

Minutes Special Meeting of the USFA Board of Directors

Saturday, Feb.14, 2004, 7:30 a.m.

Cleveland, Ohio.

Attendance List:

Voting Members: Ralph Zimmerman, Stacey Johnson, Barbara Lynch, Sherry Posthumus, George Masin, Michael D'Asaro, Andrea Lagan, Paul Soter, Ron Herman, Jonathan Jakus, Dave Micahnik, Sara Kass, Gerrie Baumgart, Bradley Baker, Linda Merritt, Marshall Hibnes,

Guests: Donald Alperstein, Jane Carter, Steve Sobel, Carla Mae Richards, Michael Massik, Kalle Weeks, Edward Wright, Nancy Anderson, Maureen Griffin, Byron Igor, Ari Diacou

I. Information

A. General Information and Organizational Items:

General announcements

A certificate and a poster honoring the presence of the USFA Junior Olympics in Cleveland was presented by the Cleveland March of Dimes of Cleveland.

Moment of Silence

Remembrances of Irwin Bernstein and Marius Valsamis preceded the moment of silence.

Appointment of Parliamentarian

George Masin was appointed as Parliamentarian by acclamation.

B. Minutes of the October 25, 2003 Meeting of the Board of Directors.

Motion (Mr. Anthony): To approve the minutes of the October 25, 2003 Meeting of the Board of Directors.

Motion was approved unanimously

C. Officer and Director Reports: (Please refer to the Index of Appendices)

D. Committee Reports

- 1 Committee Reports: (Please refer to the Index of Appendices)

The Committee Reports were approved unanimously

- 2 Executive Committee Reports of Action

Dec. 18, 2003 teleconference

1. The Executive Committee approved the following expenses (a-d) for payment received by the USFA after the close of the July 31, 2003 fiscal year and audit:

- a. Nicholas Diacou, \$476.52, signed 08/158/03, received at USFA 10/01/03, Summer Nationals referee.
- b. Alexander Diacou, \$876.52, signed 08/15/03, received at USFA 10/01/03, Summer Nationals referee.
- c. Francisco Martin, \$340, signed 09/16/03, received at USFA 09/22/03, referee at world cup in Havana, Cuba, June 20-25.
- d. Seating Solutions \$2,321.25 – NY World Cup

The December 18 actions were approved unanimously

Feb. 13, 2003

Special fees for expedited services within 48 hours is authorized and the staff will determine, publish, and report the established fees, not to exceed \$50, as received by close of business in the Mountain Time Zone.

The February 13 actions were approved unanimously.

II. Budget Phase

A. **Financial Reports:** The complete financial reports for the Budget Phase will be mailed to the Board under separate cover in advance of the meeting.

1. Budget vs. Actual report for period ending January 31, 2004

Motion (Mr. Sullivan): To approve the Budget Report as submitted to the Board.

Motion to accept the Budget Report was unanimous.

III. Decision Phase

A. **Urgent – No items**

B. **Second Hearing Items**

1. Motion (Mr. Masin): That the USFA establish a new class of competitive, voting membership to be known as Supporting. Membership dues for this class of membership shall be one-tenth the dues for Life membership. Upon payment of supporting membership dues for ten consecutive years, the membership will be automatically converted to Life membership.

Rational: There are members of the USFA who would like to show a greater level of support for the sport of fencing but cannot afford to pay for a Life membership in one lump sum. US Chess Federation uses the approach outlined in the motion. Upon paying the initial dues for a Supporting membership, a USFA member would become a Supporting-1 member. Upon renewal the member would become a Supporting-2 member, and so forth. Upon renewing a Supporting-9 membership, the member would become a Life member. Should a Supporting member fail to pay their dues for any year in the ten-year period, their Supporting membership would revert back to a Supporting 1 membership level.

Life membership is currently \$1,000, so the dues for Supporting membership would be \$100 per year. Membership dues for competitive members are currently \$40 per year. The USFA could put the money it receives in excess of regular Senior membership into an endowment fund to pay for the maintenance costs of the eventual Life membership and to fund additional development programs.

In effect, what we'd be doing is establishing a means by which members could pay for Life membership on an installment plan. Note that the method of implementation makes the bookkeeping effort trivial. The number at the end of the membership class tells both the fencer and the National Office how far the member is toward being eligible for Life membership.

The motion was amended to read: That the USFA establish a new class of competitive, voting membership to be known as Supporting. The Annual Membership Dues for this class of membership shall be one-tenth the then currently scheduled dues for Life membership. Upon payment of supporting membership dues for ten consecutive years, the membership will be automatically converted to Life membership.

The revised Motion as so amended was defeated by a vote of 8-6.

The motion was again amended to read: That the USFA establish a new class of competitive, voting membership to be known as Supporting. Membership dues for this class of membership shall be one-tenth the dues for Life membership at the time of enrollment. Upon payment of supporting membership dues for ten consecutive years, the membership will be automatically converted to Life membership.

The above motion as so amended was approved unanimously.

2. Motion (Kalle Weeks & Barbara Lynch): Modify the format of the Senior Team Championships for 2004 Summer Nationals to that which parallels the format used at the Titan Games in February 2003.

The motion was withdrawn.

3. Motion (K. Weeks & B. Lynch): To recognize Youth 12 and Youth 10 Open as National Championships starting at the 2005 Summer National Championships.

Rationale: The Youth 12 and Youth 10 competitions were added to the Summer National Championships program to provide competition for these age groups. The events have grown to such an extent that it is time to consider changing their status to National Championships. In order to determine qualifying paths it is necessary to provide another year of development of the Regional Youth Circuit. It is suggested that the qualification path would be these regional youth tournaments, whether it be by points and/or participation. The Youth Committee and the Tournament Committee need to investigate different possibilities of qualification paths that are in the best interest of the development of skilled fencers in these age groups. If this proposal is approved, it will be incorporated into the 2004-05 Athlete Handbook.

This motion was defeated unanimously.

4. Motion (Mr. Sullivan): To amend the membership fees for the United States Fencing Association according to the table below.

Rationale: The membership fees in the United States Fencing Association have remained constant since 2000. Since 2000, the costs for membership benefits have increased dramatically. These costs include athlete insurance, printing, postage, magazine costs and credit card processing fees and the cost of doing business. At the time of the last fee increase, the Board pledged to retain the membership fee unchanged until 2004. This motion was brought to the Board as a first hearing item in October to allow time for discussion and feedback prior to a Board vote in February.

Membership Type	Current Cost	Proposed New Cost
Senior/Senior 3 Year	\$40/\$105	\$50/\$130
Junior/Junior 3 Year	\$40/\$105	\$50/\$130
Coach/Coach 3 Year	\$40/\$105	\$50/\$130
Veteran/Veteran 3 Year	\$40/\$105	\$50/\$130
Fence for Fun	\$30	\$40
Associate/Parent/Coach	\$30	\$40
Family	\$60	\$100
Club	\$30	\$40
Life	\$1000	\$1200
Subscription, Domestic	\$16	\$20
Subscription, Foreign	\$28	\$32

This motion was passed unanimously.

C. First Hearing

1. Motion (Mr. Soter): In any tournament in which the strips are enclosed so that access to the scoring table is denied to non-competitors, either (1) the score shall be clearly posted or clearly announced, in a manner visible or audible to the public, after each touch, or (2) a person of the competitor's choosing who may act as a coach or attendant shall have access to the scoring table or the area facing the referee.

Issue: Tournament set-ups are only in partial conformance with FIE standards.

Rationale: The USFA has implemented only half of the FIE's "look and feel" program. Where strip enclosures are used for international competitions, large scoresheets are mounted by each strip so that the progress of the pool may be followed, and either scorekeepers post the score of each bout in progress at the scoring table or the referee is instructed to announce the score loudly. These latter measures are not being used in the U.S., so that coaches, parents, teammates, and spectators often have no idea what the score is, and cannot intervene when a scoring error is made. This is unfair to the fencers. Even where the scoring flip cards are present on the scoring tables, they are often not used.

2. Motion (Mr. Soter): The entry deadline for each national tournament shall be 45 days before the first day of the tournament. Not later than 60 days before the event, the event schedule, including projected starting times for each event, shall be posted on the USFA's Web site.

Issue: Event schedules are not provided in a timely manner.

Rationale: Scheduling information is very late in coming. This pertains to not only the cities where tournaments will be located, but also to venue location and the daily schedule at those tournaments. Fencers, parents and coaches cannot purchase tickets or make hotel reservations without this information. For people who must travel to 6-8 domestic competitions every season, the price differentials between being able to buy tickets early or having to wait until later can be ruinous. Again, this is an issue, not of making fencing inexpensive, but of not needlessly wasting fencers' money. In addition, the late posting of schedules is a direct factor in the avalanche of faxes that overwhelm the National Office immediately before an entry deadline. In an era in which the USFA has had to cut its international performance awards, it needs to be extremely sensitive to domestic competition costs. The debate about this issue has been will publicized, and the Board needs to provide firm guidance to the Tournament Committee on this issue.

3. Motion (Mr. Soter): The TC is directed to pay attention to the costs of hotels at national events, and to submit to the Board at its next regular meeting in July, 2004, (1) a report of the TC's efforts in this regard between February and September, 2003, and (2) a plan for alleviating this expense over the long-term.

Issue: The prices of host hotels are often excessive.

Rationale: Prices for host hotels are often extremely high, and usually higher than the prevailing market rate. In addition, the true cost of host hotel rooms is often not disclosed by the USFA or its broker. I believe that fencing must not go the way of ice skating, and become a sport only for the very rich. The USFA must be reasonably sensitive to the costs incurred by fencers in connection with travel to and accommodations at tournaments.

**The motion was moved to urgent status unanimously.
The motion was approved unanimously.**

4. Motion (Mr. Soter): Any fencer who qualifies for the Junior Olympics or Summer Nationals in any [under-20 or younger] age group category also thereby qualifies for the same tournament in any younger age group category for which he or she is eligible.

Issue: Qualification for age group tournaments should flow down.

Rationale: It happens constantly that a fencer will fail to qualify for the Junior Olympics or Summer Nationals in one age group, but qualify in an older age group. This may be due to variances in performance, different size or strength of tournaments, or mere happenstance. However, the result is that a young fencer must then choose between not fencing the Junior Olympics or Summer Nationals at all, or fencing in the older age group but not his or her most appropriate age group. This is not developmentally optimal. However, but this problem could be addressed by making age group qualification “flow down,” so that an age group fencer qualifies in each younger category by qualifying in an older category.

5. Motion (Mr. Soter): The Fence-for-Fun membership is terminated, effective August 1, 2004.

Issue: Whether to terminate the Fence-for-fun membership category.

Rationale: The Fence-for-Fun membership category is cumbersome for local tournament organizers to administer. Many new fencers join the USFA in the Fence-for-Fun category because it is the least expensive initial membership. However, when a member with a Fence-for-Fun membership then seeks to enter a qualifying or non-local tournament, the organizers must administer the membership upgrade procedure, which is time-consuming and irritation-producing (on both sides), or deal with subsequent messages from the National Office demanding follow up and rectification of the situation. Whatever benefit the USFA gets from the Fence-for-Fun membership category does not seem to be worth this constant nagging administrative burden on our local volunteers. There seems to be a consensus that USFA membership is under priced anyhow, so eliminating this category would be a good step.

The motion was moved to urgent status unanimously.

The motion was approved with one vote in opposition.

6. Motion (Mr. Benson): To amend the boundaries of the Ark-La-Miss Division and the Alabama Division such that the city of Oxford, Mississippi falls under the boundaries of the Alabama Division.

Rationale: The Ark-La-Miss Division comprises a large geographic area. USFA Club Members from the city of Oxford, Mississippi have requested that the Division boundaries be changed so that their city becomes a part of the Alabama Division. A packet of information has been submitted for review, and subject to confirmation, it appears that all the parties may have agreed to the change

Following Board discussion, it was determined that the information submitted to date is not sufficient for the Board to make an informed decision. The interested parties are directed to provide a comprehensive packet to Michael Massik at the National office.

7. Motion (Mr. Soter) The National point list for Y10, Y12 and Y14 shall include only points earned at National events. (this motion was not included on the original agenda but was been deemed by the President to be related to items on this agenda).

IV. Good and Welfare

1. The next Meeting of the Board will be held in Charlotte, SC in July, 2004.
The schedule of meetings is as follows:
 - Executive Committee meeting: Saturday July 3
 - Membership meeting: Sunday July 4, 7:30am
 - Congress Meeting: Sunday July 4, 7:45am
 - Hall of Fame Dinner: Sunday July 4, Evening
 - Board of Directors: Monday July 5, 7:30am

2. The Bylaw Review Committee will be reviewing the bylaws to determine if changes are needed or warranted in order to reflect the current climate of the organization. A mail vote may be necessary before the next scheduled meeting of the Board so that any proposed changes can be referred to the membership at its Annual Meeting.

3. Jane Carter has been named as the Chair of the Grants and Development Committee. Jane and the committee are committed to adhering to the published schedule of the Grants and Development committee.