

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes: **November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022**

**Next Planned Meeting: December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**

**Present:**

Michael Klonowski – Executive Director

Noah Currier – President

Bob Lopez – Commissioner

Dr. Michael Cottingham – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

Daniel Curtis – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

Dan Caldwell – Secretary

Sid Christain - Treasurer

Amy Bohn – Head of Classification

Marianne Duda – Head of Referees

Kerin Banfield – Representative for referees

Jen Allred – Representative: Lakeshore Foundation/Team USA

**USAWR (Jen):**

- Thank you for support while in Denmark! Played very well in many facets of the tournament.
- We have a few athletes who are retiring and a couple new prospects on the horizon.
- Development camp begins on November 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Big thanks to Marianne for helping make connections with officials!
- Looking forward to continuing the conversation in January or so in keeping that development pipeline open
- The level of skill across the board internationally was very exciting

**Referees (Kerin & Marianne):**

- Conducted first Zoom clinic last night. Marianne was not in attendance but was told it went well!
- Didn't have as many people attend as expected, but are hoping to get a new official certified in Philly.
- Scampering a little because there are several tournaments the weekend of 11/13 and need many referees
- Euros was completed with plenty of US representation!
- Trying to get away from physical clinics so would like the wording updated on the website and in the Full Court Press to contact Marianne if someone is interested in becoming an official.
- Marianne has written an article to be posted and we will include it in the FCP next time.

- Illegal ball holder: if it is a CLOSED loop on all sides, **no matter the shape**, it must be 14 cm or less. Dan: there is a lot of miscommunication regarding this. Vesco is manufacturing the ball holder that is being referenced.
  - There is an equipment committee in place for this reason.
  - Kerin said we have adopted WWR rules and this is NOT one of the exceptions they laid out. You can either cut it so that it is NOT a complete loop or wrap it to take up enough space to meet the measurement requirement.
  - Noah said it is important that we communicate immediately with Vesco.
  - Dan has been working with Tom, Trey and Mike trying to work this out.
  - Dan is working on getting the equipment committee together. It has been defunct for several years. Daniel said Gumbie would happily be willing to participate. Noah would like it to be finalized very quickly so we can be proactive. Dan will talk to Tom & Gumbie tomorrow. Dan also asked Marianne and Kerin to recommend some refs who are in each region that would be willing to serve. He will also reach out to Hez and Chuck French.
  - There were several ball holders at Worlds that were illegal. It can't be confirmed that THIS specific holder was one of those.
  - Dan asked if we cut 2" out of the loop would that make it legal. The answer was yes, as it would no longer be a closed loop.
  - Marianne said it would be great if we could get some pics of ball holders that are both legal and illegal so there is a better understanding.
  - There is a manufacturer already angry because he manufactured 100 of these ball holders and now they are deemed illegal.
  - Noah said we need to work toward complying with the WWR rules as they are written.
    - Mike K. said he was under the impression those manufacturers were going to be in that initial meeting. Noah said he doesn't think that is necessary and would not help move the needle. Dan specifically if he should exclude Tom Vesco as he is currently his only committee member. Noah said in HIS opinion, yes. He asked if anyone felt differently. Dan said HE feels very differently. Both Dan and Noah own this ball holder. Daniel feels that he doesn't think we should exclude those manufacturers if we have historically had them on the committee. In the past, it was a very small committee with half of them being manufacturers. Noah said that as long as the focus is on complying with WWR rules and NOT them justifying the holders since they have manufactured so many, then that would be fine. Daniel said that we are also courting Vesco and Melrose for sponsorship dollars so we want to make sure we are not doing anything to upset them if possible.

- The ball holders they are making follow one part of the rule but not another.
- While there have been 100 of these holders created, they have only distributed 5 or 6 of them.
- Vesco said that with the issues that constantly arise with ball holders, they intend to only manufacture this holder moving forward.
- Dan will provide the drawings to the committee later tonight or tomorrow morning.

### **Classifiers (Amy):**

- 412 athletes registered, still waiting for 6 who said they were planning to
- Incorrect entry of classification continues to be an issue
- 31 teams had registration issues
- Master list should be done soon and sent to Bob
- Huge kudos to Bob for taking on the task of updating the 104 athletes that had changes
- Spent \$141 on Access and Parallels
- Protest forms on website:
  - Medical protest form seems to be easily found
  - Regular protest form is difficult to find, only found in the manual
- Anne Hart was in Denmark and she went to the classification meeting – will be changes in 2026. Goal is to get the new manual in place so we can make action plans.
- Philly will have 2 panels with a chief classifier
- Columbus is not sure if they would like to have a panel as there are some teams who have expressed that they would pull out of the tournament if there was a classification panel there
- There are over 61 new athletes to be classified
  - Daniel asked how many were spinal cord injuries
  - We will sort that data and get it by the time it is needed
- SafeSport – would like to know what the new deadline will be. Should have an answer within the week as to what the issue is and that it is resolved.
  - Dan said we should not expect to have that done in a very quick timeline to have it done by the 18<sup>th</sup> (the date of the first classification panel)
  - Dan said once we get the system up and running, we should allow 30 days from then to complete.
    - Noah agrees that 30 days is a good timeline.
- Noah said he thinks the number one goal as a board should be an increase in participation so is very excited to see the increase in new players

### **Executive Director (Mike K.)**

- Will work with Bob on the new post-season bid package
- Thanks to the safety committee for the work they have been doing
- High-fives to Dan for crushing it in his new role
- Previous sponsors and current sponsors:
  - Will be working with Daniel to update that so we can determine whose logos still need to be shown on the website and in FCP
  - There are sponsors who have not donated who are still shown, and some who have donated and are not shown
  - Daniel said Oscar Mike and Melrose are the only two who currently should be showing on the website
  - Noah said he doesn't want to have this conversation now, but it will be a conversation. There are conversations Noah is having with organizations who might be supporting the league using Oscar Mike as a pass-through and thinks it would be cool to have them represented.
  - The agreement with sponsors was through the calendar year, so Daniel is fine with taking down all but Melrose and adding Oscar Mike.
  - These will also be reflected in the FCP
- 5/10K:
  - Everything is set up on the back end
  - Logo and medal design are only things left to do
  - OM designer is working on that
  - Once finalized, we will be ready to launch
    - Dan asked if we will get money from the registration or will it be solely from the fundraising. Mike K. said that he is assuming it will cost about \$25 – 30 for the medal and shirt, so depending on the registration cost, there would be some net profit from that.
    - Each individual would be required to raise \$200 and teams would be required to raise \$1000.
    - Daniel said that it being year 1, we shouldn't be looking at much as it being a money-making initiative, but something we will be doing moving forward that people can look forward to and build on.
    - Noah said he agreed with Daniel and if we can do something to leave a lasting impression, it will help with growth in years moving forward. Recognizing the people who participate will be very important. He also thinks that perhaps adding a silly component might be beneficial.
    - Daniel would love to talk further about this offline. Mentioned that there is lots of opportunity to build momentum. This is a great opportunity for everyone to participate.
- Continued delays in nailing down golf course dates. Very close to getting a date and once that happens, planning can start in earnest.
  - While hosting in Chicago is a local market, a way that you can reach a further audience is to ask those companies who are there if they have

offices in any of those cities in which there is a rugby team in order to get buy in to sponsor or participate

- Using Monday.com to track grant applications and connections. Mike has sent links to everyone so please review and provide any feedback you may have so he can tweak.
  - Dan said he has not seen the invite from Monday.com. Mike will resend it.
- Move United:
  - Hub for all adaptive sports in the country
  - Have worked with USWRA in the past and provided insurance
  - They currently work with Lakeshore and some other places
  - What we need to move forward with them is about \$500 to apply and a vote recorded within the minutes to move forward.
    - Daniel asked the thoughts on whether it would be worth it
    - Noah & Bob both said that if the \$500 got them one person, it would be worth it.
    - They are the driving force behind Wheelchair Football
    - Move United Nationals is in Birmingham the next 2 years and Jen has been in conversation with them about doing some things with them.
      - Bob Lopez voted to move forward with it
      - Dan Caldwell seconded the motion
      - All in favor to move forward with the application.
- Noah said there is a golf tournament that OM is involved with now and the organizers split the proceeds between them and another organization. The other organization has been letting them down greatly in the past few years, so he is going to strongly suggest they consider donating the other half to USWRA.

#### **Commissioner (Bob):**

- 51 player transfers – all taken care of
- Competition committee met last month and named 3 new at-large members (Dan Plaxe, Eric Newby and Gwen Debly)
- Still working on the second semi-final tournament host
  - Pushback is funding and not having a 2<sup>nd</sup> court
  - Confirmed with Mike K. that the auction raised about \$10,000 that could be split between the two semi-final hosts
    - Mike C. asked if Bob thought that amount was close to what teams needed in terms of funding.
    - Noah asked if any of the teams approached had stated a dollar amount that they would need in order to make it happen. He said finding out what that number is in order for the board to have a conversation about whether it is something we could make happen or not would be helpful.

- KC said they did the whole thing for \$15,000 last year
      - KC did not have a classification panel, but Philly did (1 panel)
- One team is having a meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> and then will come back and let us know if their hosting is a possibility. Bob is going to continue to keep pushing, but it may come to a point where we have to have two east coast semi-finals
- Noah said if Chicago or WASA was interested OM would be willing to chip in an additional few thousand dollars to help them with funding.
  - He suggests if that happens, OM give the money to the league and they would award it to the team.
  - Dan said that if we ended up in a pinch, HE might be able to pull something together or get Tampa to step up
- Mike C. said perhaps in the bid package we put a caveat that if someone wants to host nationals, consideration could be given to those who have hosted a post-season tournament in the past 3 years.
- The funds we raise in the auction at nationals is what we will use to provide payment to post-season hosts
- This year we have \$10,400 to give to post-season hosts. Oscar Mike has agreed they do not need any money from the league. Daniel said he thinks \$5,000 - \$10,000 per team is a reasonable amount. With what we have in Nielsen money and what we raised in the auction, we should be able to accommodate that.
- Sent out a Nationals schedule draft:
  - One question was whether we could do 4 courts all the days so the days aren't as long. Noah said as long as they have advance notice, there won't be an issue.
  - Bob will work on revising the schedule. He will not use 4 courts the entire time in order to avoid back-to-back games, but will revise to include more time on 4 courts.
- Guest players:
  - Was going to suggest that players that registered but are not on a team pay a fee of \$35 to play in any tournament in the season. It would need to be agreed upon by everyone.
    - Daniel wasn't opposed, but asked how we would be policing that.
    - Bob said we would depend on the host to help with that and we would be reviewing scoresheets after the tournaments.
    - Amy said she can build something on the master list that teams can use.
  - Mike C. asked if we had come up with a solution for teams from out of the country. We have a development team fee which is \$850, which is agreed is too high. Do we just charge a per-player fee?

- Mike K. wondered about consistency, too. Dan agreed and said he didn't think we could do anything this season since we have already hosted several Canadian teams that haven't paid anything at this point. He thinks when we move toward sanctioning tournaments, we will be able to have someone to manage all of that.
- Daniel thinks with the Canadian teams; they should provide us with a COI to show they are insured. If they can't provide that, then he feels there is no issue asking them to pay a \$35 per player fee.
- Amy also said on Gumbie's behalf, whenever he co-sponsors a tournament he takes out a rider on his policy to cover everyone.
- Sid said we renew our insurance on January 1<sup>st</sup>, so it can be a part of the renewal and that is why we are implementing this in the middle of the season. Mike C asked if that is what he would recommend. Sid said yes. At a bare minimum we need the paperwork from them.
- There was a note too, that players who are not registered with a team, which means nobody has paid for them, they are still getting access to classifiers.
- Bob said there are a couple of things: guest players who play one or two tournaments, then teams that come and pay a registration fee to the host team but the league gets nothing from that. The most important thing with those visiting teams is for them to provide proof that they have insurance.
- Mike C said we could come up with two different fees: One for non-team (at-large) players and one for visiting teams.
  - If they can prove they have insurance - \$150 per team
  - If they DON'T have insurance - \$35 per player
  - Dan said he does not think we are in a place to monitor this. We struggled with the COVID testing and keeping up with that. He thinks we need to work to set those expectations and implement them at the start of the season, not mid-stream.
  - Daniel said that we need to figure out how to make sure the players are covered.
  - Dan said he thinks moving forward, at a minimum we ask the tournament directors to have those visiting teams sign the waivers.
  - Kerin asked if the refs that come down from Canada, do we have them register? We do not currently, but we can. It doesn't cost anything.
  - Dan said we could have the visiting players register, and then keep them out of the queue.

- Daniel is more concerned with making sure we are covered. Dan thinks we are a little too late in the game for this weekend, but we can implement that moving forward. We can require those international players to sign the waivers and they will be covered and next year we can implement a plan to take care of all of this.
- Mike C. said that those players coming to the US from Canada most likely have coverage due to universal health care.
- At the tournament this past weekend, one of the players broke his hand during play. Bob was asked what the protocol is when someone gets injured at a tournament. Bob said we need to get that in place
  - Sid said he would call the insurance company to find out what their protocol is.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Vice President (Mike C.)**

- Sent minutes from safety committee
- Covid falsification report – not enough evidence provided to take action
- Need recommendations for the bylaw committee
- Thinks it would be valuable for board members to serve as chair of different committees
- Looked at Sid's budget for Hall of Fame and we don't have much to fund that
- Wants to see a better laid out definition of roles and tasks of the members of the board
- The Hall of Fame has been handled somewhat independent of the board traditionally. Mike C. thinks there should be some connection,
  - Bob said when they talked about it in the spring, he thought the funding was going to come under the USWRA umbrella.
- Mike thinks a day-long meeting where we could address several of the items that we continue to unravel and build on the momentum we have going
- Dan said he had been holding back on this and wasn't going to bring it up but now that it is being talked about, he thinks an in-person retreat where the BOD gets together and builds on all of the things that we have been talking about would be beneficial
  - Mike K will put together a doodle poll so that we can focus on something virtual in the immediate future and then we can talk about doing something live at a later date.
  - Bob said in blocking time, he would suggest 4 hours as opposed to a full day at this point.
- Background checks – lukewarm interest. The Safety Committee believes that prior to implementing a process there needs to be a conversation about what the disqualifiers would be, the appeal process, etc. The committee would like to

know how the league was planning to use them before they committed to supporting them.

- Dan thinks next season we should look at moving to background checks for coaches and staff members. He doesn't think we should move to players yet, unless we are talking about a player who might be rooming with a minor, perhaps.
- Daniel agreed.
- Mike C. is not a huge fan of the background checks and wants to know how you delineate who should get one and who shouldn't.
- Amy thinks that Lakeshore has a lot of good policies and she would love to see those. Jen is happy to share all of that with us.
- Official minor's policy:
  - Amy said she had a moment last year where a minor was talked to with the child and coach without the parents present and the parents were very unhappy.
  - The league needs to determine what their policy will be regarding minors.

Daniel

- The league received a grant through the Nielsen Foundation. This grant covers a 2 year period. Part of the funds will be used for individual team grants for those teams who need assistance with general needs (to include equipment, travel and accommodations) and those who are interested in hosting a clinic (to include athletes, referees and classifiers).
- Daniel is happy to create a generic incident report for instances like what happened this past weekend
- We can get the applications moving for the flow-through grants within the month
  - He would like to move them to a Google form so it will load to a spreadsheet where all of the information is readily available

Sid:

- Not a lot of activity
- \$6,000 in registration that came in
- The Nielsen check that came in
- All expenses were focused on the ED position
- He did provide a detailed run of the financials
- Provide any feedback if needed so that he can tweak the report as needed
- Put the Nielsen funds in a sub account so we can track that money and it isn't tied into the general funds
- Daniel asked if we can open a money market with Wells Fargo in order to earn a little interest. Sid said the account it is in is earning a little interest, but that money markets do have some limitations on the number of withdrawals you can

make. Daniel said if the difference in rate is minimal, then we should keep the funds liquid.

- The \$3400 from SportsEngine is a deposit from registrations and international player fees.

**Secretary (Dan):**

- SafeSport – not much else to discuss as covered earlier
- Full Court Press – first issue went out
  - Moving forward, will aim to have out on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month
  - Would like to start back with player profiles – Dan or Mike will manage these
  - Amy, Marianne and Daniel will contribute articles to the November issue
  - Mike C. will contribute an article to the December issue
  - Would like to rotate around the board and everyone contribute USAWR is welcome to provide any information they might like to share as well
- Low Point Team:
  - Dan met with the staff from the last summer. They are very interested in working with the league and Lakeshore in hosting clinics. They are hoping to go and compete in Switzerland.
  - The staff has been in contact with WWR and they are hoping that Low Point Rugby will be back in 2025.
  - Will be reaching out to places to see who would be willing to host tournaments. TIRR has already agreed to host their Nationals.
  - Hoping to have 6-10 teams.