Referee Committee Minutes - FINAL
July 20, 2022
7:30 PM EST

AGENDA

1. **Welcome (Jess) (5 minutes)**
    a. **Call to Order** – *7:33pm E*
    b. **Roll Call**
        i. Attendees – *Bob Appleyard, Dee McComb, Elaine Roden, Howard Meisner, Jessica McAlear, Kris Thorsness, Michael Murphy, Terry Friel Portell*
        ii. Absent – *Derek Blazo, Eric Weir, Lyn Wylder*
        iii. Staff – *Jules Zane*
        iv. *Jules Zane started the recording of the meeting.*

2. **USRowing Update (Jules) (30 minutes)**
    a. **Update on Activities at USRowing**
    b. **Update on USRowing Convention**
        i. *(Jules) Convention is a big question mark right now. We have two options. We can wait and let you guys know in the next 6-8 weeks, whether it'll be at its usual time and virtual or hybrid. If that's not the case, and if it's not in December, I'll let you guys know. The status is very much up in the air.*
        ii. *(Howard) I'll throw this out there. August 15th is our drop dead deadline. We need to know if there's going to be a referee track somewhere in some form. It's going to take us a few months to prepare something. We're getting into regatta season. If it goes past August 15th, I can't promise anything.*
        iii. *(Jules) I don't think USRowing is going to want to make a decision too late, especially if people are going to need to travel. We've just had very hit-or-miss fluctuations in attendance for events. I'm getting similar feedback from certain regattas. I was told today that Quaker City Masters was canceled.*
        iv. *(Murph) Yes, entries were only half of what they usually are.*
        v. *(Dee) Northwest Masters was actually higher than previous years.*
        vi. *(Jules) It was 1160 in 2019. It was at 900 when we canceled this year. We missed three of the Youth Regionals by 20-25%. That ends up being six figures. We're looking at the same thing for Masters Nationals. The first deadline is tonight. A small Masters is 1200-1400. Right now we're at 904.*

c. **Status of Confidentiality Agreement** – *Pending with the attorneys still. A lot of stuff popped up this summer, including SafeSport, so there is a waiting list. You might have seen that in March, we suspended someone.*
d. **Status of Referee Apparel, especially jackets** – *Today you received the updated design for the new polo. We looked into our options to allowing other vendors to provide clothing, such as RegattaPrint. I want to make sure it doesn't interfere with other contracts.*
e. **Status of Referee Seniority Awards**
    i. *(Jules) I had another conversation with NK. That is moving forward. The watches are made-to-order, so if we're doing a batch of 100+, they need to give us a timeline for that. Charlie from NK is interested in sponsoring watches for people hitting milestones moving forward. For example, the first 15 watches per year would be on NK. NK was very interested in making this a long term thing.*
    ii. *(Howard) What's the timeline of making this happen? We've been talking about this for over six months.*
    iii. *(Jules) I'll ping Charlie again. This is their busiest time of year.*
f. **Status of Document on Questions about Insurance**
g. **Status of Assistant Referee Package, Name Tags, etc.**
    i. *(Jules) RegattaPrint is setting up a Referee Store, including name tags. I'm hoping they can provide other gear that 766BC can't do. We can probably get that store out as early as next week.*
    ii. *(Howard) Remind us what is in the packet.*
    iii. *(Jules) In the past, it was a letter, a certificate, a patch, a name tag, and a rule book. I want to add a hat to that.*
    iv. *(Howard) What color is the hat?*
    v. *(Jules) We haven't bought anything yet. The 776BC store does navy and white.*
    vi. *(Dee) The list of people to get these packets – is it date sensitive? Is it going back to the beginning of the list?*
    vii. *(Jules) We would do a giant batch if possible, back to when we stopped, sometime before the pandemic. I think February 2020 was the last set that was sent out. So anyone since February 2020 would get it.*
    viii. *(Elaine) Any idea when that will start going out?*
    ix. *(Jules) No, but I'll contact Annette.*

3. Update on National Championships (Jules, Sarah, & attendees) (20 minutes)

a. *(Murph) I was at Youths and Summer Youths. At Youths Summers, it was like we were trying to run things like FISA rather than USRowing. Specifically, with the cones on the start bridge – the cone of shame. It was confusing to referees.*
b. *(Howard) That event is a USRowing National Championship. The rule book has USRowing Registered Regatta Rules & Procedures. If you're not going to follow the USRowing Procedures at a USRowing Regattas, then why do we have them?*
c. *(Jules) This is news to me, Murph, because we don't know that.*
d. *(Murph) I don't know if the crews knew they were cones of shame. We just chuckled about it.*
e. *(Terry) I was at Youths. I thought that Ruth and Duncan did a fantastic job. I think Ruth got a lot of feedback from coaches that they did a good job of keeping the jury separate from that. I think that it went really smoothly.*
f. *(Dee) Yes, I was going to second your comments. Despite the heat, their ability to do transport between the different positions was a big difference from last year. They actually had golf carts available to pick people up from CC.*
g. *(Jules) At Summer Nationals, some of the feedback was that each chief treated the juries as their own. If we ever integrate Trials and Nationals again, then my ask is that we nominate the Trials chief to also be the Nationals chief.*
h. *(Terry) Isn't this on USRowing?*
i. *(Jules) Having two chiefs was the ask of this committee. We wanted Rachel to be the chief of both.*
j. *(Howard) Our response was that the events have very different objectives and goals. The feedback from people who are doing both, is that you can't do both at the same time.*
k. *(Kris) It sounds to me that the two chiefs just weren't coordinating well enough. They need to communicate.*
l. *(Terry) Or were they just trying to divide it cleanly? If there needs to be overflow, that needs to come from the Events Department.*
m. *(Dee) We need to get the Regatta Reports from the Chiefs. These are observations from a few attendees. We need to get the whole picture. We need to get the Report from Rachel and Nikola.*
n. *(Jules) Moving on to last weekends' Youth Summers, it went well. Obviously the Oak Ridge Team knew what they were doing. The first two days were fairly long, but we had the 90-minute lunch break in the middle.*
o. *(Terry) Can I bring up one more thing that happened at Youth Nationals? I'm not sure what prompted it, but we had a sit-down on Friday night. I felt like we were being scolded. Rich stood up and talked about the Pride stuff and LGBT stuff.*
p. *(Jules) What happened was that staff at Benderson said that there were numerous referees who felt dismayed about the issues in Florida, and were talking about going on strike. The reason for the meeting was not to scold anyone.*
q. *(Dee) It sounded as if Rich was looking for some kind of open forum to discuss what was going on. I guess I'm backing up Terry here, in that it was an awkward meeting.*
r. *(Jules) It's interesting that that's how it was perceived. We were intentionally vague, because we didn't want to give away who had come to us. There was some sense on the Benderson side of things that it was valuable to hear these things.*
s. *(Kris) I wasn't there, but it sounds like it was strange without the proper context.*

4. **Update on Governance Proposal (Howard & Terry) (15 minutes)**
    a. *(Howard) I sent everyone a brief summary. After our meeting, Jules was able to get us a meeting with Rich. Rich came with printouts of everything we had sent, with notes on the side. The things that we're asking for, such as a dedicated program office, are of value. Rich agreed to try to budget for it in 2023. We need to start working with him to get a job description. Rich agreed that in some capacity somehow, the committee could even help with interviewing. In terms of a seat on the board, this is a stretch. If we start discussing the composition of the board, it brings up issues such as the athlete rep, that we just went through. Rich travels to the board members quarterly, and has a dedicated spot to address the board on topics important to him. Whenever he's doing those quarterly presentations, he can present information for the referees. In terms of agreed-upon-expectations, this was a big yes across the board. In terms of safety, Jules mentioned Tom Brooks. Rich would like to bring Tom into this, and have us focus more on fairness. Rich would like regattas to have a Safety Officer, who goes through training, and has to attest to certain things at the regattas. Net zero break-even – Rich understands where we're coming from. It's not just wear and tear on our vehicles. It's the gear that we need to have. He would like to better understand what those costs are. Rich is willing to understand what a reasonable standard is, and to propagate that standard with USRowing. Rich also wants to review the Ranks Proposal that we did last year. Jules will work to get a briefing on the calendar with Rich. The subcommittee will get back together in August. We'll start working on a job description and working on gathering data on the net zero side of things. It's positive motion. At some point, we're going to need guidance from USRowing on the IOP. We're not operating as a committee with the proper governance in place. Do we need to make some short term fixes until the program office is up and running? Or something else? Feel free to digest the document that I sent out, and send questions to the referee committee.*
    b. *(Kris) I would hope that safety discussions don't only just cover athlete safety, but also referee safety. This is an aspect of safety that would be a good idea for us to keep in mind, especially if we're going to be spending a lot of time at Benderson. I was there at the end of May for a regatta, and I think they did a poor job of taking care of the referees. By the end of the regatta, I was exhausted.*
    c. *(Terry) Is it Benderson, or the regatta operations that are using Benderson's responsibility?*
    d. *(Jules) I think that a lot of what USRowing does is tell the LOC what they need for each group. Then they'll go and execute that. I think the plan needs to come from the group hosting the event. It's part of the contract.*
    e. *(Howard) If USRowing isn't the LOC, and Benderson asks the LOC what they need, and they say I don't know, what you get is cold pizza.*
    f. *(Kris) Just refilling the coolers seems like little things, but they're big things. It shouldn't be our responsibility to make sure these are in place.*
    g. *(Terry) Maybe these are things we need to outline and share with the Events Department to add to the LOC Manual.*
    h. *(Murph) USRowing did a great job with Benderson at Youth Nationals in terms of taking care of referees.*
    i. *(Terry) Referees were out in the sun for six hours, and not all boats had Biminis.*
    j. *(Kris) I was out in the sun, and it was brutal.*

5. **Discussion on 2022 Referee Awards (10 minutes)**
    a. *Julian Wolf – 5 previous winners by September 1st.*
    b. *Mama Z – 5 previous winners by September 1st.*
    c. *Jack Franklin (Kris) Call for nominees annually on or before August 1st.*
    d. *Terry **MOVED** to change the Franklin Award date to coincide with the other awards; seconded by Elaine. All in favor.*

6. **RefCorps Update (Dee) (10 minutes)**
    a. *(Dee) – I am going to send out an action item list that needs to be dealt with in terms of RefCorps. What I'm discovering in dealing with the development team is that we'll want something to happen, and I'll convey that to the team, and they'll come back with a question on how it should be formatted. Something that sounds like a good idea turns into a broader scenario in terms of programming. I'll be putting together a big huge questionnaire on where our priorities are.*
    b. *(Terry) Is there a more efficient way for the development team to make these decisions?*
    c. *(Jess) Yes, we need a program office with an executive to make these decisions for us.*
    d. *(Terry) It seems to me that maybe there needs to be a smaller group making these decisions. USRowing should be making these decisions. I feel like we're the kink slowing down the process. I don't know if it's worth it for us to concern ourselves with these minutiae. We need to find a way to get this moving more rapidly. Dee, are they still doing a more agile style environment? Do they have prioritization meetings?*
    e. *(Dee) They're using Quip. I downloaded the spreadsheet today, and will send it out to the Coordinators so that they can see what's going on. They also have gotten busy with regattas and travel. We're only meeting once a week now, on Tuesday afternoons at 3pm Pacific. There are a lot of people who can show up on a regular basis, and others that can't. They're meeting at other times as well when they need to. I'll go to the Coordinators, and then back to the Committee.*
    f. *(Murph) I have a question. We have a lot of people in my region that have been dormant since the plague started. How are we going to use RefCorps to capture the people who are working, and purge those who aren't? How are we going to check people who have made their qualifications for the year?*
    g. *(Howard) The IOP says what you do about that. What we've not done is hold to what the IOP does. The IOP lays out the requirements to maintain a license. You have a year to become compliant. If you don't become compliant the second year, then your license is up for suspension. In the past, when we've brought it up, the response has been lackluster, and no license has been pulled.*
    h. *(Dee) Also, because of the conditions over the past couple years, we've suspended most requirements. So the data call at the end of August will be the first with requirements in a year.*

7. **Letter from Mike Rosenbaum (Jules) (15 minutes)**
    a. *(Jules) – Mike Rosenbaum wrote a letter to me, Lyn, and Jess. Then his wife wrote a letter to Amanda. They said they would no longer work in states where they felt that LGBTQ and women's rights were under attack. We need to invest in venues in places where the values match the values of USRowing. Those tend to be in areas that have a high cost of doing business. It's a balance. It's a fine line. I think our messaging on it has been clear. Benderson hosted 40 Pride events during Pride month. It's something we think about a lot. It's on our radar.*

8. **Action Items (Jess) (10 minutes)**
    a. **Referee Service Awards (Elaine)** – *We're waiting on NK.*
    b. **General Survey to Referees (Jules)** – *Do we want to add a question asking if referees consider the political environment when selecting regattas to work?*

9. **Other Issues or Items for Discussion (5 minutes)**
    a. *(Jules) – I had someone reach out to me who is 18 years old. He attends a college that has no rowing program. He asked about becoming a referee, but read the IOP and saw that you need to be 21.*
    b. *(Howard) We tabled it because we wanted USRowing's input. Like several things that got tabled, it went to Never Never Land.*
    c. *(Terry) – Is this an insurance question?*
    d. *(Murph) – We should change the minimum age to 18. Let's add this to the agenda next week.*
    e. *(Terry) I got a note from a guy who is concerned about the distance that referees follow shells. I'll reach out and speak to him, and am hoping that Tom will.*
    f. *(Dee) Is it too close or too far?*
    g. *(Terry) He feels it's too close.*
    h. *(Jules) Scott and Cindy went out in their own launch at Youth Summers to assess everyone's launch positioning. If it's a very recent ask, it might be related to that.*
    i. *(Howard) I'm sorry if you're slow off the start, and, if in the first 500m, you are lengths behind and getting waked out. Are we supposed to let the crews in the lead crash into each other?*
    j. *(Jules) We had Tom talk to the coaches about this at Summer Youths.*
    k. *(Terry) I don't know that it's about that event. I did copy you on the note that I sent to Tom. I got an unsolicited email from a launch driver that felt the two buoy distance was unsafe.*

10. **Next Meeting – Aug 17 (Aug 10 is the start of Masters Nationals) and then Aug 31 or Sep 14?**

11. **Adjourn –** *Dee **MOVED** to Adjourn; seconded by Elaine. All in favor. 9:48pm.*