



# UNITED STATES HANDBALL ASSOCIATION

## MINUTES OF THE USHA SUMMER BOARD MEETING

May 25, 2024

Ayres Hotel, Fountain Valley, Calif.

President Denis Hogan opened the meeting at 8:02 a.m. PDT at the Ayers Hotel.

Board members present in-person were President Hogan, Secretary Tom Sove, Ben Van Arsdale, Rich Curtner, Rob Nichols, LeaAnn Martin, Frank Holquin, Max Langmack, Daniel Navarro, Rob Birrell, and Jim Wohl.

Present virtually were Vice President Jared Vale, Alethia Mendez-Caba, Nick White and Carl Porter. Treasurer Steve Birrell was absent and his proxy vote was given to Rob Birrell. Nick White left the meeting shortly and his proxy vote was given to Sove. Also present were Executive Director Matt Krueger with Development Director Sam Esser. A quorum was present.

The meeting opened with a discussion with distinguished guest WHC President Dessie Keegan regarding the state of preparations for the World Handball Championships to be held in Ireland this Summer and Fall. This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GAA. The venue in Dublin has three pro courts, seating up to 500 viewers. There will be sixteen additional courts spread within a 45-mile radius of the prime venue. The Irish hosts are eagerly awaiting the tournament and look forward to a favorable entry from Americans. Further, Keegan briefly discussed the WHC intentions for the World Wallball Tournament, perhaps holding it in a two-year cycle. In conclusion, Keegan gave a summary of the reconstruction of the WHC leadership.

The minutes from the 2024 Winter board meeting was discussed. **Sove made a motion to accept the minutes as submitted, seconded by Martin.** No further discussion ensued. **The motion passed 16-0-0.**

The most recent Executive Committee and Board virtual votes were reviewed. They were approval of the annual Coach of the Year Award, Volunteer of the Year Award, and Organization of the Year Award; approval of a temporary Transgender Participation Policy; and approval of the president's travel expenses to the 2024 Collegiate National tournament, the 4-Wall National tournament, and the WHC World 4-Wall tournament in Ireland. Nominal discussion ensued.

**Hogan proceeded with his President's Report.** He noted there has been activity in certain committees. The board structure review subcommittee has been active and is still processing options. It is expected they will be ready with their recommendations by the 2025 Winter Board meeting. It is important that the USHA hype participation in the Worlds the next few months.

Krueger gave the **Treasurer Report** in the absence of S. Birrell. The prime topic here is the results of our annual audit. Our existing accounting firm undertook a significant rise in its fees, causing us to seek alternative firms. We selected one of our previous accounting firms at a much more palatable cost. The firm is well known to us, is reputable, and is USHA-friendly regarding our budget. The preliminary results of the audit are very positive, with a few suggestions regarding the disposition of some restricted funds. A formal audit letter will be forthcoming in June, 2024.

Insofar as the meeting was well ahead of schedule and a special session was reserved for 10:00 a.m., Hogan skipped ahead in the agenda to the **Planning Report**. A cloud-based drive was shared, with tabs for updates on new and existing topics such as future Road Shows, the Pro Tour Committee, board processes committee, the junior ranking committee, and the annual budget.



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**The Game Committee Report was next.** Sove began with a brief report on the status of resuming Road Shows. They are in the works and more information will follow. He indicated they will be featured as the USHA Showcase Series. Sove then gave an update on the results of the ONE Ball Survey conducted during the Masters 3-Wall Invitational tournament this past March in Tucson, AZ; and the resulting effect on using the ONE Ball in the upcoming Three-Wall Nationals in Toledo. The participation in the survey was substantial. While reviewing the data and comments, discussion resulted in significant observations including:

- The long-lasting effect of the ball coupled with the price did not resonate with players;
- The price of all the balls sold should be the same;
- Stick with one ball, players do not like changing;
- Developing a universal ball is a very difficult task. The idea of a universal ball is to bring in new players and keep them. As of now, we have not achieved a true “universal ball.”
- Another manufactured ball was briefly discussed until it was revealed that ball is not pressurized.

The survey resulted in a 51% - 49% vote favoring playing with the 21 ball in USHA sanctioned 3-wall tournaments. Considering there was not an overwhelming preference for the ONE ball at this time, the Game Committee recommended the upcoming 3-wall Nationals in Toledo continue using the 21 ball. Since this was not a change a formal motion was not necessary. As for USHA-sanctioned events and non-tournament play, we will continue to use ball sales as the determining factor concerning preference among our membership.

Sove next started the discussion of the development of the USHA Transgender Participation Policy. However, considering the time of day, this was tabled to allow the start of the scheduled special session.

First, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m. for a break.

The meeting reconvened at 10:10 a.m. with the special session.

At 11:30 a.m. the meeting was adjourned for lunch.

The meeting was reconvened at 12:36 p.m. with the **First Ace Report**. Curtner stated the committee met once recently and focused on youth development, specifically ways to build on creating programs as well as teaching mentors. Our collegiate programs have had good growth recently; however, youth programs are slower in returning. Perhaps we need to disseminate more “how to” material. He also announced the Mardak Challenge has expanded to match funds raised for youth program instructors, as well as continuing its normal scholarship allocations.

At this time the meeting returned to the tabled Game Committee Report. Sove provided a detailed summary of the time line leading to the second draft of the USHA Transgender Participation Policy. A first draft was accepted by the Executive Committee, which was established in February 2024. Since then, the committee has been working on the second draft. There are still a few details that need to be clarified and the second draft was declared not ready for acceptance. The committee will continue to fine tune the Policy and obtain a legal opinion before submitting to the board for approval in the 2025 Winter Board meeting.

Sove continued with the Promotion Report with an overview of the remaining tournament schedule.



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**Mendez-Caba followed with the One Wall Report.** She reported on a change in committee members and commented the committee is currently focused on the upcoming 1-Wall National tournaments this summer. The Small Ball Junior Nationals are in a few weeks, followed by the Wallball Nationals. They are accumulating volunteers for logistics and refereeing.

The committee's goals remain the same:

- Building awareness of the sport, with an air of transparency and clarity about membership, and sharing knowledge in 1-wall;
- Drive growth by incentivizing membership;
- Recognize the need to broaden our reach by making tournament entry easy, tout the low cost of handball (minimum equipment required), and engage pockets of players outside New York;
- Develop a regional structure along the lines of 4-wall.

The goal is to have these items addressed and completed in 2025. The committee has a working group for each of these focus items. Other items on the list are to take advantage of video opportunities – use replay and live streaming for our tournaments; and develop an International World tournament in NYC, which would involve cooperation with other handball organizations in the city.

She indicated there is expected to be good representation by local players planning on attending the Worlds in Ireland. We are waiting for the 1-Wall National tournament to conclude before selecting the USA team. Before then, she requested the USHA hype the expectations of sponsoring uniforms and a nominal stipend for the team. It was confirmed there still is a line item in the budget for this purpose.

Krueger gave the **Collegiate Report** in lieu of Chair Mike Wells. In their effort to retain as many players as possible the committee attempted to make amendments to the eligibility criteria for those players who were denied continuity to play due to the COVID-era. The board had a few issues with the wording and sent the recommendation back to the committee for clarification.

**The Hall of Fame Committee** is due to convene later this week, and there is nothing to report at this time.

The **Membership Services** committee likewise had nothing of importance to discuss with the board. However, a suggestion was raised to allow non-members to become certified referees, instead of requiring USHA membership for official certification. Perhaps this would entice more players to become interested in the rules as well as to develop membership. Much debate ensued regarding the viability of giving away a member perk. Nothing was resolved and the issue was returned to the committee for them to adjudicate.

The **Personnel Report** followed. Measured goals for our Executive Director and Development Coordinator have been finalized and implemented. The on-line auto payment option has been implemented, which offers annual or quarterly recurring payments, credit card payment only. It is suggested we offer a QR code for use during our upcoming Showcase Series.

**Van Arsdale delivered the Technology Report.** The use of Bracket Ace during the Collegiate Tournament went very well. The players enjoyed the linking of Bracket Act to Ace Referee. Another benefit of Bracket Ace was the ability to offer live team scoring. The typos on our web site have been repaired. The transference of the task of developing the Junior Ranking system to Technology from Game has been accepted. The Court Data Base on our web site has had 45 new venues added. There are still a few weekly updates occurring.



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At 2:43 p.m. the meeting adjourned for a break.

The meeting resumed at 2:55 p.m. Unscheduled discussion ensued regarding the business brought up during the schedule special session held in the morning.

At this time Vale left the meeting and left his proxy vote with Mendez-Caba.

In the continued absence of Treasurer S. Birrell, Krueger continued with the **Treasurer Report**. Compared to the budget membership is down 20%, but we can expect a sizeable bump during the summer due to our national tournaments. Other budget items were commented on, including ball sales, merchandize sales, and investment income, all of which were on a normal pace for this time of year. An improved program regarding Planned Giving is on the Treasurer's agenda. Krueger also briefly discussed and reviewed the performance of the USHA investment funds which were provided by the USHA's investment consulting firm.

Election of the At-Large board positions was next. This year there was a paucity of interest in these board positions. The result was only that two incumbents ran unopposed for the two positions. **A motion was made to accept the slate by acclamation, seconded by R. Birrell and Nichols.** No further discussion ensued. **The motion passed 16-0-0.** Thus, Martin and Mendez-Caba were reelected to the At-Large board positions.

Hogan asked for updates in committee make-up. As there were none, **he motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Nichols and Wohl.** No discussion ensued. **The motion passed 16-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:01 p.m.

Submitted by

**Tom Sove**  
Secretary