



TEAM USA ATHLETES' COMMISSION

**Santiago 2023
Games Report**

Summary

This report captures the Team USA Athletes' Commission (Team USA AC) Executive Director's (ED) and managers' experience and lessons learned during the Santiago 2023 Pan American and Parapan American Games.

This report will cover the following items:

1. Athlete Resource Center (ARC)	2
2. Athlete Communications and Engagement	3
3. Athlete Advocacy and Athlete Support	4
4. Flag Bearer Elections	7
5. Stakeholder Communication and Engagement	11
6. Team USA AC Social Media	12
7. Post Games and Leading Into Paris	13
8. Appendix	15



1. Athlete Resources Center (ARC)

For both Games, the ARC was housed in the Village and provided athletes access to food, drink, TV's, games and served as a place for athletes to get answers to various questions and general information on a variety of topics. The original plan was for the Team USA AC staff to be housed in a room right next to the ARC with a connecting door. But because of a construction issue, the overall ARC space was much smaller and the room the Team USA AC was supposed to be in no longer existed because a door was not put in where it was needed. Without this dedicated space, there was a barrier to interacting with athletes one-on-one as the space was not conducive to having a private and confidential conversation. To have such conversations and interact with athletes, the Athletes' Commission staff had to find other locations to connect with athletes.



Regardless, the ARC is a great place for Team USA AC staff to organically introduce themselves to athletes, make them aware of the work of the Team USA AC, and gather athlete feedback on a variety of topics. The advocacy work of Team USA AC requires Team USA athletes to trust the staff and interacting with athletes on the ground at the Games is a great place for staff to build those trusting relationships with athletes.

Pan American Games:

As mentioned above, because the original space for the AC to be housed no longer existed, it was tougher for staff to be in the ARC space at the same time as the USOPC staff and still connect with athletes. The AC staff understands that the USOPC owns the space but looks forward to continued collaboration in finding solutions when issues pop up that could potentially impact one group's ability to do their job. A huge part of our job is interacting with athletes so when the space was not there and the AC was put in the USOPC offices instead of trying to find a temporary/flexible seat in the ARC, it impeded our efforts to meet and interact with the athletes.

Parapan American Games:

After the Pan American Games, the ARC space was adjusted to the best ability of the USOPC and Team USA AC staff to improve the accessibility to the space for Para athletes. During the Games, the space was highly trafficked by athletes and the Team USA AC manager worked well with the USOPC athlete services staff in the ARC.

2. Athlete Communications & Engagement

Pre-Games Communications

Team USA AC staff created a flyer outlining the services they provide that was available to all athletes in the Delegation App. Team USA AC staff noted that the Ombuds had a similar flyer for their office that was provided to athletes physically in their village rooms. This is something the Team USA AC may consider for future Games as the usage of the delegation app amongst the athlete population does not seem to be high.

Team USA AC staff also participated in the village briefing calls in which its staff gave a quick few-minute briefing to all athletes who arrived that day. Our portion of the briefing explained to athletes what Team USA AC is and how staff can support them during the Games.

Events

Staff were provided a credential that allowed access to all venues. Staff attended events and supported our athlete reps and alternates as well as other Team USA athletes.

Pan American Games

1. Men's and Women's Water polo
2. Track and Field
3. Artistic Swimming
4. Breaking
5. Men's and Women's Beach Volleyball
6. Sailing
7. 3x3 Basketball
8. Swimming
9. Women's Field Hockey
10. Men's and Women's Squash
11. Men's and Women's Racquetball
12. Table Tennis
13. Softball
14. Fencing

Parapan American Games

1. Men's and Women's Goalball
2. Men's and Women's Wheelchair Basketball
3. Powerlifting
4. Swimming
5. Track and Field
6. Wheelchair Rugby
7. Wheelchair Tennis



3. Athlete Advocacy and Support

Athletes Commission Intake Form

In order to track support during the Games, Team USA AC staff utilized an intake form that logged athlete information along with detailed notes on the specific issue. [Note: Because of technical issues that occurred with the form at the start of the Pan Am Games, some support was not captured.]

Below outlines athlete support provided by sport:

Pan American Games

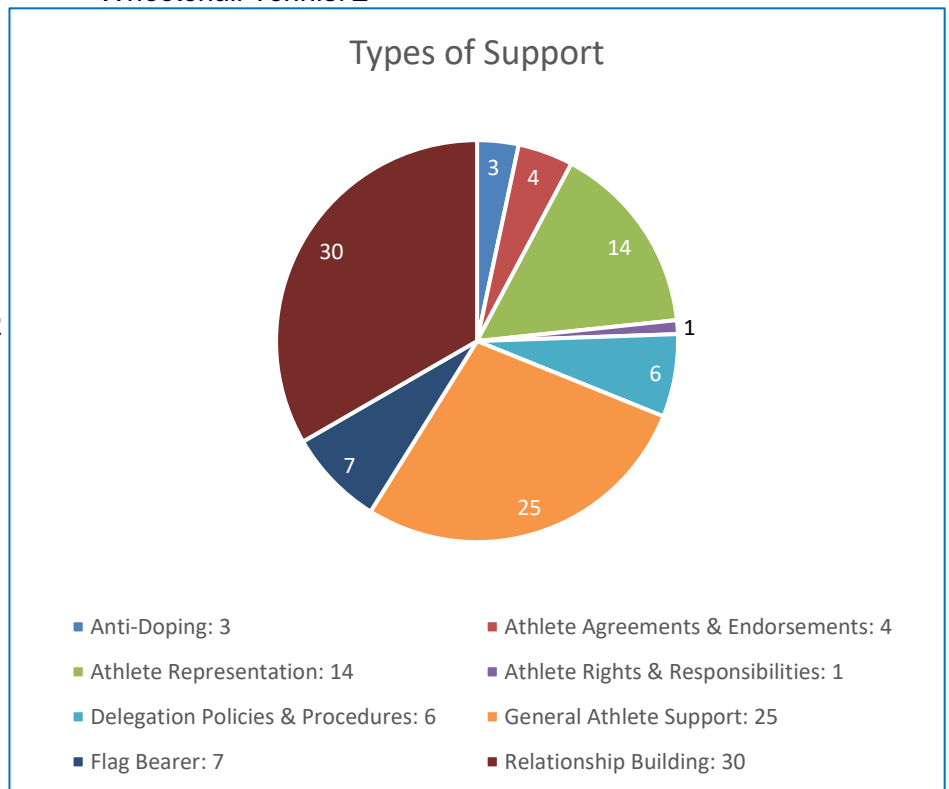
- 3x3 Basketball: 4
- Archery: 1
- Breaking: 4
- Climbing: 2
- Cycling: 4
- Gymnastics: 1
- Karate: 1
- Men’s Field Hockey: 1
- Pentathlon: 1
- Racquetball: 2
- Sailing: 2
- Squash: 1
- Swimming: 2
- Table Tennis: 1
- Taekwondo: 1
- Track and Field: 9
- Water Polo: 2
- Weightlifting: 3
- Women’s rugby: 1

Parapan American Games

- Goalball: 6
- Para- Archery: 1
- Para- Football: 2
- Para Badminton: 1
- Para Cycling: 1
- Para Judo: 2
- Shooting: 2
- Soccer: 1
- Swimming: 1
- Track & Field: 7
- Powerlifting: 1
- Wheelchair Basketball: 6
- Wheelchair Rugby: 1
- Wheelchair Tennis: 2

Other Interactions:

- Pan American Athletes’ Commission: 2
- Puerto Rican Athlete – Judo: 1
- USA Gymnastic Staff and Coach: 2
- USA Swimming Staff: 1
- USOPC Staff: 1
- WADA Athletes’ Commission: 1
- WADA Staff: 1





Anti-Doping: Testing

During the Pan Am games, Team USA AC staff was contacted by an athlete about the testing procedures at the Games. Specifically, why podium-finishing athletes were not being tested. The athlete wasn't suggesting anyone was cheating but was concerned that the testing standards were not being met. We reached out to our contacts at the United States Anti-doping Agency (USADA) and they stated in the Pan AM rules they default to the Internal Standard for Testing and Investigations (ISTI) for direction on testing and that the ISTI does not set testing requirements but helps identify how to test and what an ideal testing plan would be. USADA also shared that it wasn't until a few weeks before the start of the Games that a compliant program was in place.

In the ARC, the Team USA AC staff asked general questions among some athletes about how they thought the testing was going at the Games and the responses were mixed. Some said they were getting tested more than normal and others responded with a laugh and stated that testing in South America is not good, and everyone knows it.

Through conversations with USOPC medical staff and the Ombudsman, the AC became aware that the doping control officers (DOCs) at the Games might not have had the experience/awareness that DCOs at other Games had. DCOs had attempted to remove athletes who were on their way to training from busses to test, were entering the ARC announcing athletes they were looking for to test instead of going to the medical contact.

Opening and Closing Ceremony Participation

Team USA AC staff worked closely with our USA Sailing Athlete Rep, the USOPC and others when a sailing athlete who arrived in country before their accreditation was activated inquired as to why they couldn't participate in the Opening Ceremony. The athlete was in country prior to the Games, but not with their team in any official Team USA capacity. Team



USA AC staff, USOPC, and NGB communicated with the adult athlete and their parent about the period of stay guidelines and the accreditation policy put in place by Santiago 2023. It was explained to the athlete that because their accreditation, along with all the other sailing athletes' accreditations, was no activated until after Opening Ceremony they could not participate in Opening ceremony. This was the policy for all athletes. Additionally, the locations of the Satellite villages also prevented athletes from participating in Opening or Closing ceremony because they were too far away from Santiago. All individuals involved acknowledged a desire for all athletes, no matter the accreditation or if they are in a Satellite Village could



participate in the ceremonies but unfortunately, the policies and location of various village did not allow for that to occur.

Housing

When USOPC staff arrived on the ground in Santiago, the state of the Village was not up to an acceptable standard. Construction and laying of concrete were still occurring and no signage was up in the Village. The decision was made by the USOPC to fly in USOPC maintenance staff so they could be on site to help fix and manage all the issues in the Team USA building. This decision by the USOPC was great as it allowed our athletes to have a much better experience. The athletes Team USA AC staff spoke to about the issues in the Village, stated that things were getting fixed quickly and that all-in-all, the experience was positive. The USOPC retained maintenance staff on-site throughout the duration of both Games.

Near the end of the Pan American Games Team USA AC ED was approached by a men's



field hockey athlete because he said he and a bunch of other teammates did not have a place to stay their last night in Santiago. He informed her their team leader stated they had to check out of the Village and find a place to stay on their own. Team USA AC staff spoke with USOPC staff about the matter, and it was determined that the athletes had extended their stay a day past the NGB delegation and were responsible for finding their housing the last night. The athlete and others ended up booking an Airbnb.

Satellite Villages

Having multiple Villages at the Games is common practice and will continue to occur at most if not all Delegation Events. The reality is the experience for both athletes and staff living, competing, and working in the Satellite Villages is very different. Our staff was only able to visit the Sailing Village but also received feedback from the Team USA Handball

staff and a Canoe/Kayak coach-athlete about their experiences in their Villages. Team USA AC staff spoke to one athlete who has participated in several delegation events, and they acknowledged that they have just gotten used to not being around the other athletes and sports and that for them it was not a big deal but that is not the case with all athletes.

The experience at the Satellite Village meant they did not participate in Opening or Closing Ceremony, observe other sport competitions, or generally get to interact with other



athletes. Additionally, the Satellite Villages had different challenges related to housing and food provided by Santiago 2023. Some of the sailing staff indicated it would have just been nice to have known ahead of time what amenities (i.e. grocery stores, etc.) were available around their village before arrival. Also, when they first arrived athletes and staff were allowed to eat in the restaurant that was onsite near the boats but then it was closed off to them because they were told it was only for people with specific credentials.

Team USA AC's interaction with the handball staff member occurred after the Games but they indicated they wished their athletes had at least the chance to visit the main village and see other athletes and events. The person stated they heard from the athletes that it just seemed like just playing in any other international event and nothing special like the Pan Am Games.

Staff also heard from a Canoe/Kayak coach and athlete who did have the opportunity to stop by the main Village prior to leaving the country and they stated how nice it was for the athlete to get to spend time in the ARC and visit with other Team USA Athletes.

Athlete Different Discipline Tickets

In the Chef De Mission manual it was stated that Different Discipline Tickets would be available to the athletes but for the first week during the Pan AM Games those tickets were not available. Team USA Staff along with USOPC staff communicated clearly to both Santiago 2023 and the Pan Am Athletes' Commission how this was not acceptable. Eventually some tickets were provided to athletes but not to the level that was expected. Many athletes would go to venues hoping their credential would allow them in and sometimes it worked and sometimes it did not.

4. Flag Bearer Elections

Team USA AC takes running the flag bearer election seriously as carrying our nation's flag into the Opening or Closing Ceremony of an international multi-sport event is an honor bestowed upon only a few athletes. We are unique as a delegation in that our athletes drive the election process and elect the athletes; they believe best represent Team USA. The Flag Bearer procedures were developed by Team USA AC with the principles of ensuring a fair athlete-driven process, inclusivity, and collaboration with NGBs/IMSs. The procedures used for Santiago 2023 mirrored those used for the Tokyo and Beijing Games. The process was distributed to NGB/IMS staff on August 31st, 2023, via a Flag Bear Election Letter.

It is important to note that Santiago 2023 dictated the timelines and deadlines for when the names of our flag bearers are due and the number of flag bearers. For these Games, Team USA AC was presented with last-minute adjustments that lead to a more hectic process for all the involved parties (i.e., NGBs, flag bearer nominees, USOPC, Team USA AC).



Step 1: NGB/IMS Submission of Election Procedures for Approval

Each NGB/IMS was responsible for determining the process by which it would choose its flagbearer nominees and voting representatives. NGBs/IMSs were asked to submit a written process for approval that outlined an athlete-driven election procedure that specified who is responsible for making the selection of the nominee(s) and the timeline.

Many NGBs/IMSs did not submit their procedure on time and/or did not read our election procedures in detail leading to the submission of ineligible athletes or no athletes at all. The below NGBs/IMSs did not submit a name on time or submitted an ineligible athlete:

Archery	Submitted ineligible athletes per period of stay guidelines for Pan Am Opening Ceremony.
Badminton	Did not Submit a process for how their nominees were being selected for Pan Am and Parapan Am Games.
Bowling	Submitted ineligible athletes per period of stay guidelines for Pan Am Opening Ceremony.
Canoe/Kayak	Submitted ineligible athletes per period of stay guidelines for Pan Am Opening Ceremony.
Field Hockey	Submitted ineligible athletes per period of stay guidelines for Pan Am Opening Ceremony.
Golf	Did not Submit a process for how their nominees were being selected for Pan Am Games.
Karate	Submitted ineligible athletes per period of stay guidelines for Pan Am Opening Ceremony.
Roller Sport	Did not Submit a process for how their nominees were being selected for Pan Am Games.
Table Tennis	Submitted ineligible athletes per period of stay guidelines for Pan Am Opening Ceremony.

Step 2: Opening Ceremony

For the Pan American and Parapan American Games each NGB/IMS was asked to submit two nominees from different gender identities. To be eligible these individuals must have been willing to accept the nomination, be in the country at the time of the ceremony, plan to participate in the ceremony; and be an accredited athlete. Additionally, each NGB/IMS was asked to submit one voting representative who must have been an athlete other than



the nominees and willing to participate fully in each round of voting. With each round, the field was cut in half based on the number of votes received (With any tie on the cusp of the top ½, the tied candidates will be retained through the next round), and if any candidate has achieved 51% or more of the votes in a round, that candidate, as well as other candidates of the same gender identity, will be removed from subsequent rounds of voting. Team USA AC chair was included in the vote to avoid a tie, which occurred during the Parapan American Games.

The two top vote-getters of different gender identities that received 51% or more of the votes became the flag bearers for Opening. We did have an issue arise for the Pan American Games in which one of the top vote-getters was not set to be in country at the time of the ceremony. Team USA AC relied on each NGB/IMS to ensure that the athlete was already

scheduled to be in country as that information was unknown to Team USA AC staff. Because the athlete was not going to be in country at the time of the Opening Ceremony as required by the eligibility requirements, the next highest vote-getter became the flag bearer. For the Parapan American Games and for future Games Team USA Staff will work with USOPC Games Operations to cross-check nominee submissions with their arrival and departure dates to determine eligibility. Team USA AC staff will no longer solely rely on the information provided by NGB staff.

The same virtual voting process via the Delegation App used for the Tokyo and Beijing Games was used for Santiago. To provide voting reps a platform to communicate

amongst themselves and campaign for their nominees, Team USA AC staff created a WhatsApp group for all the voting reps. There was some communication in that text group, however, staff would like to see more communication via the voting reps regarding advocating for their nominees. The WhatsApp group was a good way to send out reminders to vote, but it did not have the effect we were looking for in terms of encouraging conversation. Team USA AC does encourage nominees to submit a video and written statement to allow the nominees or a selected delegate to campaign on their behalf. We did get more nominee submissions for both Opening and Closing of the Pan American and Parapan American Games than we did for the past Olympic and Paralympic Games. The goal for Paris is to have every nominee submit a video or statement. Noted in a later section is how Team USA AC plans to improve the process leading into Paris.





Step 3: Closing Ceremony

For both the Pan American and Parapan American Games each NGB/IMS was asked to submit two nominees from different gender identities. As with Opening each nominee was allowed to submit a personal video or statement describing why they would be the best ambassador of Team USA to carry the flag. Different than Opening, there are no voting reps, rather all credentialed athletes get one vote per round. There are two rounds of voting unless a winner receives 51% or more of the votes in the first round.



On the Pan-American side, there were two flag bearers and the election procedures dictated that the top two of different gender identities (four total) move to the second round & the two top vote-getters of different gender identities that receive 51% or more of the votes would be the flag bearers. On the Parapan American side, there was one flag bearer and the election procedures dictated that the two vote-getters, regardless of gender identity, from the first round moved to the second round. Then the highest vote-getter from the second round becomes the flag bearer.

For both the Pan American and Parapan American Games there was not great athlete participation in the voting process for Closing Ceremony. This is not unique to these Games and was also what occurred for Tokyo and Beijing. Team USA AC staff believes one of the contributing factors is that many athletes depart from the Games shortly after their competition ended and no longer utilize the Delegation App. Looking forward to Paris, Team USA AC is strategizing how to do more leg work during the Games to get the word out about the Closing Ceremony flag bearer election. During the Games, while athletes are still in the Village, voting reminders can be pushed out to athletes. Additionally, Team USA AC staff can utilize AC reps, NGB communications and ARC staff to remind athletes to vote. Staff are also working with USOPC staff to gain a better understanding of the Delegation App's capabilities to explore more creative ways to incentivize participation.

5. Stakeholder Communication and Engagement

NGB Staff

Team USA AC relies on NGB staff during the flag bearer election process to be the conduit with each sports athlete population. As such communication with team leaders is paramount. However, some of the issues that arose with the flag bearer election at these Games highlighted a need for improvement.

Pan American Athletes' Commission (Pan Am AC)

The established relationship between Team USA AC and Pan Am AC was helpful on the ground in Santiago. When issues arose at the Village, questions about flag bearers or questions about anti-doping, the staff was able to directly communicate that to the Pan AM AC. Additionally, Team USA AC worked with USOPC staff to ensure messaging on certain issues to the Pan AM AC was consistent with what USOPC staff was providing to Santiago 2023.

USOPC Staff

The Games environment provides a great opportunity for Team USA AC to engage with and meet a significant number of USOPC staff in person. During the Games Team USA AC staff engaged with the USOPC on some issues that arose involving athlete matters.

Team USA AC staff were included on daily coordination and Village briefing calls. Team USA AC staff also worked in conjunction with the USOPC communications team regarding flag bearer announcements.

As one-off issues arose staff communicated and worked with the USOPC to problem solve. For example, during the Parapan Am Games Team USA AC manager was hearing from athletes NGB staff was telling athletes not to go to medical if they were showing signs of allergies because they might have to test for Covid. The manager made sure to relay that information back to USOPC sports medical team so they could problem-solve. Another great example of USOPC staff collaboration during the Parapan American Games a USOPC Psychological Services provider made sure an athlete who was going through an issue at the Games related to coaching knew the Team USA AC staff was a resource on the ground for them.

During the Pan Am Games, Team USA AC staff and USOPC staff communicated frequently on several items including but not limited to: flag bearer elections, anti-doping questions, the physical state of the Village, different discipline tickets, international athlete eligibility and other athlete matters.

USADA

As previously mentioned, if staff were approached with specific questions related to anti-doping, they were able to contact staff at USADA to get the necessary answers.

Ombuds

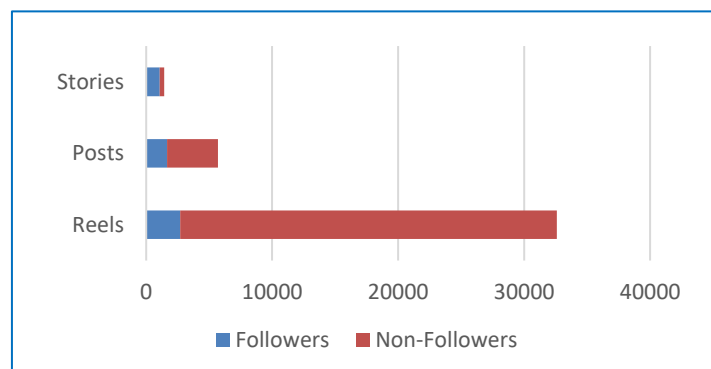
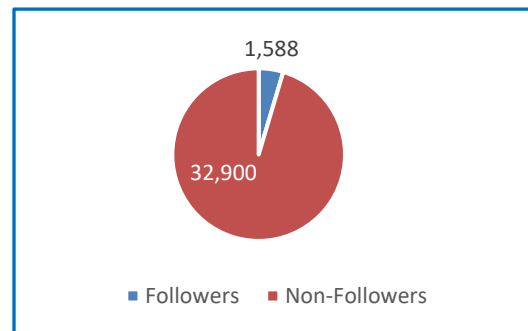
During the Pan Am Games, a few anti-doping issues came up and a couple of times we communicated with each other and the medical staff. Since the Games, the Team USA AC staff has met with the Ombuds staff to discuss how to better work together in the athlete space in general not just at the Games. Team USA AC must be made aware of anti-doping issues at the Games so they can then advocate to ONDCP, WADA and USADA if changes need to occur.

6. Team USA AC Social Media

Throughout the Games, staff documented their experiences primarily on Team USA AC Instagram and on X (formally Twitter). A Games environment provides increased eyes on the Movement and an opportunity to showcase Team USA AC work to stakeholders and athletes. We leveraged this chance to also launch our Team USA AC sizzle reel video we created to increase awareness. [View video here](#)

Instagram Data (Oct 1-Jan 1 versus Jul 7-Oct 4)

- **Profile Activity: +138%**
- **Profile Visits: +137%**
- **Impressions: 137,905 (+186%)**
- **Reach:**
 - **Followers: +34.9%**
 - **Non-Followers: +469%**
- **Content-Type**
 - **Followers: +34.9%**
 - **Non-Followers: +469%**



7. Post Games and Leading into Paris

Flag Bearer Elections

To address some of the flag bearer problems previously mentioned, it was a point of discussion at our January 2024 Team USA AC athlete forum. One area of improvement is to address NGB/IMG non-compliance with the procedures. Many did not submit their processes on time or submitted ineligible athletes. At the meeting, reps discussed potential solutions to try to resolve these problems including, but not limited to, simplifying the IMS/NGB Process for submitting procedures by creating a uniform process and hosting a pre-Games webinar for team leaders for NGB/IMS staff to walk them through the flag bearer process.

To try to increase athlete participation in voting, the group discussed whether it is possible to just have the Team USA AC rep serve as the voting rep for the opening ceremony as well as the possibility of having a monetary award for the flag bearer winners.

Prior to Paris Team USA AC is planning to create a more formalized Flag Bearer Election Policy [Appendix No.1] that will encapsulate the procedures used previously with minor tweaks for improvement. The goal of creating a formal policy is to improve the communication of the procedures to NGBs/IMSs. Additionally, the staff is planning on holding a Webinar about the flag bearer elections to improve communication. Team USA AC hopes these actions will help improve the overall process.

ARC

Staff is working with the USOPC staff to ensure that at a minimum Team USA AC has a dedicated spot even if shared space with others, that the Team USA AC staff can have in the ARC to sit and interact with athletes.



International Athletes' Commission

Team USA AC is continuing to build its relationship with the Pan AM AC and following up with them regarding our collaborative work in Santiago. Team USA AC is working to foster a good relationship with the IOC and IOC Athletes' Commission so we can work together in a similar fashion in Paris with those respective groups like we did in Santiago with the Pan Am AC.

Satellite Villages

A topic for discussion the January 2024 Team USA AC's Athletes Forum was around how can we improve the athlete experience at satellite village. Athlete Reps acknowledged that it is possible for Satellite Village athletes to always attend Opening or Closing Ceremony, but how the USOPC should make sure those athletes still feel celebrated.



WADA/USADA

Team USA AC will provide feedback to both USADA and WADA regarding the anti-doping issues that arose in Santiago related to Doping Control Officers and what some athletes perceived as inconsistent testing or testing standards that only met the bare minimum standards rather than best practices.

Appendix

—images provided by Team USA AC and Getty Sport Images

1. Flag Bearer Election Policy: [Click Here](#)