



Meeting Minutes from September 9, 2024 Referee Committee Meeting
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Central Time

Attendees: Fariba Madani, Cedric Barksdale, Jay Farrell, Will Gatch, Chris Hodgins, Diane Martin, Chuck Sweigart, Shelby Velazquez. Guests: Elisa Au, Brody Burns, Michael Cain

Call to Order: Jay Farrell called the Referee Committee (RC) meeting to order at 11:07 a.m. Central Time.

Fariba Madani stated that she had prepared a document to request funding for some of the officials that had been doing international travel.

Brody Burns discussed a proposal with Fariba Madani and Elisa Au at the recent PKF Championships in Brazil. The proposal focused on restructuring the Referee Committee and creating a model for officials to increase accountability, better serve USA Karate, grow the official corps, and create a revenue pool for officials. Brody Burns, Elisa Au, and Michael Cain came to the RC meeting to have Brody Burns present the model and get buy-in and feedback from the RC. Elisa Au and Michael Cain stated they fully support the proposed changes.

Elisa Au stressed that the officials are a key part of the officials/coaches/athlete equation with the overall goal to look holistically on how to support the athletes and USA Karate.

Brody Burns went through his presentation at the RC meeting. He stated that the idea was adapted in part from a model he has implemented with the National coaches, lead coaches, and supporting staff. He explained that the funding is currently limited to the two signature events and coaches as well as officials need another revenue model to draw funding from.

Brody Burns presented the areas of responsibility for the Referee Corps as including education, certification, operations, retention, and recruitment. He explained that the RC was covering the first three areas to some extent, but needed much more work on retention and recruitment.

Brody Burns stated how the coaching structure that he put in place uses a regional approach. Coaches, similar to officials, wanted more funding, and coach members wanted more support. There are six regions for coaches and national coaches, head coaches, lead coaches, and staff. The concept of regions provides for better communication, organized training, accountability, team cohesiveness, and the ability to get together more frequently. The coaches are now more accountable and invested using the regional approach, and the program structure has been successful. His proposed model for organizing the referee corps would follow the same regional model.

Organizationally, there would be a USA Chief Referee that would be a member of the staff reporting to the Director of Sport. That Chief Referee would manage six Regional Chief Referees and be responsible for the RC. Ideally, there will not be Regional Chief Referees serving in two positions (i.e., be on the RC and also a regional Chief Referee). There may be some interim period until a person serving in a Regional Chief Referee role is replaced on the RC. All Regional Chief Referees and the Chief Referee will have an Assistant Chief Referee. Each of the Regional Chief Referees will also have instructor(s) that would be in their regional organizational structure.

Brody Burns explained that those interested in becoming Regional Chief Referees would need to go through an interview with the Director of Sport, CEO, USA Chief Referee, and an AAC representative. The USA Chief Referee would need to be a current WKF official in Kata and Kumite and have preferred

experience officiating at the highest level (e.g., Olympics, Pan American Games, World Games). The USA Chief Referee would manage the Regional Chief Referees and be responsible for overall quality and performance of officials.

Regional Chief Referees are also preferred to hold WKF licenses and will be responsible for recruitment, organizing events, increasing referee corps in numbers and quality, holding seminars, and improving officiating within their region. They will report to the USA Chief Referee, serve two-year terms, have performance reviews, and meet metrics. Brody Burns envisions the Regional Chief Referees working closely with their Regional Coaches to hold training and seminars together.

The Referee Committee will maintain key areas of responsibility, including program and policy development, rule updates, developing and establishing educational curriculums, administering and managing national and signature events, and monitoring budget tracking.

Revenue generated for seminars by instructors and Regional Chief Referees would be given directly to the USA Karate Federation. 20% of the revenue up to \$500 would be retained by the instructor. All decisions on fund allocation will be made by the CEO.

Jay Farrell asked whether Regional Chief Referees needed to live in the region. He stated he lives in Colorado however his teams are in the West Region.

Brody Burns said that Jay Farrell could apply and interview for that region and explain the circumstances. Coach Dustin Baldis is currently living in one region and head of another region as well.

Fariba Madani stated she is very supportive of the proposed model and increased accountability and quality of officials.

Brody Burns said the next steps will be to present to the board Thursday, September 12, and update information with feedback received. Brody Burns will let the board know it was discussed with the RC. There is no vote needed by the RC or the board as this is operational and the final decision will be made by the CEO and Director of Sport.

Brody Burns' goal is to implement the program starting in 2025 with interviews and selection of Chief Referees in the 4th quarter of 2024. Once finalized, Diane Martin will send communication out to officials about the program and how to apply. Brody Burns stated he will share the draft slide deck and said this should not be shared outside of the RC or Board members since it has not been finalized.

Brody Burns and Michael Cain discussed that a future goal will be to combine training camps, referee seminars and regional tournaments.

There was not time to review other agenda items; therefore, agenda items will move to the next RC meeting. Fariba Madani will coordinate another meeting for the RC. She requested RC members review the Kata list and come prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

Jay Farrell made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Cedric Barksdale seconded. All members agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 12:11 p.m. Central Time.