

Minutes

Special Meeting of the USA Fencing Board of Directors

December 15, 2011 via Teleconference

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

Guests: Donald Alperstein, Dan Berke, Omar Bhutta, Greg Dilworth, Mary Griffith, Marek Stepien

I. General Information and Organizational Items

General announcements

Remarks – Kalle Weeks, President

Ms. Weeks conveyed thanks to Sunil Sabharwal and others who contributed to our hosting a successful FIE Congress.

The Athlete Protection Task Force will be meeting again next week. They are on schedule to report at JOs with recommendations to the Board. The Executive Director Search Planning group met last night. The group has re-interviewed two search firms and is also consulting with other NGBs that have recently completed searches. A report will be submitted to the Board in January. It may require about \$30,000 to complete the process.

Ms. Weeks indicated a desire to have a division best practices group. Jerry Benson has been identified as the chair. Ms. Weeks is working with Mr. Benson to flesh out membership and mandate. A report will be expected in late spring, and no later than Summer Nationals. Some divisions are currently functioning well, others are not functioning at all. Reports have come in regarding how qualifiers are being run, youth tournaments organized in ways that allow those not entitled to fence to fence, age restrictions, equipment issues, and other problems. We need to find ways to address these long-standing issues. The group will identify best practices and make recommendations.

Ms. Weeks reminded the Board that she had previously asked people to put forward names of people to assist with the upcoming Executive Director evaluation. Mr. Clements, Mr. Baker, Mr. Herr and Mr. Wood have been identified and will be involved in that process.

Ms. Weeks noted that, as previously appointed, Mr. Clements will serve as parliamentarian.

II. Minutes of the November 17, 2011 Special Meeting of the Board of Directors

Motion (Mr. Baker): To approve the minutes of the November 17, 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.

Report not available, motion withdrawn.

IV. Executive Director's Report (Greg Dilworth)

An oral report was provided by Mr. Dilworth.

The National Office received information this week from the Russian Federation about the Cadet and Junior World Championships, including identification of the host hotel. The price is better than we had hoped for. We'll definitely stay at the host hotel and save significant amounts compared to our previous anticipation of costs and budgeting.

Membership numbers continue to be relatively steadily growing. They are a little lower than hoped for. We're currently down about 800 from this time last year.

Question: Has there been movement to implement ideas to increase numbers?

Answer: We are sending out a survey to lapsed members. We continue to send out newsletters and encourage sign-ups. The main question is whether we want to do any promotions with clubs and incentivize them to sign up members.

One-day members are not converting to full memberships. We have had 242 one-day members this season. Very few later signed up for the full-year.

We just concluded a successful event in Kansas City. Mr. Dilworth expressed thanks to the Bout Committee, referees, armorers, and medical staff for putting on a very good tournament. Hotel expenses for staff are more than budgeted. We need further analysis of what happened and to control this moving forward. Entry numbers for Portland are down significantly from what had been anticipated.

The FIE Congress was a significant success.

Mr. Dilworth answered a set of questions that had been forwarded prior to the meeting:

Who is responsible for controlling international budget: Jim Page

Who is coordinating referees to world cups: Courtney Kulik (not a change)

Expenditure for that line item is current on pace, although it is anticipated that we will be spending 5,000-5,400 more than budgeted.

Who authorizes squad expenditures: Squad managers and Jim Page.

Mr. Dilworth noted that there needs to be more discussion of current roles for delegations traveling internationally. NTOC will have an in-person meeting to help better define roles moving forward.

The staff is working on updating the Strategic Plan and where we are with regard to office responsibilities. We are on target with most items. There are a few where we're behind by a month or two. For example, production of weekly newsletters to generate fan interest, mobile website design, financial targets.

The move of Summer Nationals from Dallas to Anaheim and the loss of the Texas grant is causing financial difficulties.

V. Finance and Budget (Sunil Sabharwal)

Financial Reports

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

Second: Mr. Clements

An oral report was provided by Mr. Dilworth.

As one can see from budget report, Year To Date, we are down from where we projected to be by ~\$60,000. The biggest reasons are additional expenditures in National Events, lower membership revenue, and a few places of over-expenditure in international programs. This is offset by positive variances in business development and doing better in junior programs and weapon squad budgets. We expect those to “catch up.” We have gained additional information since the budget creation six months ago and as a result, Mr. Dilworth indicated that he would like to suggest that the Office redo the budget for the rest of this year. This would involve reforecasting everything through the end of the fiscal year, with the goal being ending up close to approved budget. A new budget will be presented at next meeting in January.

Mr. Dilworth indicated that for next budget cycle it may be better for staff to present multiple options and let the Board select which option best fits its desires.

There was further discussion of the budget and questions and answers.

Motion passed.

VI. International Update (Sunil Sabharwal)

An oral report was provided by Mr. Sabharwal.

The FIE Congress was a significant event, the first FIE Congress held in the US. It also represented the only Annual General Meeting of any Olympic sport in the US this year. We received huge support from the Philadelphia Sports Congress and the USOC. This included both financial assistance and the participation of USOC Chairman Larry Probst and Dragomir Cioroslan, USOC Director of International Strategies. The Vice Chair of Comcast and Philadelphia Mayor Nutter both addressed the FIE audience. Two innovative features of the Congress were a symposium and exhibition match.

The significance for USA Fencing is quite large. Our athletes have gotten better and better each
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year. This event has elevated our stature in political realm. We donated \$25,000 (and significant time), and in return got an event that took about \$500,000 to put on. We were the biggest beneficiary of hosting this event.

The scheduling move of Senior Worlds from October/November to July/August was the most significant change coming out of the Congress. This change was heavily supported, including by our coaches.

There was a threat that cadet worlds would be replaced by an under-23 World Championships. This motion from the Italian Federation did not pass.

Mr. Dilworth noted one other change from the Congress: In the past we had the option to pay a 500 € fine for not sending a referee to a world cup, with adequate notice. That option has been changed to 1000 €, regardless of notice.

USA Fencing received FIE Executive Committee approval to move our world cup to Chicago.

VII. Legal Update (Donald Alperstein)

An oral report was provided by Mr. Alperstein.

The THS lawsuit has been served. This was somewhat delayed as they attempted to evade service. Two addresses used in their prior dealings with us were both found to be vacant buildings. In New Jersey, unlike Colorado, the registered agent of a corporation is not readily accessible information. THS has 30 days to respond.

A number of contracts have come in for review, including ProPrintWear, Nike, and others.

Based upon Board discussions in November, John Springgate has drafted a letter addressed to the Mannan family. Mr. Springgate also reported back to original complainant. The letter to be copied to New Jersey Division, Metro NYC Division, Ms. Weeks, and Mr. Dilworth.

The Board previously resolved to appoint a panel to explore violations of an existing suspension of membership. Potential members of the panel have been identified, but not yet contacted.

VIII. Committee and Task Force Matters

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

Second: Ms. Kwan

Mr. Wood reported on behalf of the Nominating Committee that the committee has received applications for nomination and is in the process of reviewing them. They are on pace to announce nominees by January 15.

Ms. Weeks thanked Mr. Herman for providing a report from the Equipment and Technology Committee. Mr. Blake indicated that Mr. Herman has indicated a plan to forward reports from armorers after each NAC going forward.

There was discussion of the contract with Absolute for equipment supply for the next quadrennium.

Motion passed.

Motion (Mr. Baker): To approve the appointment of Susan Jennings to the Tournament Oversight Committee.

Second: Dr. Schiller

Motion passed.

IX. New Business

A. Vacancy on the Board of Directors

Some introductory comments were provided by Ms. Weeks.

With regret, Ms. Reed, because of extenuating family circumstances, has indicated that she will not be able to continue to serve. The Board is required under the Bylaws to name a new member by resolution.

Ms. Weeks reviewed the names that have been submitted by current members of the Board and requested that a resolution be put forward.

Three potential candidates were identified:

Bill Becker

Alan Geller

Jim Speta

Mr. Becker is a former Board member and former chair of the Southeast Section. He is currently a club owner in Phoenix and a member of the FOC. He is also a former member of the Tournament Committee. He has two children who fence who are of an age to make him eligible for this position (eight and ten years old).

Mr. Geller is a software architect for Microsoft. He is a vet-50 fencer and his children fence. He is an active foil referee and is currently serving in his third term as an officer of the Western Washington Division. His twelve-year-old son competes locally and nationally.

Mr. Speta is a law professor at Northwestern. He has been Secretary of the Illinois Division since 2010. He is also involved at the national level with USA Pentathlon. His daughter is a cadet fencer, aging out this year.

A suggestion was made by Mr. Alperstein that members of the Nominating Committee refrain from discussion and from voting, to avoid potential issues with an appearance of bias.

It was noted that information of the candidates' status under the on-going process being led by the Nominating Committee is not being distributed to the Board at this time.

Discussion ensued.

Motion(Mr. Glon): Resolve to appoint Mr. Becker

Second: Mr. Blake

Motion passed.

Members on call that are members of Nom Com abstained from participating in discussion and vote.

B. Motion (Mr. Thompson): To direct the National Office to make a budget variance in order to compensate the 2011 Women's Sabre World Championship team for the bronze medal result they achieved at the World Championships: \$1,150 to Ms. Muhammad and Ms. Wozniak and \$4,000 to Ms. Schneider.

Second: Dr. Schiller

Discussion ensued.

Motion passed.

C. Motion(Mr. Blake): To instruct the tournament committee that the National Anthem be played in the morning of each day of our National tournaments (to include NAC, JOs, Div 1 Nationals, Summer Nationals).

It was noted by Mr. Dilworth that this will be accomplished without need for a resolution of the Board.

The motion was withdrawn.

D. Motion(Mr. Salmon): To allow a motion regarding a rules change that was not included in the agenda to be brought before the Board.

Second: Mr. Herr

Motion passed.

E. Motion(Mr. Salmon on behalf of the FOC): To modify t.28 and t.102 of the USA Fencing Rulebook to include:

If a competitor crosses one of the lateral boundaries of the piste, he must step back one meter from the point where he left the piste; and if he goes off the piste during an attack he must return to the position he occupied when he started his attack and then step back a further meter.

The change to the rules will take effect immediately.

Second: Mr. Herr

It was noted by Mr. Alperstein that the motion may not reflect what was changed at the FIE Congress.

Motion amended to read:

To adopt rules for t.28 and t.102 to reflect changes enacted by the FIE during the December 2011 Congress meeting.

Amendment accepted by movant and second.

Motion, as amended, passed.

X. Executive Session to consider personnel, disciplinary and membership status matters

The Board resolved to accept the report and recommendation of the Athlete Protection Officer to approve the professional membership of a coach who appealed a “red light” finding in the background check. The Membership Department and the subject coach will be advised accordingly.

XI. Adjournment

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

Second: Mr. Glon

Motion passed.

DRAFT

Appendix A
Equipment Technology Committee Report
Ron Herman

Equipment Supplier for the 2012-2016 Quadrennial:

Absolute Fencings bid to become the equipment supplier for the next Quadrennial has been accepted. Some changes to the proposal remain to be finalized, and a detailed contract drafted, but we feel that the proposal from AF will best serve the interests of the USFA.

We will be going into the next four years with all new equipment, which will not only enhance the look and feel of the tournaments but provide increased reliability of the tournament equipment as well.

Equipment availability for ROC and SYC events:

As a result of the increased availability of equipment resulting from the new equipment contract, which will free up many of the aluminum strips currently in use, we hope to be able to offer to regional organizers rental tournament equipment.

Our current thinking is that the equipment would be offered in 2 strip increments. One of our shipping containers, containing 2 strips, 2 machines with the necessary reels, cords, stands, etc., would constitute one unit. Organizers could specify how many units they would require and the equipment would be shipped to their designated location and returned after each competition.

Once again, the details concerning costs, contracts, responsible parties, etc., need to be finalized after discussion between Board and Staff, but implementation of a program like this should be straightforward.

Non-conforming Epee grips:

In response to complaints received after NAC A & B that some fencers were using Epees that were either longer than the allowable maximum or had been modified by bending or taping so that they no longer were compliant the rules, the staff in Kansas City undertook to test all French grip epees at control.

Contrary to expectations this did not materially affect the length of the control process: we finished at 8:30 and 8:15 respectively the first two days.

After the first two days control we had identified 15 weapons that were longer than the rules allowed, 3 that had had their pommels taped to the extent that it was our judgment that the result constituted a non-conforming orthopedic grip, and 2 that had their handles canted beyond acceptable limits (the bends were within limits but

resulted in handles that were too long.

In all cases but one the variance in length was ½ inch or less and was the result of mismatched handle/pommel combinations, multiple lock washers, or canted handles whose bend, while permissible by itself, pushed the end of the pommel past the allowable 20cm limit.

While no doubt conferring a small advantage to the user, we feel that the non-conformity we found was an inadvertent result of mixing parts and that there was no attempt by any of the owners of the equipment tested to deliberately gain an advantage with a modified weapon. The fact that the only time these tests are routinely performed are at World Championships and IOC events means that the question of length (as with all the other physical characteristics of a weapon) are never addressed, and fencers buy standard parts and assume that they will assemble into a compliant weapon.

Anecdotal evidence from the previous NACs indicated that there are some severely out-of-spec weapons in use, but none were presented to control. It seems unlikely that a deliberately modified (illegal) weapon would be presented for inspection at an announced control. We will continue to test at Team Selection events for the season, and review the results at seasons end.

Head Technicians Tournament Report:

I am including the Head technicians report for NAC B for your information, and will include the reports for each event as they occur from this point forward; the report for NAC A will be included with that from NAC C for the next Board teleconference.