what it had accomplished over the last nine months. He noted the resiliency of USA Wrestling during the pandemic, including having creative solutions for elite training and hosting a successful Olympic Trials.

He said that the USOPC had brought 2,000 people to and from Tokyo, did it safely, and Team USA won the Summer Olympic Games. He noted the USOPC followed that up with the Winter Games in China, and while it was challenging for the U.S. athletes, they were also effective and the athletes performed. He also noted the chaos that was created with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Adams said he has much respect for USA Wrestling Executive Director Rich Bender and the Board, and said the USOPC relationships with USA Wrestling is strong. He said USA Wrestling is best of class, both on and off the mat. He noted that USA Wrestling historically does well with compliance, audit, ethics and Safe Sport issues. He said it is the USOPC goal to find ways to partner with USA Wrestling in order for it to continue to improve. He also noted the efforts of the USOPC on the collegiate front, including its support for the RTC system.

Steve Thorpe asked if more events would be coming to the USA because of the IOC recommendation not to allow events in Russia. Rich Bender noted that the 2023 World Championships had not yet been moved from Krasnoyarsk, Russia. He said that UWW Vice President has told the UWW Bureau that USA Wrestling has offered to host the 2023 Worlds if that opportunity arises. Rick Adams noted that the USA is making standing offers to help host international events in our nation. He noted that much work is being done in Washington, DC to ensure that the USA can provide visas for international events hosted in our country. He also noted that the USOPC is making its training centers available to Ukrainian athletes. In regards to the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Training Center, he noted that it was a challenge during the pandemic. He said there is progress there, and that some top wrestlers had met with USOPC CEO Sarah Hirshland about this. He said the USOPC will be a better partner in that situation.

3. APPROVAL OF MARCH 8, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes of the March 8 Executive Committee meeting made by Kerry McCoy, seconded by Veronica Carlson. Approved.

4. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Bruce Baumgartner noted that it has been a busy time since the last Board meeting. He said that everybody in the room, from staff to volunteer leaders, should be proud to be part of USA Wrestling. He noted the changes made to the By-Laws, and praised the AAC for stepping up and populating the committee positions. He noted that USA Wrestling will always be dealing with issues, and some decisions will not always make everybody happy.

He noted upcoming activities, including the ad-hoc membership cost planning committee, and a review of athlete stipends and compensation. He praised the leadership for being willing to update, improve things and make the sport better.

Bruce Baumgartner noted that he will have a busy schedule ahead, with his interest in being elected to the UWW Bureau. He will go to the Pan American Championships in Mexico, to the U.S. Open in Las Vegas and to the Junior/16U Nationals in Fargo.

5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Rich Bender noted that USA Wrestling had made a donation on behalf of the Executive Committee to the charities selected to honor Mark Reiland's memory. He reported on the USOPC Board Meeting, just completed, which had a focus on bidding to host the 2030 Winter Games.

He reported on the joint effort of the USOPC, USA Wrestling, the Big Ten and the University of Nebraska to hold a special award ceremony presenting Tervel Dlagnev with his 2012 Olympic bronze medal in Lincoln, Neb, during the Big Ten Wrestling Championships (which was caused by doping penalties). He noted that the Olympic Training Centers were opening up. He explained the efforts to protect wrestling from some proposed NCAA regulation up for vote that will disconnect college coaches from the athletes, which the USOPC and USA Wrestling is working to get tabled. Bender also praised the national staff, saying he has never been more proud of the staff members than recently.

He said as part of the Executive Director's Report, a number of staff members would be making short presentations on their departments.

Bill Zadick discussed the men's freestyle program and noted the consistency, opportunity, experience and performance of the National Team. He reported on the increase in medals won at the Senior level and at the age-group levels. He noted the 32 freestyle medals in this quadrennium, including 13 gold medals. Zadick praised the RTC system for improving athletes at all three levels (high school, college, international). He noted the team won five medals from five athletes including two golds at the Tokyo Olympics, and seven medals including three golds at the 2021 Oslo Worlds and said there is momentum halfway through this quad.

Cody Bickley reported on the Greco-Roman and women's freestyle programs. He noted that the Olympic Training Center is making changes, which is great news. If USA Wrestling had to hold camps elsewhere besides the USOPTC, it would be a financial burden. There are three jobs open in the national staff (one in each style), with a target of filling them by the U.S. Open in late April. The U.S. women have made great strides, and are working to pass Japan. The Greco-Roman program must be elevated, and a new staff position will help rethink outside the box.

6. NATIONAL TEAM PROCEDURES FROM SPORTS COMMITTEES

Cody Bickley presented three sets of procedures: 1) Senior Pan American Men's Freestyle Procedures; 2) General Procedures/Challenge Procedures; 3) Coach Selection for Developmental Tours. He provided information on each and answered any questions.

Motion to accept all three proposals made by Michael Macchiavello, seconded by Van Stokes. Approved.

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, continued

Rich Bender introduced Les Gutches, with his new position as Chief Operating Officer. Les Gutches, reported on National Teams, office and technology improvements and financial issues. He explained the restructuring in the National Teams areas, reported on physical improvements at the headquarters and the outsourcing of IT support. He also noted that USA Wrestling had received a clean financial audit, and that there was an extension on the filing of the 990 document. He noted that USA Wrestling was preparing to select a Marketing Consulting Firm to set a plan for the highest return on investment and helping staff with a playbook. He also noted that a nine-member ad-hoc Membership Cost Planning Committee will now be looking at a long term plan in this area. Gutches said USA Wrestling is poised to plan for growth and continued success.

8. FINANCIAL UPDATE

Treasurer Van Stokes noted that the next meeting of the Finance Committee would review the latest finance figures of USA Wrestling. He said the February 28 meeting had looked at the data through January, and that USA Wrestling is financially healthy and currently ahead of budget. He noted that membership had rebounded from the pandemic figures, and praised the state associations for their efforts. Les Gutches discussed that pent up demand was driving membership now, but that there were headwinds financially that must be planned for moving forward. Van noted that the next big project for the Finance Committee and staff would be the creation of the 2022-23 fiscal budget.

9. ATHLETE ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Veronica Carlson reported that the AAC had been focusing on its bylaws. She noted that there will be AAC Peer Review at an in person meeting in August, so athlete leaders will be clear on their roles. She noted that they have been observing the turnover of athlete leaders, and discussed the new four-year terms and timing. They would also review their standing policies at the in-person meeting.

Planned projects include the implementation of an Athlete Leader of the Year Award, voted on by the Executive Committee. In addition, there will be focus on a section of the website for

athlete resources. There will also be exploration in increasing member make-up of the committee, perhaps not strictly three athletes for each style.

Executive Committee members discussed the pros and cons of not having three athletes per style. John Stefanowicz, Kerry McCoy and Van Stokes talked about the development of leaders, and the best ways to identify and develop athlete leaders. Veronica Carlson gave credit to the late Mark Reiland for being an advocate for the athlete voice and helping guide her and other athletes about how to be effective in their quest to lead. She said that the athletes would not have their current voice without Mark Reiland.

10. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, continued

Steve Fraser presented the Fundraising report through March 15, and noted that his department is tasked with raising nearly \$2 million each year. He said that there had been \$1.4 million brought in to date, 74% of the annual target for the full fiscal year. He reported on new activity in Legacy Giving, First Time donors, Giving Tuesday campaign, Greg Strobel Leadership Academy and other projects.

11. DEI AD-HOC COMMITTEE REPORT

Kerry McCoy said that the committee had been active, and had established some core activities. A big focus moving forward is the organization's transgender policy. He noted that the NCAA chose to use NGB policies in their sport, and USA Wrestling was dedicated to having the best policy in place. He commented on the Diversity Celebration calendar, and was working on its education plan and implementation.

12. SAFE SPORT REPORT

Laura Peeters noted the structure of Safe Sport audits. Last year was a Safe Sport event audit, and this year will be a Safe Sport administration audit (with results still pending). She noted that the good news is USA Wrestling's membership system is outstanding and effective in supporting Safe Sport, and that we received great preliminary results from the audit. She noted that our final audit grade may not fully reflect how well USA Wrestling is doing due to the Safe Sport Center's attention to many small details and procedures.

Laura Peeters, in her role as General Counsel, gave a lawsuit update to the Executive Committee, with explanations on a few pending cases.

Bruce Baumgartner asked if the U.S. Center for Safe Sport is moving its case load more quickly, and Laura Peeters and Rich Bender noted that progress had not been made in that area. The committee also discussed the Center's decision to move more into the issue of emotional abuse. A discussion was held on whether Congress and the law was requiring for Safe Sport

accountability from other sports organizations outside of the U.S. Olympic family. The answer is currently no.

13. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, continued

Gary Abbott presented the Communications Department update, noting the increased activity required with both an Olympic Games and a Senior World Championships held a few months apart on the same year. He noted that the 2024 U.S. Olympic Team Trials is only two years away. An increased focus will be on the return of Final X in 2022, which has not been held since 2019. He reported on the promotion of a new property, the Bout at the Ballpark, which was held in the stadium of the Texas Rangers this winter. He also explained the expanded effort by Communications, working with other departments, to promote USA Wrestling National and Regional events. Other topics discussed were the National Girls High School rankings, the National High School Recruiting Showcase and the nomination of John Smith for the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Hall of Fame.

14. WOMEN'S WRESTLING REPORT

Joan Fulp presented a powerpoint on the growth of wrestling for girls and women, with specifics on the high school level where she and Andrea Yamamoto have worked on behalf of USA Wrestling in recent years. She noted that preliminary data shows girls high school wrestling grew by 16% for the 2021-2022 season. She also explained the rapid growth of girls wrestling once a state approves an official girls state championships. She reported that 34 states currently had official programs, but the number should increase in the next few months as votes will be held in some states. She discussed a number of issues facing girls high school wrestling moving forward, with special focus needed on developing more female coaches and officials.

15. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, continued

Pete Isais discussed USA Wrestling Events, noting that the USA Wrestling folkstyle season was about to wrap up for the 2021-22 season. He reported that there was \$64,000 awarded in prizes to U.S. athletes at the Bout at the Ballpark event. He noted that the U.S. Open is returning to its traditional location in Las Vegas, and that the World Team Trials Challenge Tournament was set for Coralville, Iowa. He explained how Final X would partner with the Hall of Fame in Stillwater, Okla. on June 3 and with Beat the Streets New York in New York City on June 8.

Tony Black, in his State Services report, gave membership data. The organization had reached 94% of its best all-time levels, and that there would be over 220,000 by the end of the weekend. He noted the expansion of state leaders virtual meetings. He also reported that many USA Wrestling state associations were seeing large turnouts at their state tournaments. He also reported that state association websites would soon be completed.

16. ONBOARDING UPDATE

Bruce Baumgartner noted that new Board members were coming on Board, including the new Independent Director. He noted that there would be meetings with them, with some education on the Board portal and an expanded On Boarding effort being implemented.

17. UNITED WORLD WRESTLING UPDATE

Rich Bender reported that Stan Dziedzic's term on the UWW Bureau would be up in 2024, and full effort is being made to have Bruce Baumgartner elected to serve on the Bureau in that spot. He explained some rule changes which had been implemented for this year. He also noted that UWW had banned Russia and Belarus indefinitely due to the war in Ukraine, He also noted that UWW had traditionally been sympathetic to Russia.

18. STANDING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Megan Ball reported that the Executive Committee had been surveyed about the best time to hold Executive Committee calls, and that either Tuesday night or Wednesday night may still be the best time. Bruce Baumgartner said that he would switch to Wednesday night moving forward at 5:00 p.m. MT.

19. NEW BUSINESS

Van Stokes reported that the Long Range Planning Committee was moving forward, and there would be an in-person meeting in June, facilitated by Avery Wilson of the USOPC.

Tony Black reported that Pat Ream had been voted to fill Mark Reiland's position as the Vice President of the State Chairpersons Committee. He also noted that the Junior Olympic Wrestling Committee had voted to make no rule modifications, and to use UWW rules for freestyle and Greco-Roman. Rob Cate said that following UWW rules was well received at the state level

Kerry McCoy reported that he and Jahid Jones of the HBCU Wrestling Committee had met with former NFL coach and current broadcaster Tony Dungy at the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, and he will support the effort. He noted that they discussed with staff members Jess Medina and Jaimie McNab about how to include opportunities for women at HBCUs.

Kerry McCoy noted a proposal for an NCAA rule which would put the RTC system under attack. Rich noted that USA Wrestling found out about this by happenstance, and that if approved, it could set back wrestling 50 years. The Committee members discussed in more detail what the proposal (2019-15) would do that would negatively impact the sport at the high school, college and international levels.

Kerry McCoy made the following motion:

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“We support tabling 2019-15 to provide the opportunity for more research and exploration of the impact of this proposal on college wrestling and the entire sport, and its adverse affect on women’s wrestling.”

Seconded by Nate Engel. Approved.

Michael Macchiavello explained noted that what is best for the athletes is also best for the entire organization. He expressed the need to provide support to a core group of athletes for our nation to have its highest level of success. He wanted to highlight the importance of athletes to USA Wrestling.

Bruce Baumgartner moved the meeting into Executive Session at 11:45 a.m., to discuss the Executive Director Evaluation.

Meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.