



Referee Committee  
Minutes of Meeting  
Friday, December 7, 2018  
at Convention in San Diego

Attendance

Referee Committee:

Lyn Wylder – Chair  
Bill Eldon – SW, Regional Coordinator  
Bob Appleyard – At Large, Referee College  
Dee McComb – NW, Regional Coordinator  
Derek Blazo – MW, Regional Coordinator  
Howard Meisner - NW, Regional Coordinator  
John Musial - MA, Regional Coordinator  
Josie McNamara - SE Regional Coordinator

Referee Committee by Phone:

Terry Friel Portell – At Large, Secretary  
Kris Thorsness - At Large

USRowing Staff:

Jules Zane, Manager Referee and Membership Programs  
John Wik, Director of SafeSport  
Susan Smith, Director of Domestic Programs  
Patrick McNerney, USRowing CEO

Guests:

Eric Chiang, MW  
Melissa Chun, SW  
Sam Dempsey, SE  
Charles Flieger, SW  
Annette Forster, SE  
Mariah Foster, NW  
Bryan Fraser, SW  
Andrew Hauser, MW  
Katherine Hauser, MW  
Dee Hotop, SE  
Jim Hotop, SE  
Barbara Jones, SW  
Doug Jones, MA  
Catie Lawrence, MW  
Rachel LeMieux, NW  
Joe Manion, MA

Lyn Wylder called open the Referee Committee Meeting at 9:02 AM PST.

Attendees introduced themselves.

## **I. Old Business**

- a. Lyn asked if there is any Old Business to come before the Old Committee. Two items (IOP update and implementing a new Chief Referee rank) will be moved to new committee.

## **II. Patrick McNerney and Jules Zane Opening Remarks**

- a. Patrick McNerney thanked the 2017-18 Referee committee for their leadership and service.
- b. Next spoke about rationale for the new committee structure.
  - From this point forward, the committee is bringing together the coordinators and committee into one. The previous committee did good work but having two separate entities was not as optimal as we had hoped.
  - Thanks to John Wik for his work with the Referees and bringing it forward until he took over the SafeSport work. Additionally, we just got a survey from the athletes of the sport that they feel the environment they are part of, the culture of the sport is safe and they feel safe – on and off the water - which is so important. John has handed the keys over to Jules.
- c. How Rowing is Changing
  - Now we have over 1M people rowing in all kinds in the U.S. We now include coastal rowing; indoor rowing also is part of us and we need to embrace all types of rowing. When we say rowing, we do not mean just traditional sprint racing and there are a lot of people who row, but are not on the water.
  - There will be a new event in Long Beach next Feb (The 2019 World Indoor Rowing Championships) and we encourage everyone to be part of it because “it will be like no other”.
  - Junior rowing is so important because we want to set the foundation for a great lifelong sport. They may row for a year or two, but if they leave, we want those rowers to feel they can come back. Collegiate rowing is another area where we want to continue growing.
  - With Masters, we had our largest championship in Oakland this summer. That event was great and people enjoyed the event, especially the free beer.
- d. Importance and Positive Changes for Referees
  - But everything – all this growth – isn’t possible without the referees. You are part of the fabric of the events. You need to be there as representatives of the sport and USRowing. There are steps we (staff) were trying to make over this past year – such as the new merchandise store – and as we move forward, we are looking to evolve and improve for you to elevate the referees to a standard closer to the NCAA standard. You shouldn’t lose money when you work a national championship.
  - Our Championships – they are the premier events, and they continue to grow. Having our referees participate and be part of the experience, should be the pinnacle of a referee year.
  - We have a lot on our agenda for referees and we are all working toward this. The message I want to reinforce is we are all part of the team and there is a lot of work ahead of us and where we are going and what you bring is critical. I like to think we are moving in the right direction and I’m also here to listen to critiques. I see 2019 as a year with the new committee and we have to address the IOP and what are the

expectation of the Referee Committee. You are the experts in terms of what this all should be. In time, by the time we get to 2Q, we have worked through the principles of the IOP.

e. USRowing Strategic Planning

- Additionally, the Board of Directors announced a Strategic Planning Initiative. It will be published later this month; it is a draft. We've gone through an extensive set of meetings to get to this plan. And I expect comments because my goal as CEO is to be accountable and transparent.

f. Jules Zane, Manager of Referee Programs, provided an update on regatta growth in 2018.

- 240 additional events (registered regattas) in 2018 beyond all the owned events and there were another 220 regattas that you all may have been the only representative at. We have gotten feedback that there are regattas where you end up as the USRowing rep. For next year, one of many things I'd like to do is work with the committee and maybe develop something like a Referee Bill of Rights which is how referees should be treated and how things should be done.

g. Patrick discussed recruiting efforts.

- As we look over 2019, we are looking at restructuring memberships. One thing we are looking at is in 2020, having a certification or Gold Star club, which would be minimums to make a club meet a gold standard. One of the criteria will be supporting referees – either having candidates, referees, etc.
- It is still on my list to work through my personal licensure as a referee as well. I had hoped to do more in 2018 but it is still on my agenda.

h. Questions

- *Howard Meisner, NE Regional Rep-* How many referees are working on the Strategic Plan and how does it impact referees? *Patrick:* This is a Board initiative, so you have Joe Manion, but the core group is smaller, and it has Anita DeFrantz who is a referee. It is looking at macro issues of the organization – funding, the whole structure of retention (when students graduate from college). I'm trying to look at the tensions between the NGB (National Team) and the domestic interest of the sport. Once the committee determines the priorities (9) and I would expect there will be referees involved in the working groups for those nine priorities. Other macro issues are diversity, elitist image, financial model, etc. When we publish this document, I will expect comments like this.

*Bob Appleyard -* The referee corps is providing a service. And you mentioned standards and we want to promote that. I agree referees who work at Championships hopefully will be at zero cost. Another component of that is recruiting and developing training and there are costs involved in that. When we ask someone to travel to a clinic, be mentored, etc. and then they have to pay out of pocket, I'd like to see us say we are going to pay for those things. At some point it is necessary for you to say, 'where is your investment going?' At some point, the national organization will have to say 'we can't support every event in each region' and at some point, you need to help us understand which events we should be focusing on. *Patrick:* We want more regattas and more events but they have to be well supported. In the referee corps, we probably have people who are working events which are not USRowing events. Part of the new coaching program we have relaunched is mentoring and that is well received. We are launching next week in Sarasota, an Olympic Development program so how can we use those events to mentor coaches and maybe referees? If

we can use a LOC with our athletes, where can we support events and create opportunities to mentor and develop referees? We were organized at HQ in silos, but now we are in lanes and we are trying to select opportunities where we can bring things together and help move each program forward. What I'm excited about for next year is we have made commitments to Cincinnati and Sarasota for events in the next 3 years. Those are two LOCs who have demonstrated creativity in terms of how they run the events which helps us with sponsorships etc.

*Jules* – I am looking also at a Club Excellence Program as part of my work with clubs and the Registered Regatta program. I was in Colorado Springs talking to other NGBs about their club excellence programs. If every club recruited one referee, it would be 1400 referees. If you reward clubs for things, that is how they get things done.

*Howard Meisner, NE Regional Rep* – This creates the quality versus quantity problem.

If we had that many new candidates, we don't have enough regattas to get them certified. *Patrick* – This is where the devil is in the details. The message is if there is a club, they need to be participating in the full scope of the sport. If you look long term, in a much broader definition, there is consideration of introducing Coastal to the Olympic program. Just that statement will draw more attention and that is an area we have to get our arms around. Also, indoor rowing is about to explode. There is going to be a bigger need. There are a lot of regattas out there, maybe at the high school level – where coaches are running it. We know there are a lot of regattas out there. *Jules* – Yes, the number of indoor regattas jumped from 20 to 30 this year which is a huge jump and they are getting bigger and bigger.

*Patrick* – Another thing is that our Rules structure is not ideal. A long-term goal is to not review Rules each year. We have interim rules for indoor and coastal for '19, and we can work to put them in place in '20. Maybe then we move toward an every-four-year Rules review and use the time we normally use on that for other projects.

- *Lyn Wylder* – I have heard people asking, what happened with Clubs and adding another day? *Patrick answer:* We screwed up. We didn't properly communicate internally. It will not happen again. *Lyn* - The concern now is how are we going to staff that? *Jules* – There is a significant budget increase to help address the issue. AJ and James have put money in place so we can address it and they will review the length after this year.
- *Howard Meisner, NE Regional Rep* – From a strategic perspective, when you look at events, will you be looking at the reason for the events? What is the purpose of the event? Is it to allow lots of racing or to crown a champion? *Patrick:* As an example, we have two youth constituencies who race different distances. We have dropped the word 'Club' from the Nationals. Our nationals are in July, but the national team is at that point already selected for Worlds. We'll get through 2019, so we are thinking through questions like 'why can't we include U23s or Jr National team into the Nationals?' I want to get back to what I remember where we had a combined collegiate National Championship, then a few weeks later you were at Indy for nationals and there were white-tie events in conjunction with Nationals. Nationals was an "Event". I want to get back to that.
- Q? - Is there a special event we can have – like Henley? *Patrick:* Let's look at the optics of the sport. But the image of our sport is something I'm sensitive too and there is an element of wanting to go mainstream. We just had Golden Oars. During our debrief, we asked, 'should this event be moved around one of our regattas?' That is

now a National Team fundraiser. Maybe we should take the awards out of it and bring them back to Convention and make Convention a reunion with awards. At the end of the day, this is a sport, an athletic event, but we can build more around the competitions.

- Q? – On that note, one of the clubs I belong to, wanted to create blazers. There are clubs who want that. *Patrick answer:* When I want to encourage more kids to participate in the sport, blazers may not be what we want to project. Even looking at referees, should we be wearing blazers? Maybe yes, maybe no. Golf referees used to wear blazers. Maybe we can look at what we wear and it doesn't need to be a blazer. It needs to be functional, blue, logoed. We are getting into the details, but ... (it should be on the table.)
- *Bob Appleyard* – We have a problem we have to work through this weekend with working Nationals (in July). Going into a new structure, it might be worth getting the Events Dept staff and referees in the same room. Because this is going to have to be a compromise. *Patrick answer:* Let's have the conversation together. We need to bridge '19. We all (Events Dept & Refs) need to go through the pain together and I'll find a time to make it work this weekend and I want to be there. This situation will not happen again. Let's do it today.
- *John White, MA Ref* – There is a great challenge with youth rowing in Virginia. *Patrick answer:* I went down to TC Williams doing a site visit for FISA. The majority of those students (80%) are of color. Later that day, I met with the coaches and all the kids rowing are white. I have a panel this afternoon and in terms of growing the sport, we need to look at diversity and inclusion. I have people smarter than me on that panel – Deb Arenberg, Patricia Spratlin, etc. and my plan is to move us in that direction. Finally, Thank you. If you see me at a regatta, know I'm thanking you. I appreciate your time.

15 minute break til 10:30.

### III. Update on USRowing Referee Activities

- a. Manger of Referee Programs Report – Jules Zane
  - We are at 130 new candidates this year vs. 180 last year.
  - Our referee list is better than it ever was and SafeSport has helped keep the list clean. There was a net loss of 30 referees in 2018.
  - We do need to put a purge date in the IOP.
  - New assistants are at 43 vs. 63 last year. Done at significantly lower expense. Almost 50% lower expense over last year.
    1. We have really changed what we have done in the SW. One new thing we have done is the reception at Masters Nationals. Also, when people renew their membership, there is a question about are you interested in learning more about refereeing. People who say yes, get a standard email telling them where to get the info online. Then at some regattas, we host a small reception with food and we are getting a lot out of it, more so than what we did in the spring. Our goal is to do more of this next year and at the Nationals, like what we did at Masters. Several people who did that at Masters have already become assistants. We've seen good success. Overall, I'd have liked to see the numbers higher in

all the regions. These people have said yes on the renewal and said yes to the invitation so the commitment is higher

- Over the course of the year, Sharon Collins resigned this fall. We did lose some momentum over the year, and now we have an elite athlete, Kendall Chase, who is assisting Jules with following up with people etc..
- Lengthy discussion regarding attrition, how to keep candidates, how long candidates should stay in the system, how to make it workable for new candidates to get the observations (regional differences can make it challenging) Noted that a lot of regattas are moving racing to Thursdays, Fridays. We need to look at that with our recruits and refs as our racing is changing.
- Question ? – Is there a set standard of how candidates are contacted and integrated? Yes, process was explained. *Jules* – Of 43, 20 started 2018 and completed in 2018. Pretty much the numbers are very very low for people who carry over a year or two. Three-fourths of people licensed are done before June of the year. Opportunities are so low in the fall. [Discussion about fall racing and observations.] We are hoping to track individuals better with the new RDS system and understand them better based on their profile – age, experience, location, etc.
- Discussion regarding possibly adding a license category of venue specialist or something similar where individuals could be approved to work certain positions. During discussion pros and cons were presented. Examples: Howard Meisner - I'm opposed because that locks people into positions at venues or events and it limits the ability to bring in new people who need to move around. PRO - I think we should look at it. The structure we have says that once you have a license you are able to go to any venue any event. You are nationally qualified when you get your license when I was brought in. We have been struggling for the last 10-15 years, and it isn't cutting it. We need to look at it. How willing are we to expand our thinking on this? In Des Moines, we need people to staff 3 events each year which are good events. We are volunteering our time. Can we respect that people we bring in have different goals? In the Midwest, we lose more recruits than we gain. This is one of the tensions. Can we come up with a way to be able to staff events in different regions who don't have people locally to run the event? *MA Regional Rep, John Musial* – I think this issue is regional. Some flexibility in rank structure is needed but a position specialist is not something I want. I have people in Philadelphia who can't get a finish line observation and I have to send them to other venues. *NW Regional Rep, Dee McComb* – When I started I was a position specialist. Working different places is what makes us good because every venue is set up differently. We need to compromise here. Is it feasible to create another rank? *Jules* – We did create the Chief rank this year. The other thing is to change how we look at candidates. If we break the exam into chunks, certain observations that are similar, we could pass people on certain areas and that allows them to work and be working toward the rest of the positions but still be funded. *Annette Forster, SE Ref* – I love if they are partially certified because then I can pay them and bring them in and they can observe the other positions on an off shift. *Tom Mannle, NE Ref*: The whole idea of a specialist, I'd want to know who trained them, where they have worked etc. so I know if I need to support that person with a referee of my own. *Bob Appleyard* – Why are we doing anything this way? Answer usually is because we've done things this way. Jules has been talking to other NGBs. The experience in other sports is you start locally and work your way up. Are we that

different that we can't consider this? The whole thing has to be thought through. *Howard Meisner, NE Regional Rep* – Jules, have you gotten info on how other NGBs handle different levels of competition? *Jules* – What I understand is there are a couple of ways of going about it. The USOC has started an officiating best practices group and they did a survey which I am waiting for the results. What I've seen is a ranking structure... Take USA Hockey, they are very strict. They bring different levels of referees to the same rink, depending on the game that is there. I do worry that we don't put too strict a structure in place so that regattas and chiefs don't have the flexibility to bring in people they deem who are capable. *Tom Mannle, NE Referee* – My concern would be for regattas where colleges are competing because coaches' jobs can be impacted. [short discussion] One thing to realize, most Chief referees are not spoiled for choice. We don't have 20-25 people looking to do the regatta. If I don't know you, I will ask around. You come, I observe, figure out what you are good at and use you again or give feedback to whomever gave me the info. *Bob Appleyard* – We have stuck our toe in that water as we are doing this with Trials. Maybe we rank our events. Tom is working with collegiate competitions and that group of events has evolved. There are coaches where a certain competition may have their job riding on they won't stand for referees who they don't know ...

- *Lyn Wylder* – As USRowing referees, should we start focusing our efforts on USRowing owned and less on non-registered regattas? *Bob Appleyard* – Isn't what we are talking about supporting member organization events? There needs to be some affiliation with USRowing. In the old days, we officiated wherever as ambassadors. It is a different world now. If USRowing says we are going to support you referees to provide service to non-affiliated, then we should. *Lyn* – Most of the colleges are affiliated with USRowing.

*John Wik* – We need to remember the liability issue if someone is not affiliated with USRowing (regarding using candidates who may not be members yet). We have to be careful if there are events that are not supported by USRowing. *Jules* – The policy that covers everything, allows different users to opt into what they need. Clubs have to show insurance if they don't use USRowing insurance each year as part of their renewal. This is a huge factor. *Kirsten Meisner, NE Ref* – [Talking about not supporting the non-affiliated regattas] is not a tiny thing. There are a lot of regattas we won't support if we say we aren't supporting those. *Susan Smith, Director of USRowing National Programs* – From a USRowing standpoint, I'd like to understand who those non-affiliated regattas are and reach out to them and there is a path forward where we can talk to the regatta directors. Take Diamond States, for years they weren't a registered regatta. They didn't understand what a registered regatta was. We took the time to explain it and they've been really really happy the last years they have been a registered regatta. As a registered regatta, we will promote their event. Back to Diamond States, they were able to grow that regatta because of the benefits of registered regatta. In the past, we haven't had the bandwidth to do the outreach, but we are using national team athletes to help us with that process. *Kirsten Meisner, NE Referee* – We have that info in the RDS to show you which regattas those would be. *Susan Smith* – We help new organizations and give them a discount and we could do that with registered regattas. *Annette Forster, SE Referee* – That makes sense for smaller regattas that don't know, but there are larger regattas who have better insurance or don't want to go through the process to insure our referees. Dealing with professional coaches, you have to pick your battles and I talked to John

(Wik) about having some situations where we can cover the referees. We need a proactive approach to deal with these regattas because the Chief has so many other battles to fight. I'd like to see more effort from the NGB on this because they may or may not have insurance which may or may not be better than what we get from USRowing. *Howard Meisner, NE Regional Rep* – At these massive regattas where they want to get so many kids down the course... what should a registered regatta be? [Brief discussion about Safety Checklists and availability in the RDS.] *Bob Appleyard* – If we provide service to an event that has no affiliation with USRowing, what are they giving to us? Let's get the liability figured out. If we are talking about an event like Clemson Invite, what are they giving us? If they allow us to bring newer referees and use it as an opportunity to bring in some newer referees to get that experience, then that is providing value both ways.

*Lyn Wylder* – It's getting to the end of our hour so let's pause this discussion. I welcome comments on these or other areas. Please send your comments to me or Jules. We will take a one-hour lunch break and reconvene at 1p.

1p – We will start with the presentation from Terry Friel Portell

#### **IV. Nationals Championship surveys presentation**

- a. See Attachment *Referee Nationals Survey 2018.pdf*
- b. Jules – Many of the things that have been identified here will be addressed. They are in the proposal to the Board to address things like rental cars, travel, off the water things.
  - *John Musial, MA Regional Rep* – Do we ask people why they do not put in for Nationals? When we send this survey, maybe send to the entire corps? And ask why they do not.
  - *Lyn Wylder* – One thing I noticed here is that interactions with coaches were low. Is there a way to add to coach training about how to deal with referees? At youths, there were issues with weigh-ins. *Bob Appleyard* – We also may need to do some education with our referees with the growing professionalism in the coaches ranks, that we need to understand changes they may be dealing with at a regatta. *Jules* – I've seen situations where we don't diffuse situations or teach when we might. *Lyn* – Using an ombudsman, is very useful and we use a lot in the NW. The ombudsman can float and walk around and provide feedback and provide real time info to the chiefs to improve things before they get worse. *Dee Hotop SE Referee* – There are times when the coach is looking for the ref to say 'no' because they are being pushed by parents, Athletic Directors, etc.

#### **V. Dee McComb – Regional Coordinators Report**

- a. See Attachment *2018 Regional Summary.pdf*

#### **VI. Rachel LeMieux – Trials Coordinators Report**

- a. See Attachment 2018 Trials Report USRowing Annual Convention San Diego CA

#### **VII. Nationals Discussion**

- a. New format for Nationals

- The new format for Nationals (July, formerly Clubs): There are 72 events. There are essentially the first 42 events on Tu -W-Th (ending mid-day); then the clock stops and the next group of events start on Friday and conclude on Sunday.
- b. National Championships Regattas discussion will postpone to tomorrow so discussions can be held with Events department later today.

### **VIII. Membership for Referees**

- a. Jules – A few years ago, they created a package system for membership for athletes. Now we are looking at creating a referee package which would include insurance, then rowing, education, etc. The basic package will cost \$0. If you already paid, let Jules know. The starting package will include insurance for free. There will be a significant expense to provide the magazine to members (5 digits). Rowing magazine may be an opt in or possibly gift for those who work Nationals. There is a line item for a significant piece of clothing for referees who work Nationals.
  - John Wik – It is important to have the opt-in because there are people on the list who don't do anything.

### **IX. Safety Committee, Rachel Le Mieux**

- a. Update
  - I have been named Chair of the new Safety Committee. We are here in an advisory capacity for USRowing; but I believe we have a commitment from USRowing so we can work on trying to make things better from a safety perspective.
  - I want to share some topics that have occurred.
    1. We could go all the way back to the Snowflake Regatta
    2. The most recent situation was the one in California with air quality issues. Athletes were wondering why the regatta was going on given the air quality. NCAA programs left but the regatta went on. We have pictures of rowers with masks and boats coming out of the water with ash. The LOC said they were following NCAA guidelines. USRowing did not provide a guideline.
  - We need to work with and educate our Chiefs about what to do when situations exist and we have to pull the plug. It is a big multi-faceted issue. Safety is about the time you hit a regatta site (indoors and outdoors) and how safety permeates everything we do. We want everyone – athletes, volunteers, refs to get to regatta and home safely.
  - The Committee will come up with a few things we want to work on and accomplish in 2019. Committee will be working on providing information for best practices etc. A few years ago, there was an issue of algae in the water which is toxic and you can't hold a regatta. In that case, there were conversations that started well before the regatta so it was handled much better. This is about when water or air, quality, temps, etc. isn't optimal, what should be USRowing's minimum standards for safety. We need to work with the referee college to arm chiefs with better information so they can manage these situations better.
  - This won't happen by March 2019, but hopefully by next year or worst case the year after we have some progress. Some other things from the Safety Committee may happen sooner. When you mandate things, so many other implications come up so we

need to think through everything we consider because we don't want to face unforeseen implications.

The Committee meetings will resume at 8a in Executive Session. We hope to start at 9a for the open Committee portion again.

Lyn Wylder, Committee Chair then called the meeting to closure - 11:58 AM PST.