

Minutes of the USHA Summer Board Meeting

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

President Hogan opened the meeting at 8:29 am PDT at the Multnomah Athletic Club in Portland, Ore. The meeting was conducted both in-person and virtually via Zoom. Present in person were Vice President Jared Vale, Treasurer Steve Birrell, Secretary Tom Sove and board members LeaAnn Martin, Ralph Fregoso, Quinn Foley, Rob Nichols, Terry Nett, Kyle Kloss and Ben Van Arsdale. Present virtually were President Denis Hogan and board members Tracy Eubanks, Alethia Mendez-Caba, Carl Porter, Rob Birrell and Nick White. Also attending in person was Executive Director Matt Krueger.

Hogan asked the board members and staff to introduce themselves and share what they've done to grow handball and/or the USHA since the last meeting. Activities espoused include attending, promoting and running various tournaments; mentoring programs; raising money; recruiting players; and committee chores.

Time was allotted to review the minutes from the 2022 winter board meeting in January. **Van Arsdale moved to approve the minutes from the winter board meeting. S. Birrell seconded.** No discussion ensued. **The motion passed 16-0-0.** This was followed by a review of board decisions and Executive Committee decisions made since the last board meeting.

Board decisions:

- Approval of the revised Personnel Guide
- Approval of the winter board meeting minutes
- Approval of the ball price increase
- Approval of the ball price increase timing
- Approval of a special Tournament Membership fee for the Wallball nationals

Executive Committee decisions:

- Approval of the president's travel expenses
- Approval to offer a 21-and-under division at the 2022 three-wall Junior nationals

President's Report: Hogan delivered his president's report, starting with the slate for the two at-large board positions to be elected at the end of the meeting. He asked for three protocol changes: to prepare submissions for the board at least a month before board meetings to allow time to read them, for committee chairs to include timelines in their monthly reports and to confer with ED Krueger before discussing board issues with anyone outside the USHA. Hogan confirmed the President's Club will fund the printing of a current rule book as well as match the costs of streaming the four-wall nationals.

Planning Committee: Hogan presented two issues under consideration: ways to conduct our business better, such as by becoming more strategically oriented rather than reacting tactically; and consideration of our situation when the Baby Boomers leave our sport — will we be half the size we are now? Hogan also proposed that every three years we have a retreat to deal with our problems.

A short break was taken at 9:34 am.

The meeting continued with the **One-wall Committee**. Mendez-Caba reported on the upcoming Wallball nationals, citing a current entry field of 40 so far. They are promoting entry payment by credit card. There will be no prize money for events other than Open.

The committee has welcomed new members, who have been very active and who bring new perspectives. Unfortunately, with Karen leaving the committee, some women's-game perspective has been lost. However, other members are promoting women's participation in national events. One example is offering women free entry to the Speaker's Cup this year.

The committee has submitted rule recommendations to the Game Committee for consideration. Also, Game has been asked to provide a summary of all one-wall rule changes.

The committee has concluded using social media sites is much more effective for disseminating information than relying on the USHA website. A brief discussion ensued on one-wall events in other parts of the nation, specifically Southern California, Minneapolis, Texas and Florida.

First Ace Committee: Grant-recipient programs are becoming much more active, and they are responding to our requests for progress reports. The new programs are doing well, and they are practicing. Hopefully, some will attend the Junior and collegiate national tournaments. The grant application forms will go out sooner this year. New reference material on how to start a program is being devised.

At this time, the normal meeting was interrupted to receive a virtual report from our accountant regarding our annual audit. The auditor discussed our staff, analytical procedures, test controls, observations regarding inventory control and the completeness of our statements. The auditor led the board on a cursory look at our statements. The findings of the audit resulted in some recommendations regarding bank reconciliation, cash receipts, deposit timing, invoice/receipt coding and internet purchases. It was stressed there were no deficiencies or issues of concern, and their final Letter of Governance reflected this fact. We were urged to develop a formal IT policy, and Vale volunteered to assist Krueger in this endeavor (with the Technology Committee).

Treasurer's Report: Birrell started his report by saying our revenues are down this year, but our expenses are down even more. We are trending ahead of budget in membership and ball sales. Krueger added that there has been a minor rush to buy balls in light of the announced price increase, and the WPH has purchased another order of balls. The supply chains are back up regarding the 21 balls, but it is still problematic for the ONE balls. We are now selling current inventory of balls manufactured in 2022. Sales of balls are expected to slow down once the price increase takes effect. A brief discussion ensued regarding breakage. The older inventory incurred some breakage as they aged, but not at an epidemic level. Birrell made it clear we receive credit for returned balls from the manufacturer. The ONE balls are not breaking, as represented by the lack of balls being returned to us for replacement.

The meeting was halted for a fifteen-minute break.

Game Committee: Sove gave the Game Committee report starting with the news the rule book will be printed this summer (as indicated in the president's report), and the Game Committee has approved the Collegiate Tournament waiver.

The referee's guide has been updated, noting the title has been properly annotated to be the three- and four-wall guide. A separate one-wall guide will be produced later this year. **Martin moved to accept the revised referee guide. Van Arsdale seconded. No further discussion ensued. The motion passed 16-0-0.**

A review of the entries into this year's four-wall nationals A division brought to light that there is continued ignoring of the "proficiency of play" standard, and this event is infused with a plethora of "sandbaggers." Many A entrants are local Open-level players but not proficient enough to compete with the pro players in the Open event. However, they still are too proficient to compete in the A division. Consequently, the Game Committee recommended we add back the amateur Open division to the four-wall national tournament, with the proviso the term "amateur" be made clear, notwithstanding prize money won and that there be no inclusion in the pro rankings. **Martin made a motion to add the amateur Open singles division starting with the 2023 four-wall national tournament. Fregoso**

seconded. Discussion centered on the name and perceived confusion with the existing Open division. It was agreed the name will probably be changed. **The motion passed 16-0-0.**

The next issue concerns the habit of players entering national tournaments without partners. This puts too much of a burden on staff and delays the finalization of the draw. The Game Committee proposes a protocol that absolves staff of the responsibility to find partners; it will be left to the entrant to come up with his/her partner, although staff may assist if reasonable and they are able. To this end, entries without partners will be accepted up to the entry deadline, after which the entries will be discarded. This protocol will be made clear on the entry form and on the R2 website. This protocol was accepted by the board by consensus and with little discussion.

There were four rule changes to be decided.

The first concerned a nominal housekeeping wording change to Rule 4.10.C.2. Concussion. **Porter made a motion to amend the third sentence in the fourth paragraph of Rule 4.10.C.2), to read: "The penalty for refusal to cooperate shall be forfeiture of the match." Nichols seconded.** No discussion ensued. **The motion passed 16-0-0.**

The second item concerned a conflict between Rule 4.8.H, Interpretation No. 21, which states losing improperly worn eye guards is an avoidable hinder, and Rule 2.5.B, which makes any improperly worn eye guards a technical foul. To be consistent with the official USHA protocols regarding properly wearing proper eye protection, it is proposed to delete words relating to improperly wearing eye guards from Interpretation No. 21 and to add to Rule 2.5. part B. Violations: "Players must have access to an eyewear strap. They will not be required to wear it unless the referee deems it necessary to properly secure protective eyewear." Further wording was added to charge a timeout to secure such strap. **Quinn made a motion to accept the Game Committee's proposed rule changes. Seconded by Mendez-Caba.** No further discussion ensued. **The motion passed 16-0-0.**

The third item was to amend the requirement for the wearing of gloves for Big Ball. Right now, gloves are required for three-wall and four-wall Big Ball, but not necessarily for one-wall. The proposal is to make the glove requirement universal for all Big Ball disciplines. **Mendez-Caba made a motion to delete Rule 2.3 Gloves from the one-wall rule book addendum and add it as part E. Big Ball to Rule 2.3 of the master four-wall rule book. Martin seconded.** No further discussion ensued. **The motion passed 16-0-0.**

The last rules item was to expand the scope of Rule 4.9 Technicals, part A.5), threats. **Martin made a motion to revise the wording to read: "threat of any nature to anyone, including but not limited to an opponent, referee, spectator, etc." Van Arsdale seconded.** No further discussion ensued. **The motion passed 16-0-0.**

The next Game Committee topic was a review of our ball situation. A very lengthy discussion ensued, including comments:

- The ONE ball manufacturer has rectified the pressure and surface texture issues;
- The WPH and R48Pros are happy with the 21 balls;
- Do we necessarily want to have only one ball;
- Many players don't care which ball we choose, just decide; and eventually, we may have to make a choice;
- There is no consistent test to compare balls;
- Let our market results decide on the choice of ball;
- Make all balls USHA approved and let tournament directors decide.

It was determined by consensus our current protocol on the ONE ball shall not change. The USHA should continue marketing both the ~~19~~ 21 ball and the ONE ball. We will obtain feedback on the acceptance of the ONE ball via market experience. Also, we shall continue to encourage ACE LLC's attempts to develop the "universal" prototype ball and look forward to playing with samples as they arrive.

There was a brief discussion on who has the proprietary right to the "Ace" label, the USHA or ACE LLC. We will endeavor to find out if it is used by ACE LLC.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 pm for lunch.

Hogan reconvened the meeting at 1:25 pm.

Promotion Committee: Sove began with a review of the 2022 tournament schedule. Just the Masters Singles tournament in September remains to be finalized. The discussion of the 2023 tournament schedule first centered on the Women's Classic. Women's Commissioner Kristen Hughes submitted a report on the 2022 tournament in which she noted the trial format was very well received, in that every player had competitive matches with the appropriate ball. It was determined to offer the same format for 2023 in conjunction with the USHA Hall of Fame tournament in April 2023.

Discussion segued to the 2023 four-wall national tournament and possible venues. Of most interest is a move to have this tournament consistently on Memorial Day, especially when we can obtain one venue for a joint singles/doubles format. Many Midwesterners complain the June timing is too late in the four-wall year. Memorial Day is the traditional start of summer and the end of the indoor season, and the holiday provides an extra day off from work a la the three-wall tournament over Labor Day. The 2023 tournament schedule still has gaps to be rectified.

Membership Committee: Kloss gave this report. He stated they will resume consistent committee meetings every six weeks for their strategic planning. They will conduct a survey on the true value of having a members-only page on the website. They will work on an automatic renewal page for the website. They plan to devise a letter breaking out where membership dues are allocated.

Funding Committee: Foley's report included his recent dialog with a representative of Penn balls regarding the possibility they could include our handball logo on their racquetballs, which are used for Big Ball handball. He is working on a template to use to approach small business owners to solicit revenue for handball. For past players who own small businesses, this is one way to keep them invested in handball. He has come across a drone video of a one-wall court being constructed. Perhaps this could be included on our website. He also has specifications for building a three-wall court.

Collegiate Report: There was a positive increase in participation in the national tournament in February, and the tournament was another success. The committee just completed codifying eligibility guidelines allowing an extension for those students who were deprived of a year of eligibility due to the cancellation of our national tournament because of the Covid pandemic. Considering some players taking advantage of this extension may be graduated and no longer students, are there any legal ramifications if they become injured? After obtaining legal advice, the answer is this would not present additional exposure. However, it would be reasonable to tighten the wording of our tournament waiver. The Collegiate Committee did so and submitted it to the Game Committee for protocol adjudication.

The 2023 tournament will be in Tucson, Ariz., and the 2024 tournament is undecided. The committee is considering restructuring the scoring format of the tournament to make it less confusing. There was a tie in the voting for Most Improved, but the tiebreaker protocol was not implemented. The committee is taking steps to clarify the protocol's existence.

Personnel Committee: Nett reported the Personnel Policy Manual update has been completed, with a few housekeeping chores to be finalized. Included in this are guidelines for the use of funds for employee emergencies. Krueger added he is looking into a health insurance provider.

Technology Committee: Van Arsdale stated the committee will use monthly timelines from this point forward and will make use of subcommittees for projects. Developing an IT policy will be a primary goal. There have been talks with website sources concerning revising our current product. The court map on the website has had many updates recently.

Investment Committee: S. Birrell noted the stock market is a bit volatile right now and confirmed our investments have incurred a corresponding downturn. Consequently, the committee has held sessions on the right course of action, including whether to sell and hold the cash (and consider any tax implications), look at each investment individually, or let everything ride and wait it out. The decision was to obtain professional management opinions, and Birrell will have that done within two weeks.

Birrell segued to the **Budget Report**, concluding there is nothing more to add. He urged the board to push memberships and new players.

The next item was the election of two at-large board members. S. Birrell and Fregoso hold the expiring positions, and two others are seeking the positions. Time was taken to review the candidates' statements. After the first ballot S. Birrell received enough votes to be reelected. After two more unproductive run-off elections between the three remaining candidates, **Martin made a motion to temporarily suspend the bylaws voting process and only vote between the two highest candidates. Nett seconded.** No further discussion ensued. **The motions passed 15-0-1.**

After the ensuing election, Rich Curtner garnered the most votes and was declared the winner. Birrell and Curtner will begin their three-year terms as at-large board members starting in January 2023.

Hogan closed the meeting with a roundtable discussion of "what I plan to do to grow handball and/or the USHA."

Porter made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mendez-Caba. No discussion ensued. **The motion passed 15-0-1.**

Hogan adjourned the meeting at 4:13 pm PDT.

Submitted by:

Tom Sove
Secretary
July 16, 2022