

Meeting Minutes

WESTERN PA DIVISION / USA FENCING

Annual Meeting and Election – July 16, 2023

A.) Call meeting to order

- Meeting called to order at 4:36 pm.

B.) Roll call

- Attendees (alphabetical order by last name):

Erik Blank
Lucas Bolton
Iana Dakova
Harry Hardman
Oleksii Kucherenko
Andy Liu
Adam Marthens
Sarah Read
Dave Theriault
Deb Theriault
Storm Walden
Olivia Weiss
Renee Weiss

C.) Adoption of minutes from last Annual Meeting on July 17, 2022

- Minutes from last annual meeting, held July 17, 2022, were adopted at this time.
- **Motion:** to accept Minutes; moved by Erik Blank, seconded by Olivia Weiss.

D.) Reports

1.) Treasurer's report: Deb Theriault provided the Treasurer's Report.

- As of 7/16/2023, the ending balance of the WPD bank account was \$8,693.83.
- Total income for the 8/1/2022-7/16/2023 period was \$610.00 (Meet fees: \$340.00; USA Fencing dues share rebates: \$270.00.)
- Total expenses for the 8/1/2022-7/16/2023 period had not been totally determined before the Annual Meeting: these will include SafeSport policy

partial rebates: \$360.00; facility rental for Division equipment storage: \$540; as well as \$165.26 in miscellaneous administrative upkeep fees (WPD website, Fencing Time software, printer ink for the Division computer). Deb Theriault will write and send out checks as needed for these expenses and issue a final financial report by the end of the month.

- **Motion:** to accept Treasurer's report: moved by Sarah Read, seconded by Olivia Weiss.

2.) Secretary's Report: Renee Weiss provided the Secretary's Report. She summed up tournaments held and ratings awarded in the Division during the 2022-2023 season.

- There were 12 sanctioned tournaments during the 2022-2023 season, as well as the JO Qualifier and the SN Qualifier:
 - IUP : Spooktacular 10/29
 - (PFC : Spooky Scary Stabathon 10/30)
 - (Allegheny : Gator Fencing Fun 11/6)
 - Tiger : Pittsburgh Steel Youth & Tiger D-Under 11/12
 - PFC : Fall Into a Rating 11/13
 - WPD : JO Qualifier : 12/4
 - PFC : Winter Foil Festivities 12/4
 - PFC : Winter Unrated Foil 2/5
 - PFC : C & Under Mixed Foil & Unrated WF 2/11
 - (PFC : Winter Youth Challenge 2/19)
 - (Pitt : UPitt Panther Open 2/19)
 - Corsair : Irish City Open 7 3/18-19
 - (CMU : Holy Grail 3/25)
 - WPD : SN Qualifier : 4/2
 - Tiger : D-Under 2023 M & W Foil Epee 4/22
 - IUP : Banana Open 4/23
 - PFC : Spring Fest-Open Mixed Foil & E WF & Y14 Mixed 4/30
 - WPD : Lil Yinzers Youth Cadet & Junior Tournament 5/21
 - PFC : End of School Year Celebration E MF & WF & Y14 Mixed 6/4
- In addition, there was CMU's Holy Grail, as well as 2 unsanctioned youth tournaments at PFC and unsanctioned scrimmages at Pitt and Allegheny.
- The Junior Olympics Qualifier for the 2023 Junior Olympics Championships had 5 WPD members qualify over 4 different events; 1 WPD member fenced in Junior Olympics, held in Denver in February 2023.

- The Summer Nationals Qualifier for the 2023 USA Fencing National Championships had 14 WPD members qualify over 13 different events. All together, the WPD had 7 members fence in Phoenix in 8 different events.
- Ratings awarded in the WPD during the 2022-2023 season:
 - Across the 12 sanctioned tournaments held in the WPD during the 2022-2023 season, there was a total of 34 ratings awarded.
 - Foil: 23 Es, 3 Ds, and 1 C; Epee: 5 Es, 1 D; Saber: 1 E
- **Motion:** to accept Secretary's report: moved by Olivia Weiss, seconded by Erik Blank.

E.) Year End Review: Olivia Weiss briefly summed up memberships and clubs in the WPD for the 2022-2023 season:

- WPD Membership statistics:
- According to the most recent USA Fencing membership spreadsheet, there are currently 356 members of the WPD, an increase from last season's 261 members.
- Of these 356 members, 256 are under the age of 18. There are 113 women and 243 men.
- There is a total of 91 eligible voting members, taking into account both age and membership status. Ineligibility to vote due to non-competitive membership will not be relevant next season due to the upcoming changes in membership categories.
- WPD club statistics:
- There continue to be 10 active fencing clubs in the WPD: a mix of private clubs, high school clubs and college clubs.

F.) Elections

- Elections were held for the positions of Chair, 1st Vice Chair, and Treasurer.
- The WPD Nominating Committee consisted of Adam Marthens, Will Romanias, and Caileigh Wettasinghe.
- The Nominating Committee's Recommended Candidates were Olivia Weiss as Chair, Sarah Read as 1st Vice Chair, and Harry Hardman as Treasurer.
- There was much deliberation in re the elections.
- The final election results were as follows: Olivia Weiss as Chair, Sarah Read as 1st Vice Chair, and Harry Hardman as Treasurer.

- The current Executive Committee includes Erik Blank as 2nd Vice Chair and Renee Weiss as Secretary.

There was a five minute recess from 5:23 to 5:28.

G.) USA Fencing's Uniform Set of Division Bylaws

- USA Fencing has introduced a uniform set of Division Bylaws for all Divisions to use.
- The WPD needs to transition to these new Bylaws via the means set forth in its current bylaws, which calls for an affirmative vote of two-thirds supermajority at this meeting.
- The new Bylaws will take effect at the beginning of the 2023-24 season on August 1st, 2023.
- Voting was unanimous to transition to the new Bylaws.

H.) Division Operating Guide

- Along with the uniform set of Division Bylaws, USA Fencing is requiring each Division to adopt a Division Operating Guide. A template of this Division Operating Guide has been made available on USA Fencing's website, with allowances for Divisions to modify certain provisions to reflect the needs of that Division.
- A draft copy, with modified provisions, will be sent out to the Executive Committee within the week for any comments or corrections.
- After being approved, this new Division Operating Guide will be adopted by August 1st, 2023.

I.) Advisors to the Executive Committee

- The appointment, by Olivia Weiss as Chair, of various advisors to the Executive Committee was discussed at length.
- Two positions that are under consideration are: Division Equipment Manager and Division Sponsorship Manager.

J.) Club Representatives

- Each USA Fencing member Club, in good standing in the Division, if not already represented by an officer of the Executive Committee, is entitled to representation on the Committee.
- Each WPD USA Fencing member Club will be contacted to appoint a club representative to fulfill that role.

K.) Looking Ahead

1.) Strip coaching rule change

- At the April 16th meeting of USA Fencing Board of Directors: the board voted to remove a USA Fencing-specific exception to FIE Rule t.109, regarding strip coaching. At FIE tournaments, and at tournaments operated by most other national fencing federations, strip coaching — the act of a coach verbalizing instructions during a bout — is not permitted.
- The USA Fencing Rulebook has made an exception to this rule to allow this kind of strip coaching, but, beginning Aug. 1, 2023, USA Fencing will remove this exception. The change is designed to mitigate the bullying behavior of coaches, parents and spectators against referees, while also restoring civility to fencing. It will also ensure that U.S. athletes are better prepared for the rules they'll encounter at the international level.
- Iana Dakova and Andy Liu both briefly discussed the practical application of this rule change and how it is intended to function.

2.) New AskFred platform

- The recent acquisition of AskFred by USA Fencing was discussed, as well as how some issues with tournament registrations and fencer profiles will hopefully be mitigated under the new system.

3.) New USA Fencing membership categories

- For the 2023-24 season, USA Fencing has revised the membership tiers and accompanying costs for both individual and club memberships.
- The individual “Non-Competitive” level membership has been eliminated; starting with the 2023-24 season, all USA Fencing members of the appropriate age will have voting privileges.
- The “Affiliate” club membership has also been eliminated. Certain types of clubs will be eligible for a reduced Club Membership cost, of \$199 instead of \$825.
- There was some discussion of these price increases for both individuals and clubs proving financially challenging.

4.) SafeSport expiration dates

- SafeSport training now expires after 365 days, rather than at the end of the season.

5.) Executive Committee meetings

- According to USA Fencing's uniform set of Division Bylaws, meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held on a regular basis, not less frequently than quarterly, at a time and place designated by the Chair.
- These meetings are planned for August, October, January, and April.

6.) Tournament Planning meetings

- In accordance with the new Division Operating Guide, the Executive Committee will make every effort to set the Division Calendar for the first half of the season at an Executive Committee meeting held no later than August 15, and for the second half of the season at an Executive Committee meeting held no later than January 15.
- Clubs should indicate their interest in having tournaments by emailing the Division with the tournament sanctioning form found on the website.
- The Executive Committee will still accept sanctioning requests for available dates after those meetings as well.

7.) Tournament Discussion

- Some suggestions for tournament guidelines were mentioned. One suggestion was a uniform close of registration on Thursdays to allow for one business day to address any complications at either the Division level or with the National Office. Another suggestion was a uniform pay scale for tournament staff at Division-run tournaments which would be shared as a suggested pay scale for club-run tournaments in the Division.
- Training and retaining tournament staff (bout committee, referees, and armorers) was briefly discussed. Seminars for these different specialties will be planned for the upcoming season.
- As the tournament schedule for the first half of the season will be determined at the August meeting of the Executive Committee, there was little discussion of actual tournament dates at this time.
- Emails will be sent out to all clubs informing them of the new tournament planning system.

L.) Adjournment of General Meeting

- Olivia Weiss made the motion to adjourn the general meeting, seconded by Adam Marthens. Meeting was adjourned at 6:47 pm.