

USA Wrestling Board of Directors Meeting  
Virtual Meeting  
Wednesday, November 15, 2023, 5:00 p.m. MT

Board Members Present

Bruce Baumgartner, President  
Kerry McCoy, First Vice President  
Joan Fulp, Second Vice President  
Van Stokes, Secretary  
Don Reynolds, Treasurer  
Jay Antonelli  
Veronica Carlson  
Rob Cate  
James Considine  
Patricia Culp  
Zac Dominguez  
Nate Engel  
Macey Kilty  
Scott Kluever  
Craig LaMont  
Heather Lawrence  
Joseph McKenna  
Tocarra Montgomery  
Hardell Moore  
James Ravannack  
Pat Ream  
Corey Ruff  
Jon Ruggiano  
Katherine Shai  
Iris Smith  
Robert Smith  
John Stefanowicz  
Mallory Velte

Absent:

Vito Arujau  
Stan Dziedzic  
Adeline Gray  
Anthony Holman  
Elliot Hopkins  
Michael Macchiavello  
Sara McMann  
Michelle Meadows  
Mike Moyer  
Sally Roberts  
Lee Roy Smith

Dr. Angie Taylor  
Rick Tucci

Staff Members in Attendance:

Rich Bender, Executive Director  
Megan Ball, Executive Assistant  
Cody Bickley, National Teams High Performance Director  
Tony Black, State Services Director  
Kenya Dixon, Manager of Safe Sport and Compliance  
Aphthen Goldman, Director of Business Development  
Bill Zadick, National Men's Freestyle Head Coach  
Greg Dana, Director of Finance  
Meredith Suess, National Teams and RTC Coordinator

Guests in Attendance:

Finbarr Kirwan, U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee

A virtual meeting was held over Zoom. A quorum was present. President Bruce Baumgartner called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm MT. He thanked everyone for joining and reminded all that we have added two virtual board meetings a year along with the annual in person meeting.

**1. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT & OATH OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

President Baumgartner asked Secretary Van Stokes to read the statement:

“Is any member aware of any conflict of interest (that is, of a personal interest or direct or indirect pecuniary interest) in any matter being considered by this meeting, which should now be reported or disclosed or addressed under the USA Wrestling’s Conflict of Interest Policy? If a Board member determines there to be a conflict of interest at any point during the course of the meeting when a specific subject is being discussed and/or action is being taken, a declaration of a conflict of interest should be made at that time. This is also a reminder that no confidential information disclosed during this meeting, or while doing any of the business of USA Wrestling can be used for the benefit of any other entity.”

When the question was asked, no member announced that they had a conflict of interest as defined in the statement.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM AUGUST 11-12, 2023 MEETING**

President Baumgartner called for a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. Motion by Jon Ruggiano to approve the minutes from the Board of Directors meeting of August 11-12, 2023. Second by Zac Dominguez. Unanimously approved.

**3. USOPC UPDATE**

Rich Bender introduced Finbarr Kirwan, the Senior Vice President, Chief of Olympic Sport for the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee. Fin thanked Rich for the introduction and began by acknowledging the 11 medals USA wrestlers brought home from the Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile in the recent weeks. Fin shared that he spent time with many USA

Wrestling staff members and was grateful to witness the team's success in person. He thanked the board for the opportunity to speak with them and that the USOPC is incredibly proud of Team USA and the performance in Santiago. Additionally, Fin applauded the success of USA Wrestling at the recent World Championships, bringing home 14 medals and a total of 49 for the championship season. He also recognized the brilliant performance by both the athletes and coaching staff. He acknowledged Cody Bickley and Rich Bender for their leadership and continued collaboration with the USOPC.

Fin shared that during the Pan American Games he spoke with Rocky Harris, the Chief of Sport and Athlete Services at the USOPC, regarding the highest performing NGBs. In that discussion, Fin used USA Wrestling as an example of a very high performing NGB with a clear focus on being the best. The USOPC recognizes the commitment to high performance USA Wrestling holds. The USOPC also recognizes the pipeline of talent USA Wrestling and the growth of membership especially on the female side of participation. Fin assured the board members that the relationship between USA Wrestling leadership and the USOPC is the strongest it has ever been. Looking forward to the Paris Games, the USOPC is dedicated to working strongly with USA Wrestling to have a great experience in the summer. Rich Bender thanked Fin for the partnership with the USOPC and for his time with the board.

#### **4. PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Baumgartner thanked Fin for his contribution and thanked all for being in attendance, for their time, and for their dedication to the sport and USA Wrestling. He shared that progress is always important, but the current group has led to the success the organization is currently experiencing. President Baumgartner shared that since the last meeting, he has attended the Senior World Championships in Serbia and the Wrestle Like A Girl Gala. Next, he heads to the first Living the Dream Medal Fund Victory Tour Dinner and Bill Farrell in New York City. In December, he will head to Fort Worth, TX for Senior Nationals. President Baumgartner is running for a UWW Bureau seat as Stan Dziedzic terms out, and he and Rich are working on a travel plan to boost his position before the elections in the late summer. He reminded all board members to ensure they have completed all membership requirements as soon as possible. President Baumgartner then turned the call over to Rich Bender.

#### **5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Rich Bender thanked President Baumgartner for his leadership and the board's leadership. On August 31, USA Wrestling wrapped up the most successful year in history - from membership to medal count. Rich shared that USA Wrestling has submitted 3 bids for the 2025 U17 World Championships, 2026 U20 World Championships, and 2027 Senior World Championships. It is currently trending towards most if not all will be held in Las Vegas. The decision will likely be made in the spring. Rich thanked Rob Cate and Pete Isais for their work on the bid process.

United World Wrestling (UWW) released that the Olympic Game qualifying tournaments will not have gold medal matches. As the qualifying spot is determined in the semi-finals, in previous years many of the medal matches were forfeited and this is a positive solution to that issue. Additionally, a second gold medal for 87k in Greco was awarded by UWW today due to issues with officiating in the match. There is some concern with the Pan American Olympic qualifier that is planned to be held in Acapulco, MX due to the hurricane the city experienced. USA Wrestling has been assured that the event will continue on as planned.

Rich asked for any questions. Craig Lamont asked if the situation of the call being reversed after the match results were finalized will set a precedent for the future. Rich shared the same level of concern and agreed that it would not be a precedent that USA Wrestling would support in the future. A similar situation occurred this summer at Cadet Worlds due to the scoring being incorrect, but that situation was addressed on site at the event and both athletes received Gold on the medal stand. Rich then turned the call over to Tony Black, Director of State Services.

## **6. MEMBERSHIP & STATE SERVICES REPORT**

Tony Black shared that through 10/31/23 membership is ahead by 29%. All 51 state associations are ahead of last year through October. California is already up by over 3,800 members and Illinois up by almost 2,000 members. Female participation comprises 15.7% of total membership compared to 14.3% last year through end of October. Last November was the largest month in USA Wrestling's history with 70K members and the organization is trending 10% ahead of that for the month so far.

Additionally, more states are utilizing the membership system for state or local run event registration. This lessens the burden on the event director for checking memberships and closes the gap on any holes in terms of membership. Tony asked if there were any questions for him. President Baumgartner thanked all the state chairs and leaders for their work and efforts towards growing the membership.

## **7. NATIONAL TEAMS UPDATE**

Rich Bender turned the call over to Cody Bickley, Director of High Performance National Teams for a national teams update. Cody thanked Fin for covering much of his update. Cody shared that the group is preparing for future events including the U15 Pan American Championships, domestic Olympic Team trial qualifiers, and international Olympic Game qualifiers. He thanked Mallory Velte for coaching the U15 Pan Am women's team in Panama next week. Additionally, the lead up to Paris is going well and Cody has met with USOPC staff frequently and USA Wrestling continues to receive additional support from the USOPC for the Paris Games.

## **8. SAFE SPORT & COMPLIANCE UPDATE**

Rich Bender turned the call over to Kenya Dixon, Manager of Safe Sport and Compliance and Megan Ball, Executive Assistant for the Safe Sport and Compliance update. Kenya Dixon shared that there continues to be positive growth and changes in the realm of Safe Sport. There were 27 State Safe Sport coordinators who attended the first state coordinator meeting last month. Additionally, she has developed office hours for coordinators to join and ask questions or receive support they may need. The virtual state coordinator meetings will take place every quarter, and the office hours will take place every few weeks.

Megan Ball shared that the USOPC audit is now finalized. All findings have been closed and the supplemental report is now published by the USOPC. Following the completion of the audit, USA Wrestling staff met with the USOPC recertification team and were met with the positive news that USA Wrestling would be recommended for renewal in good standing. This will be voted on at the December USOPC Board meeting.

Following these staff reports, Rich Bender concluded his Executive Director report. President Baumgartner thanked Rich and the staff for their work.

## **9. FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

Treasurer Don Reynolds shared the finance committee met on Monday, November 13. The committee approved the June, July, and August financials to officially close out the previous fiscal year. The year end financials ended up exactly as suspected with a positive variance of 2.7 million over budget. The auditors are wrapping up their processes and once that is complete the finance department will be able to get caught up on the financial statements for this fiscal year. The organization currently has 3.2 million in unrestricted funds, and no issues on the horizon. Treasurer Reynolds completed his report, and there were no questions.

## **10. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION REPORT**

First Vice-President Kerry McCoy shared that the DEI committee met last week and continues to focus on highlighting USA Wrestling members who are representatives of celebration months. He commented that the communications department is doing well executing the plan for celebrating months and have broadened the subjects from just athletes to staff, officials, and volunteers. A continuing topic for the committee is staying aware and informed on Transgender Athlete inclusion and policies. Next Monday, November 20 will be Morgan State's first home dual since the reinstatement of the program. Additionally, Kenya Dixon represented USA Wrestling at Delaware State's homecoming celebration as they get closer to announcing a women's wrestling program.

## **11. ATHLETES ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Johnny Stefanowicz let the board know that the AAC has met twice since the BOD meeting in August. A lot of work has been done towards Governance and the AAC continues to work to be the leading NGB example. Johnny will attend the USOPC Summit in Atlanta in January for Team USA AC, and during the summit USA Wrestling will be used as an example for future audits. The AAC has made a lot of ground on approving Olympic Team Trials and Olympic Team qualifying procedures. Johnny thanked Cody Bickley and Rich Bender for the dedication to athlete safety looking at future travel. Mallory Velte added that is very helpful that Johnny is the alternate Team USA AC representative for wrestling as they are able to switch off these events. Rich Bender thanked Johnny and Mallory for their leadership and efforts to contribute to the organization.

## **12. WOMEN'S WRESTLING UPDATE**

Joan Fulp shared that women's wrestling continues to see growth and success. Forty-four states will offer a women's state championship in 2024, and two more states are in emerging sport status. There are currently 172 college programs nationwide. Of those programs, 96 are NCAA, 45 are NAIA, and 31 are NJCAA. At the state level, the New York State Athletic Association voted to start the process of implementing freestyle rules for girls in high school. They will start with one rule modification of a neutral start at the beginning of every period and any out of bound call. Previously, the Women's Age Group Council pushed for a neutral start and step out in August for USA Wrestling rules, and only the step out was passed. Joan encouraged the board to recognize that the amazing growth will lead to the need for more women to step into roles as coaches, officials, and in administrative positions. These positions should be filled by the women

not only on the mat, those retiring, or those coming on the mat in the next ten years, but also by the women in the stands. She shared that one former female competitor, Liz Short, is teaching and coaching at the high school level in Illinois and had 81 girls come out for the team. Additionally, the importance of coaches' education continues and over 4200 Teal courses were taken by the end of September – with another 400+ taken since October 1.

Kerry McCoy added that Lehigh has hired Brazel Marquez to be the women's club coach in preparation for Lehigh to convert to a D1 program in the future.

Rob Cate added that the step out rule was used at preseason nationals and the girls division ran wonderfully. The officials feedback was also excellent. It was both easy to implement and successful.

### **13. CONSTITUENT GROUP REPORTS**

President Baumgartner shared that Jay Antonelli provided a written report to the board. Jay added an update to his report that because Russia and Belarus decided to attend CISM, UWW pulled the event from their calendar and UWW branding cannot be used at the World Championships. It will not impact the competition further.

There were no other constituent reports.

### **14. NEW BUSINESS**

President Baumgartner called for any new business. There was none to be shared. President Baumgartner wanted to ensure the board was informed that Steve Thorpe has stepped down from many of his roles, but is still involved in Oregon, and was replaced on the Executive Committee by Pat Ream.

President Baumgartner let the board know that the next board meeting will be announced and shared at least a month in advance. He thanked all state leaders, volunteers, board members, and contributors for their work and efforts for the sport of wrestling. He thanked the executive committee for their efforts at the meetings and thanked the staff for their work.

President Baumgartner called for a motion to adjourn. Jon Ruggiano motioned to adjourn. Joan Fulp seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:17 pm MT.

Minutes Prepared by: Megan Ball, Executive Assistant

Reviewed by: Van Stokes, Secretary