



## Referee Committee

Minutes of Meeting  
February 8, 2018  
Conference Call

**FINAL**

### Attendance

#### Referee Committee:

Andrew Blackwood – Chair  
Lyn Wylder - Secretary  
Bob Appleyard – Referee College  
Dee McComb, NW – Regional Coordinator Representative to Committee  
Jean Reilly – FISA  
Terry Friel-Portell – Safety/Referee Utilization  
Gevvie Stone – Athlete Representative  
Marcus McElhenney – Athlete Representative

#### Regional Coordinators:

Howard Meisner, NE  
Derek Blazo, MW  
Michael Rosenbaum, SW

#### USRowing Staff:

Patrick McNerney, Chief Executive Officer  
John Wik, Director, Safesport and Special Projects  
James Rawson, National Events and West Coast Program Manager  
Sharon Collins, Candidate Referee Recruiter  
Jules Zane, Membership Programs Coordinator

#### Absent:

Rachel Le Mieux – Trials Coordinator

#### Guests:

Patty Hyatt, NW  
Bill Eldon, SW  
Josie McNamara, SE

Andy called the meeting to order at 8:35 PM EDT

1. Andy Blackwood
  - a. Welcome
  - b. Roll Call and Identified guests (noted above)
  - c. Announcements - none
2. SafeSport and Background Checks: John Wik and Patrick McNerney
  - a. Patrick McNerney started the conversation by stating how critical this program is to USRowing, rowing and the athletes participating in this sport.
    1. He noted that 5 staff members are on the call to make sure that we have sufficient resources in place to respond to questions and concerns.

2. He continued the discussion that was started in Sarasota (at the convention) about SafeSport.
  3. He wanted to reinforce the importance of SafeSport and wanted to answer all of our questions and clarify any issues.
  4. He reiterated that he and John are available to respond after the meeting. John has the primary responsibility but Patrick is heavily involved as well.
  5. USRowing is working on an updated communication plan that will go to the referees and the membership on a regular basis.
  6. Patrick is feeling good about the protocols and process. This is an evolving topic for all National Governing Bodies (NGBs) that come under United States Olympic Committee (USOC) governance. This is a topic that is very relevant to our sport.
  7. The focus has been on training and compliance. But now we also need to focus on changing our culture and how we interact and respond. This is about the health and safety of our athletes.
  8. USRowing has taken many good steps to date, but now we need to increase the awareness, compliance and what we do about these issues.
  9. This is a responsibility for all of us – staff, coaches, referees and volunteers.
  10. All of the issues that John and Patrick are dealing with today relate to the way people used to think. We must deal with concerns and issues in a timely fashion.
- b. John Wik - reiterated that we need to change our culture.
1. In the past we have focused on compliance; we are now recognizing that to fully embrace SafeSport principles we will need a culture change.
  2. USRowing will also focus on communication. They are preparing webinars on this subject that will be available to the entire membership.
  3. SafeSport is about protecting athletes and all personnel who are involved in the sport.
  4. Sexual misconduct issues and reports will be handled by the Center for SafeSport. This is true for all of the NGBs and not just USRowing.
- c. Patrick McNerney then said that the purpose for John Wik and him to be on the call was to address concerns and take questions.
1. Howard Meisner: He mentioned that he had had a couple of conversations with John and Patrick and he appreciated that. But he wanted to have Patrick clarify why we are doing this and if the requirement to have a background check every two years had changed? *Patrick McNerney replied that the USOC updated their training in November 2017 and there are changes from what we did before. There are nuances especially related to sexual mistreatment. We should think of this as a change to our culture and not compliance.*
    - a. James Rawson stated that he had taken the training in August and then had to do it again in January but found that it was worthwhile.
  2. Michael Rosenbaum: Just felt that the communication in December was blunt and lacked any reasoning or context. He didn't think that

it should have fallen to the Regional Representatives to deliver a bad message to the referee corps but that the message should have come directly from the CEO.

- a. Patrick McNerney replied that this isn't a bad message. This is about the health and safety of our participants. It is a message that we all need to support. This is not about compliance; it is about changing our culture. You will see a more proactive approach from USRowing in the next few weeks. He added that USRowing has to be somewhat reactive due to USOC mandates which come out frequently.*
3. Bob Appleyard: Supported Mike's remarks. He didn't think that USRowing should ask our regional coordinators to sell this to their referees. Their role is to answer questions. USRowing should push the policy communication. The regional coordinators can relay the information.
  - a. Patrick McNerney asked what do we need to do to further communications?*
  - b. Derek Blazo: Suggested that we need a better way to know when we are in compliance. Can this be put in the Referee Data System (RDS)? People don't know when they need to do their training.
  - c. John Wik: Understands that we need to address this. We have three separate databases that don't talk to each other. USRowing has prioritized updates to the systems.*
  - d. Patrick McNerney: We are very immature in terms of an organization, but in the Olympics world, we are typical. USRowing is working to update the membership database with Regatta Central integrating SafeSport. Adding the background check will be harder. Unfortunately for now it is a manual process.*
4. John Wik said that he had done a quick check to see how many referees were in compliance with the requirement to do the updated training and that only 25% of the National Championship and Trials juries were in compliance. He went on to say that was about the same percentage as it had been for the past two years.
5. Bob Appleyard asked if the background check was separated from Safesport training?
  - a. John Wik said that they felt that they had to get the requirement for training out to all of the referees and that the background check for most of the corps wasn't due for another two months (March 2019). They are separate items.*
6. Jean Reilly: If you want to reset the organization's culture you should start by sending an e-mail to all referees expressing the USRowing's expectations. Let us know what you are doing and what and by when we need to do things. Let us know the consequences. Include a section on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and contacts so that people with additional questions know where to go to get answers.
  - a. Patrick McNerney: There will be a follow-up communication with referees.*

7. Dee McComb: What about candidates? Do they need to take it again? This could be an issue for them as they are already volunteering a lot of time just to get trained.
    - a. *Patrick McNerney: We should be selling this as a good thing as an opportunity to get more information. We should try to get people to want to do this.*
  8. Howard Meisner: Understands that compliance has been a problem. People didn't write down the date and time they took the past training or did the background check.
    - a. *Patrick McNerney: He can't speak to the past, but will clean up our communication and focus on how we move forward.*
  9. Michael Rosenbaum: As the Chief Referee for SW Youths do I have to check with all of the clubs and see if they have Safesport and that all of their coaches have complied?
    - a. *Patrick McNerney: No that isn't your job. There is a separate initiative for member organizations. There is a signed document on membership renewal. USRowing is going to do an audit of the clubs to make sure they are in compliance. We are updating our protocols.*
  10. Derek Blazo: There should be a flag in the membership database for people who are coaches that indicates if they are Safesport certified.
    - a. *Patrick McNerney: We're working on something like that and are probably two or three months from implementation.*
  11. Terry Friel-Portell: What do you need to get people on board? Training is great but people want to know more about what happens if there is a Safesport incident.
    - a. *Patrick McNerney: The protocols do exist and are on our website. We are working to structure it in a more logical manner. We are reviewing the documents and streamlining when it is appropriate. We are creating a visual presentation of the process that should be posted by the end of February. Any form of sexual misconduct will be referred to the Center for SafeSport. The processes do protect confidentially for both the accused and witnesses.*
  - d. Patrick McNerney stated in summary that:
    1. Communication will be more proactive.
    2. USRowing is working to improve the backend of the process.
    3. We are encouraged to embrace the training.
    4. Noted that all NGBs are doing this
    5. USRowing is taking this very seriously.
  - e. Terry Friel-Portell asked if there is a deadline and what was the purpose of the January 31, 2018 deadline?
    1. *John Wik responded that the January 31 deadline was to show the importance of the training, but that the real deadline is the start of regatta season.*
  - f. Patrick McNerney: USRowing will issue a follow-on communication. Please encourage all referees to complete training.
3. Referee Corps Size: *Terry Friel-Portell, Lyn Wylder, and Andy Blackwood*
    - a. Terry reported for the group. We have approval to pull data from the RDS. Jean Reilly has shared the analysis that was done in the SW Region in 2015.

We are looking to see what we can reuse. We hope to have something for the committee by the next meeting

4. Rule Question from Rachel Le Mieux. The current rule states:

**5-203 General Requirements for Entries and Affiliation (\*)**

(d) A Competitor shall represent only one Club at a Regatta. A Competitor shall not represent more than two Clubs in any calendar year. Individual exemptions from the requirements of this subsection may be granted by USRowing to Competitors upon a showing of good cause.

**5-204 Composite Crews**

Composite Crews are those that include Competitors from more than one Club and/or Unaffiliated Competitors. Such Crews shall be ineligible to receive points or other scores used to determine Team trophies or awards. Once a Crew has been entered as a composite Crew, it shall remain so, regardless of subsequent substitutions.

- a. Background (from e-mails to the Referee Committee):

1. A question came about from a master's rower and the rule regarding not competing for more than 2 clubs in a calendar year. Rule 5-203 (d) appears to be clear on the subject and it is an asterisked rule. However, when the question was posed to USRowing by a competitor going to the San Diego Crew Classic, this was the response:

*Hi XXX,*

*Rules for USRowing Master's Rowing*

*You can compete with multiple clubs throughout the year.*

*You can only compete with one club at a single regatta.*

*YYY, USRowing's Membership Coordinator*

This has been determined to be the incorrect answer and the response should have directed the questioner to request an exemption.

2. In addition, during the e-mail discussion another question and response was noted as follows:

*This question concerned a junior athlete who is doing off-water training at a gym and will enter an erg competition as a member of one club based upon that affiliation. This individual will then row with a different club that is training to qualify for the Youth Nationals. The coach's concern was that this athlete then goes to college next fall and may compete as a member of their collegiate team in a fall head race. In this scenario, competing with a college team in the fall will be the third club affiliation in a single year, in violation of this rule. This scenario was related to USRowing's Senior Events Manager during the convention in December 2017. His response was that at the events he is overseeing this rule will be applied as written. That is, an athlete may compete for a maximum of two separate clubs in a given year. He told me that in the scenario that I had posed, he did not agree that the scenario meets a "good cause" test and he would not allow it (if left to him as the events administrator). This is at odds with the reported comment from the membership coordinator.*

- b. Discussion based on the questions above and the initial incorrect response from USRowing:
    - 1. James Rawson: The person at USRowing who answered the question posed in “4.a.1.” above, incorrectly responded and didn’t really understand the context of the question. This led to a misinterpretation of the rule. James also talked with the Senior Events Manager and they determined that we might need to be more supportive of the youth athlete discussed in “4.a.2.”. USRowing really hasn’t been asked for exemptions under this rule but will follow the protocol above. The staff will involve the Referee Committee and the Senior Director, Programs and Communications when necessary.
    - 2. James Rawson explained that this rule was incorporated to reduce the impact of the roll-a-dex crews that show up at master’s regattas and put the focus back on clubs.
    - 3. James Rawson will call the person who raised the question and give them the correct response.
    - 4. Lyn Wylder: Most people don’t even know about this rule - especially in the master’s world.
      - a. *James Rawson noted that it is usually in the regatta packet for master’s regattas*
    - 5. Gevvie Stone noted that she was glad to hear the consideration to err on the side of the athlete in the case noted above involving the junior rower.
  - c. Questions and responses:
    - i. What is the current process at USRowing to grant an exemption? *For all USRowing-owned or registered events exemptions should be referred to USRowing’s Senior Events Manager; National Events and West Coast Program Manager; or Senior Director, Programs and Communications. They are the people who can grant an exception. The staff will involve the Referee Committee and the Senior Director, Programs and Communications when necessary.*
    - ii. Who at USRowing has the authority to grant an exemption? *Answered above.*
    - iii. What are examples of “good cause?” *We need to focus on the athlete’s perspective*
5. Referee Examinations
- a. Dee McComb and Bob Appleyard did not have a chance to discuss this ahead of the meeting. The question to Dee is what exactly do the Regional Coordinators looking to have done specifically? *Dee responded that they are more concerned with the written portion of the exam, because it is out of date. Looking at the IOP, the Referee Committee is charged with preparing the examinations. The Regional Coordinators want to be part of the process. Dee will propose a list of people to work with Bob to review and update the exam.*
  - b. Bob Appleyard: From the college perspective, we want to make sure that there is a good correlation between what we are teaching and what is on the exam. Bob will coordinate efforts and will make sure that the exam is consistent with the training. He wants to give full opportunity to the regional coordinators to express what they want to affirm and to be sure that candidates are qualified for the promotion in rank.

- c. The Referee Committee will authorize the instrument.
6. Next meeting
  - a. The next conference call of the Committee should be on March 14<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 PM EST.
7. Meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM EDT.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyn Wylder  
Secretary, USRowing Referee Committee  
wylderlyn@gmail.com  
503-780-8413