



**U.S. Biathlon Association, Board of Directors Meeting  
9:00 A.M. September 24, 2022  
Meeting Minutes, Submitted by Art Stegen, Secretary**

**I. Call to Order**

Bob Hall opened the meeting at Mt. Van Hoevenberg, Lake Placid NY at 9:00 A.M.

**II. Roll Call**

Members in attendance at the Board of Directors were: Bob Hall, Bill Alfond, Phyllis Jalbert, Art Stegen, Sarah Konrad, Kelly Kjorlien, Jake Brown, Rachel Steer, with Hap Brakeley, Dexter Paine and Max Durtschi attending virtually via Zoom. Also participating in the meeting were: Sara Studebaker-Hall, Lowell Bailey, Tim Burke, John Farra, Jack Geirhart, Neil Fortier with Preston Noon and CEO/President Max Cobb virtually attending via Zoom. The members present and online represented a quorum.

**III. Opening Remarks**

Bob Hall welcomed the members and thanked them for joining the meeting and mentioned some of the on-going activities. He congratulated Max Cobb on his selection to become the IBU Secretary General and Sara Studebaker-Hall for her election to the IBU Technical Committee. He indicated that this is an important meeting with many issues and that the 2030 Plan would be reviews

**IV. Approval of the Minutes**

Bob Hall asked for approval of the previous meeting's minutes which were approved.

**V. Introduction of Interim CEO and Director of Sport Development**

With Max Cobb about to leave the USBA, Bob Hall introduced Jack Geirhart as the Interim CEO until a search could be completed to find a permanent replacement for Max. He also introduced John Farra as the new Director of Sport Development. Both Jack and John have extensive experience working with sport national governing organizations.

**VI. Staff Update**

Max began by reporting that the USOPC has a new Chief of Athletes and Sports Services, which was an important change. He said that challenges exist between the NGBs and the LA Organizing Committee with flat funding levels. He told the Directors that USBA was fortunate to receive increased funding while other NGBs were

## Meeting Minutes – USBA Board of Directors Virtual Meeting – September 24, 2022

experiencing reductions. Dexter Paine added that it is a factor of the number of medals available to each sport, which implied that there were expectations to deliver.

Max told the Directors that the IBU was in a strong position with media rights contracted to 2030 with a 15% annual increase in funding and would be an increase of \$83,000 over last season. He indicated that it is important for the USBA to have representation on each important IBU committee. Currently, along with Max, Claire Egan was elected Chair of the IBU Athletes' Committee and Sara Studebaker-Hall elected to the IBU Technical Committee.

Max indicated that there would be some "head-winds" for the coming season due to the war in the Ukraine which will cause increased costs in many areas due to the energy crisis. He also mentioned that NBC is reducing its broadcasting of winter sports, which is another potential disappointing development that will need work towards finding a solution that avoids any setbacks. He also pointed out that another funding issue will be changes in the dollar/euro exchange rates but that they are hedged by receipts from the IBU.

Lowell Bailey reviewed the previously distributed update on High Performance that included a review the Fall training and the National Roller-ski Championships at Jericho. He reviewed the summer European training and testing, including the World Summer Biathlon Championships and European competitions that netted four flower ceremonies and a silver medal for Sean Doherty. He announced a newly hired team coach Emil Bormetti. Training would move to Utah in October and then to the first World Cups in November. Testing would continue for rifles and skies and new team policies would be made available as well as the National team criteria.

Tim Burke followed Lowell with a review of Development, highlighting the bronze medal by Maxime Germain at the World Summer Biathlon Championships. He explained that this was an example of the successful "development pipeline." He explained that there was successful collaboration with the National Guard and partnership for funding from the IBU that has allowed Cambell Wright to join the US team for the competitive season. He also explained that the Development Summit Camp show the value of in-person training camps that promotes peer evaluation and a final commitment to the sport. He told the members that Coaches' Education will be a big focus of the 2030 Plan with shadow opportunities to work with National coaches and funding from the IBU for gender equity grants. The schedule for the junior athletes would training in Utah for October then Canmore, Canada for November with junior trials to be held in Alaska.

Sara Studebaker-Hall reported on operations, saying that a Safe-Sport Audit has been completed that would prepare the Association well prepared for the upcoming IBU Safeguarding compliance. She felt that the Association was well prepared for compliance. She mentioned the IBU funding grants for gender equity projects to include coaching and officiating opportunities. She also told the members that the staff was prepping for the USOPC audit and working on updates to the Bylaws and preparing for the 2024 season. A communications review with Tom Kelly and Preston Noon and that permission for access to media clips from the EBU and contracts with Nordic Focus would allow athletes use on social media.

## **VII. Marketing**

Neil Fortier of the The Diff reviewed his background and explained efforts towards securing partners/sponsorships currently amounting to \$59,000 with planned potential projected to \$225,000. He gave a review of “Tailwinds vs. Headwinds” pointing out the relationship with ORDA, Ariens Nordic Center, and NYS funding (for employment potential, and 503 status) as well as limited assets, public perceptions following school shootings, timing, lack of events (in terms of a known racing circuit) and the general economic state.

## **VIII. 2030 Plan**

Max Cobb opened the discussion about the 2030 plan that was approved last year that focused on greater spending on both High Performance and Development. Success had been achieved at all levels except for the Olympic Games. Focus on college pathways and the hiring of a Junior Coach is expected to improve the pipeline and provide a clear pathway for athletes from the Youth level to Senior team members. Venue development and IBU licenses continues. Currently there are three non-USBA funded programs providing elite level support which brings support to athletes to the highest level ever. Increased lobbying for IBU funding and the creation of a Club Certification program and the newly hired Director of Sport Development have been steps that provide substantial opportunities for reaching successful outcomes for the 2030 Plan.

## **IX. Foundation Update**

Bob Hall explained that it was a reasonable year with 2 additions to the membership and that sharing the 2030 plan in a one-page brochure is in preparation to encourage additional membership to the Foundation.

## **X. Finance Committee**

Phyllis Jalbert presented a budget review and asked Max to explain some of the details. Max indicated that a projected 6% increase in staff salaries could be offset by a reduction in housing costs through Air B&B and VIK, which were not reflected in the financial accounting. Although reduced expenses help to maintain a balanced budget a constant concern is the cash flow. Anticipated expenses for an Executive Search were not built into the budget but will be supported by USOPC aid. Brian Noyes again stressed the need for a “rainy day fund” that would help strengthen the organization. A motion to accept the 2022-23 budget was made and approved.

## **XI. Athletes Report**

The athlete representatives reported that they will create an internal advisory council of three additional athletes who would not be members of the Board, but by which they hoped to gain additional feedback from the athletes. An election for the

replacement of Sean Doherty will be coming up and currently athletes have indicated the interaction between staff and the athletes has improved.

## **XII. ICC Committee Report**

Lowell Bailey reviewed the previously distributed criteria summaries. The staff had proposed the criteria with ICC approval, which is then approved the Directors. Lowell explained that the 2023 criteria is not substantially different except for the acknowledgement of the Team Handbook. There were some changes to the Junior criteria which meant moving away from the “fixed place” results due to the reduced field sizes at the junior international level and the introduction of the FISU and IBU Junior Cups. Following a discussion of the Team Handbook it was mutually agreed that a set of expectations that brings together 3<sup>rd</sup> party policies would become a one-place source for athletes and staff in a centralized document and a separate document would be included for signatures acknowledging agreement. A motion to approve the document subjected to the discussed edits was made and approved. A motion to approve all four criteria was made and approved.

## **XIII. Governance Review**

Dexter Paine explained that a comprehensive review was required for the USOPC audit. Changes had previously been distributed. Among the notable changes were the requirement for 33% athlete representation on the Board of Directors and all Committees, the Nominating Committee, Governance and Ethics committees would be six members of two athlete representatives, two Board members, one from Group B (coaches) with one additional appointed member. A review of all policies updates per USOPC requirements was also performed. An additional Gifts & Entertainment Policy, Grievance and Whistleblower were announced, and a motion was made for approval and the motion was approved.

Sara Studebaker-Hall announced that a Gender Equity Committee was still in development and that committee would develop priorities for the IBU grants. Coaching and officiating would be high priorities. She reviewed the upcoming election of BOD members by explained that all Officers were appointed while others were subject to election by the group or membership.

## **XIV. CEO Search**

A long discussion took place concerning the establishment of a Search Committee, the need to develop a “job spec” and the need to find a firm with which to develop a process to find a replacement for Max Cobb, who would assume his new position with the IBU in October. There was extensive discussion about the variables of the search which also opened a discussion about the location of the USBA office. A Search Committee of Kelly Kjorlien, Rachael Steer Phyllis Jalbert, Tim Burke, Dexter Payne as chair, with one person to be announced was proposed. After the lengthy discussion a motion was made to appoint the committee, and it was approved. A committee to research the potential location of the USBA office was also suggested.

**XV. Interim CEO**

Jack Gierhart discussed three priorities that he visualized from the Board of Directors perspective. The first was financial management, with the second the management of the staff and communication that safeguarded a culture of success and the third being an effective search for a new CEO.

**XVI. Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled to be a virtual meeting on December 20, 2022 at 4:00 PM EST.

**XII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM to Executive Session.