

CROSS COUNTRY SPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

USSA CONGRESS 2010 - PARK CITY, UT

The Yarrow Resort Hotel & Conference Center/USSA Center of Excellence, Park City, UT
May 15, 2010

Cross Country Committee

Chair: Jon Engen, Ketchum, ID
John Farra, Heber City, UT (Programs)
Matt Whitcomb, Park City, UT (Development)
Rick Kapala, Ketchum, ID (Coaches) (IMD)
Bob Gross, Park City, UT (Officials)
Justin Easter, Aspen, CO (Mountain)
Joey Caterinichio, Anchorage, AK (Alaska)
Yuriy Gusev, Madison, WI (Central)
Janice Sibilica, Hopewell Junction, NY (East)
Ben Grasseschi, Truckee, CA (Pacific)
David Knoop, Park City, UT (At-large)
August Teague, Reno, NV (At-large)
Wendy Wagner, SLC, UT (Athlete)
Nina Kempfel, Anchorage, AK (Athlete)
Patrick Weaver, Burlington, VT (Athlete)

Meeting Chair: Jon Engen

1. Roll Call

The following members were present: Jon Engen, John Farra, Matt Whitcomb, Rick Kapala, Bob Gross, Yuriy Gusev, Janice Sibilica, Ben Grasseschi, David Knoop, August Teague, Wendy Wagner, and James Southam

Members absent and excused: Justin Easter, Joey Caterinichio, Nina Kempfel

Chair Jon Engen declared that a quorum was present and opened the meeting.

Changes to the Cross Country Sport Committee for the next year were noted. Through the Coaches' Subcommittee, Joey Caterinichio was elected to replace Rick Kapala as Chair.

Andrew Johnson was nominated to replace Nina Kempfel as an Athlete Representative. Rick Kapala was nominated to an additional term as the IMD Representative. Jon Engen was nominated to an additional term as Chair. Mike Elliott was nominated as the RMD Representative filling the remainder of Justin Easter's term.

Bob Gross moved that the nominations be approved. Ben Grasseschi seconded. **APPROVED**

2. Chairman's Introduction and Comments

Welcome everyone! Thank you for contributing to U.S. Cross Country, coming to these meetings and conducting productive sessions in the 2010 USSA Congress.

The cross country community is bubbling with activities and new initiatives at this time. At the top end of our sport, we had very few skiers in tangible scoring positions and fell short of the elusive

Olympic medals. However, in the World Cup following the Olympics, we had skiers of both genders on the podium. This took place at Holmenkollen, the site of the next World Championships, and should bode well for the future. The future is ours as our main attention goes to well-organized national, regional and club activities from the J2s through the junior ranks and up. Thanks to all the program operators and coaches across the country who make this happen.

The progression of our sport needs to come from within and that is what the USSA is trying to promote. The USSA is a place for coming together to participate in the process and for keeping an organizational umbrella over the activities.

Thanks to Andrew Johnson for becoming the USSA's new USOC Athlete Representative and to Wendy Wagner and James Southam for their roles as USSA Athlete Representatives for Cross Country. Your experience, insights and initiatives are vital and important for the road ahead.

3. Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

4. Approval of Minutes from USSA Spring Congress 2009

August Teague moved to approve the minutes of the Cross Country Sport Committee from USSA Spring Congress 2009. James Southam seconded the motion. **APPROVED**

5. Reports and Proposals from Officials' Subcommittee

Proposal from the Officials' Subcommittee:

Add to Rule 352.1.1 the US*SA sub-section:

...At USSA Sanctioned US Championships mass start races (including Sprints and Relays) a "photo finish camera system" must be used (i.e. FinishLynx, Omega Scan'O'Vision STAR, Alge)...

Change the following rules:

53.1.1 Flower Ceremony. Immediately after the competitors seeded in groups ~~1 and 2~~ A and B have finished,....

83.3.2 Competitors who do not have valid NRL points will be placed in ~~Group 0~~ the last seed group and randomly drawn.

83.3.7 From the fastest to slowest, the seeded groups are: Red Group ~~(Group 4) Group 3 Group 2 Group 1 Group 0~~ (A), B, C, D, E...

83.3.9 A normal star order for interval start races other than the Sprint will be ~~3, 4(red), 2, 1, 0~~ B, A, C, D, E...

Bob Gross moved that the rule changes be approved. Dave Knoop seconded. **APPROVED**

Action Item from the Officials' Subcommittee:

For individual starts, poles must be in front of the wand and there must be a post on both sides of the start gate. Ernie and Matt will work to get better clarification on the wand start parameters. This information will be added to National TD Seminars.

Action Item from the Officials' Subcommittee:

There was much discussion on the use of the language DSQ in the preliminary and unofficial results. Of course the Official Results will show the DSQ at the bottom with no time shown. Many people present discussed whether a TD can or cannot declare a person as DSQ until after the official jury meeting. Many preferred notating that an athlete's time is pending jury decision or notating the name without a time. The goal is to let the skier or coach know there is a problem with a skier's performance.

The final decision was to put off the decision until further information can be gathered from FIS and review the protocols they follow.

Action Item from the Officials' Subcommittee:

Pull out the Team sprint scoring on page 15 of the USSA comp guide. Bob Gross suggested at least saying that "No Team Events will be scored to the NRL."

Action Item from the Officials' Subcommittee:

It should be noted that, when possible, all skiers should be scored. Meaning if skiers of the same gender are all skiing the same length course then the classes should be run consecutively (each class in full, in appropriate order of class speed) so all skiers can be considered for scoring. Be sure to not interrupt a race with another gender or different distance.

Proposal from the Ski Jumping and Nordic Combined Coaches' and Officials' Subcommittees:

Athletes participating as a member of the Junior Olympic Team in Nordic Combined and/or Ski Jumping shall be eligible to compete in the USSA Junior Olympics for Cross Country. Reciprocal rights shall be offered to Cross Country skiers should they want to participate in the J/NC Junior Olympics.

Rationale: Looking forward, the 2012 Junior Olympics for all Nordic disciplines will be held in IMD. Under our current structure this does not happen that often. It would be a great opportunity for those Nordic Combined skiers who wish to compete at the Cross Country portion of JOs to do so. All disciplines need to see an athlete's true potential and encourage these athletes to pursue what they excel at notwithstanding a coaches' preference.

Seeding: Shall either be in the guest class or with unranked skiers if the skier has no NRL points.

Numbers: It is not anticipated that this is going to be more than a handful of skiers in a few select races (most likely freestyle).

Discussion: Yuriy Gusev asked how scoring would be handled if a nordic combined athlete ended up in the top 5. John Farra explained that, for classic races, this was not expected to be an issue as Nordic combined athletes do not typically train on classic technique. For freestyle sprints and mass starts, the guest class is able to compete, but cannot earn points.

Janice Sibilica asked whether this same opportunity would be extended to

U.S. Biathlon. John Farra stated that we don't have the same sport relationship with biathlon.

Jon Engen recommended that the proposal be accepted in concept, but not subjected to a vote. Because the joint JOs would not be held until 2012, there is time to work through the details and explore issues that have not currently been anticipated.

The TD Assignment Committee has selected and confirmed the TDs for the following events:

American Birkebeiner - Telemark, WI Feb 26
TD Carlie Casey, Asst TD Jim Tervo

U.S. Championships - Rumford, ME Jan 2-8
TD Matt Pauli, Asst TD Allan Serrano

Junior Olympics - Minneapolis, MN Mar 7-12
TD John Estle, Asst TD Terry Tansey

U.S. Championships - 30/50 km and USSA SuperTour Finals - Sun Valley, ID Mar 26-Apr 2
TD Bob Gross, Asst TD John Filander

NCAA Championships - Stowe, VT Mar 10-13
TD Doug Ouren, Asst TD Bill Rodgers

(All but Jim Tervo have confirmed the assignment.)

The National TD Seminar will be held in Minneapolis, MN Fall 2010 as a four-day format. Thursday and Friday will cover TD training topics. Saturday and Sunday will be an international homologation clinic conducted by Yngve Thorsen from Norway on behalf of the FIS. The invitation will be extended to all comers to highlight the importance of homologation to the future of ski racing in the U.S. Chief of Competitions are required to attend the national seminar every two years.

6. Reports and Proposals from Coaches' Subcommittee

Subcommittee chair Rick Kapala reported that there was a great turnout of coaches from across the country and thanked them for their participation and interest. He added that the challenge for the subcommittee this year was to create a competition calendar that supported the goals of the National Team, but also those of the club teams working to move athletes along the Athlete Development Pipeline.

Mr. Kapala mentioned that new clubs, like Craftsbury Green Racing Project last year and a fledgling club in Vail, CO, were focusing on bringing elite-level racers into the domestic race circuit. These clubs join more well-established clubs like APU and CXC in challenging athletes to progress to senior race status.

Mr. Kapala cited the transition from a prevalence of high school teams to a professionally-coached, club-team structure as having a profound influence on the sport. There is new thinking on the role of training and racing in developing a solid, race-focused culture for cross country with younger athletes making up a large population within the clubs. From Mr. Kapala's perspective, the effect of this transition will become more evident over the next 10 years as these younger athletes become seniors.

Mr. Kapala noted that the U.S. is a half century behind the Scandinavian countries, which made this type of transition earlier. In those countries, athletes who were raised as ski racers are now bringing their children into the sport.

To summarize, Mr. Kapala stated that the goal of the Cross Country Coaches' Subcommittee is to provide good competitive opportunities for all levels of ski racers. To accomplish this on the domestic front, the challenge will be to identify locations and to improve sponsorships for the USSA SuperTour.

Proposal from the Coaches' Subcommittee:

Change the U-23 Team Selection Criteria so that the best two out of four races at U.S. Championships are used.

Rationale: For a particular athlete, this could be 2 sprints, 2 distance races, 2 disciplines. In sprinting, the best indicator for success in international performance is the ability to qualify. The sprint scoring, therefore, will reflect rankings in the qualifying round and not the finals.

Discussion: Matt Whitcomb asked whether there was a risk of athletes dropping out after the qualifier just to get the points. Mr. Kapala responded that the built-in rest days should help with recovery so athletes can complete the rounds. He also noted that future team selection criteria required the ability to perform in the rounds. James Southam supported this while further noting that coaches need to stress completing the rounds especially with respect to how those points position an athlete and the U.S. in FIS standings.

Proposal from the Coaches' Subcommittee:

Shorten the distance for the team Relay at Junior Olympics to 3km for all classes.

Rationale: Younger athletes need to become more comfortable with passing and fighting for position within a tight pack. This should keep the J1 and OJ fields closer throughout the races.

Proposal from the Coaches' Subcommittee:

Change the technique rotation for Junior Olympics to a freestyle-classic-freestyle-classic rotation, followed by a classic-freestyle-classic-freestyle rotation.

Rationale: Grouping discipline races together means that athletes spend up to four days off of the equipment for the other discipline. Alternating disciplines allows muscle groups and energy to remain at a high level during the entire completion.

Janice Sibilina moved that the preceding three proposals be approved. James Southam seconded. **APPROVED**

Proposal from the Coaches' Subcommittee:

Adjust the U23 and JWC Team Selection Criteria for single race results as follows:

U-23 men 50 points, women 60 points

JWC men 65 points, women 75 points

August Teague moved to approve the change. Ben Grasseschi seconded. **APPROVED**

Proposal from the Coaches' Subcommittee:

The penalty calculation for all NRL races will use the discipline point list except for JOs as these athletes have less experience with sprinting.

Proposal from the Coaches' Subcommittee:

A test event for the 2011 season will be added allowing an Organizer to have two scored races (USSA & FIS) in one day such as, two sprint qualifiers during the same competition day, or a sprint qualifier followed by a prologue. Points will be scored to the USSA NRL and to FIS when sanctioned as such.

Proposal from the Coaches' Subcommittee:

Adjust the regional NRL point minimums down to: men 50; women 65.

John Farra moved to approve the previous three proposals. August Teague seconded.
APPROVED

Proposal: USSA Cross Country National Development System (NDS) – Yuriy Gusev

The National Development System is a project-based system that provides an interface between the U.S. Ski Team and the Regions, Clubs, Academies and Programs throughout the country. USSA is in the process of evaluating the NDS in terms of the Alpine program. This will provide a useful model for Nordic sports as well. The goal for cross country will be to provide opportunities for J1 and J2 athletes to train in peer groups.

Jon Engen recommended accepting Mr. Gusev's proposal under advisement pending the work of a subcommittee composed of one to two representatives from each region to research the major cornerstones of Athletic, Operational and Business Plans for a new regional approach to athlete development. It includes researching the Alpine Development System that is being evaluated by USSA. The subcommittee is expected to report back by July 15.

Discussion: Dave Knoop asked if NENSA had such a program in place already. Janice Sibilia responded that they did and that a National proposal would be helpful to integrate regional programs.

Ben Grasseschi volunteered to be Far West's representative to the subcommittee. Others will be identified. USSA representatives will be John Farra, Matt Whitcomb and Bryan Fish.

Kevin Johnson, an industry representative from Salomon commented that having the U.S. Ski Team designation for the program would make a difference in the willingness of the industry to provide sponsorship.

Dave Knoop moved to approve Mr. Engen's recommendation to accept the proposal under advisement. Janice Sibilia seconded. **APPROVED**

Calendar Notes:

John Farra noted that there is a hole in the USSA SuperTour schedule on the weekend of Dec 4-5 and this will provide a challenge for athletes after West Yellowstone. As it currently stands, it will be two weeks before the next FIS Nor-Ams in Canada.

The time period of February 5 – March 20 will include OPA Cup races being scored to the NRL so that athletes competing in the U-23 Championships can maximize their European race season.

The New Zealand COC races have been eliminated from the draft NRL calendar as they are outside the competitive season and could have the effect of adversely influencing points.

7. Confirmation of Cross Country Sport Committee Membership, 2010-2011

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| Jon Engen, Ketchum, ID | Chair | 5/2012 |
| John Farra, Heber City, UT | USSA – Programs | By Employment |
| Matt Whitcomb, Park City, UT | USSA - Development | By Employment |
| Joey Caterinichio, Anchorage, AK | Coaches, Alaska | 5/2011 |
| Bob Gross, Park City, UT | Officials | 5/2011 |
| Rick Kapala, Ketchum, ID | IMD | 5/2012 |
| Mike Elliott, Durango, CO | RMD | 5/2011 |
| Yuriy Gusev, Madison, WI | Central | 5/2011 |
| Janice Sibilila, Hopewell Junction, NY | East | 5/2011 |
| Ben Grasseschi, Truckee, CA | Pacific | 5/2011 |
| David Knoop, Park City, UT | At-Large | 5/2011 |
| August Teague, Reno, NV | At-Large | 5/2011 |
| Wendy Wagner, SLC, UT | Athlete | 5/2011 |
| James Southam, Anchorage, AK | Athlete | 5/2012 |
| Andrew Johnson, Park City, UT | Athlete | 5/2012 |

8. Adjournment

John Farra closed the meeting by thanking the Committee for all their hard work and reminding everyone that we are now focusing all of our efforts on Sochi, RUS and success in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. With that mind, Mr. Farra challenged clubs, officials and organizers to further the work of homologating more U.S. venues so that we can continue to host FIS level races which help to improve our athletes' FIS point profiles.

Ben Grasseschi moved to adjourn. Bob Gross seconded. **APPROVED**