



**U.S. Association of Blind Athletes
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
August 24, 2022**

Present:

Mark Ackermann, Chair
Gary Remensnyder, Treasurer
Skye Arthur-Banning, Vice Chair
Brian Eaton, Independent Director
Jennifer Demby, Constituent Board Member
Eve Wright Taylor, Board Member
David Cohen, Board Member
Calahan Young, Athlete Board Member
Matt Simpson, Athlete Board Member
Eliana Mason, Athlete Board Member
Tyler Merren, USOPC AAC alternate representative
John Kusku, Chair of Ethics Committee
Molly Quinn, CEO
Kevin Brousard, Staff
Breann Scott, Staff
Catherine Raney-Norman, Staff

Not Present:

Amy Wasson, Secretary
Zach Buhler, Athlete Board Member Elect
Tracie Foster, Chair of Nominating and Governance Committee

The meeting took place via videoconference. The meeting was recorded.

Call to Order / Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by board chair Mark Ackermann at 4:00 PM Mountain Time.

Conflict of Interest

Mark asked if any board members had a conflict of interest that they needed to disclose relating to the topics listed on the meeting agenda provided to the group beforehand. No such conflicts were declared.

Board Chair Report

Mark provided his chairman's report. He thanked the board for attending the last meeting at the Goalball National Championships in Fort Wayne. Mark recognized the award winners at the National Championships, including board members Eliana Mason and Calahan Young. He then reminded members about the October 28 Breakfast with Champions and encouraged them to host an event in their communities around the livestream of the breakfast.



The USABA/Turnstone fundraising kickstarter event in Fort Wayne during the National Championships raised \$8k toward a new goalball floor at Turnstone. The fundraising goal is \$50k and we are working to get a potential major donor that could underwrite a large portion of the fundraising goal.

Mark noted there were 12 nominations for the inaugural Ronald W. Plassman Gold Standard Award and the selection committee met earlier in the day to select this year's recipient. The winner will be announced at the Turnstone Gala in September.

Mark, Molly Quinn and Jennifer Demby attended a USOPC presentation by David Patterson on the importance of culture in an organization and USABA was cited as an example on several occasions.

The next 12 months will be a large challenge in qualifying for Paris 2024 while ramping up blind soccer in the U.S. Mark asked board members to help where needed to lessen the heavy lift on the staff as well as contributing through philanthropic gifts and outreach to personal networks.

Mark noted we will be adding a special meeting of the board in late September-early October to review finances and stay focused on the Breakfast with Champions fundraiser.

Mark and Molly attended the celebration of Ron Plassman's life in Fort Wayne and spent time with the Plassman family. Ron's estate included a major gift to USABA which we will be receiving before the end of the year.

CEO & Staff Report

Molly highlighted the 2023 Goalball High Performance Plan and the Road to Paris 2024, with three opportunities for the men's and women's goalball teams to qualify for Paris...December 2022, August 2023 and November 2023.

Seven-time goalball Paralympian Jen Armbruster has joined the USABA staff as blind soccer coordinator.

USABA received a bid from the Los Angeles Recreation & Parks Department to host blind soccer clinics starting in October and will include Paralympian David Brown as coach. There are many mini pitches around the country that could host blind soccer once they are retrofitted for blind soccer specifications.

Blind Soccer Strategy Updates

Kevin Brouard provided a history of blind soccer programming and how we plan on creating awareness with the naming of our National Team. We currently have 12 teams playing across the country and have six strategically located hub cities (Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Columbus and Charlotte) that are part of the Building Blind Soccer grant through the US Soccer Federation. Since 2018, we have hosted 10 national camps and clinics. Thirty-three participants from 19 states attended the recent coaching education summit in Virginia. Currently we estimate 150 athletes, 35 coaches, two IBSA-certified officials and 30 engaged volunteers. On the funding side we have secured \$250k in grassroots funding since 2018. We have hosted three National Team identification camps to grow our National Team player pool to 15 athletes. We have also been actively recruiting coaches and added a strength and conditioning coach for the pool players.



Molly noted a prep camp for the Blind Soccer National Team has been approved and funded by the USOPC. We have requested a meeting to present our 2023 plan to the USOPC High Performance Team, Special Grant Services Team and with their foundation. There are opportunities for additional funding, especially on the women's side of blind soccer.

Catherine Raney noted USABA has put in a bid for work at \$72k to host four youth blind soccer clinics in Los Angeles as part of PlayLA Adaptive Sports Program, and the entire proposal was approved. In November, LA asked USABA to host events via a secondary proposal. Down the road there will also be the opportunity to host goalball events in the LA area.

Skye Arthur-Banning talked about the successful coaches' camp hosted by the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind and their hopes to host again next year. A retired Navy admiral will be conducting a blind soccer demo with some members of Congress later this week.

An upcoming diversity and inclusion panel will be held at Chicago's Sidley headquarters with Matt Simpson, David Brown and Alison Lynch. Partnerships also in the works with Harris Blitzer and Oakley. Paralympian John Register will be hosting a media training session for all USABA sport ambassadors.

Committee Reports & Updates

Eliana Mason provided an update on the formation of the Athlete Advisory Committee. Eliana is the athlete rep and Tyler Merren is the alternate. An internal AAC committee of six athletes was proposed to the USOPC.

John Kusku provided the Ethics Committee report and said there was nothing new to report.

Molly Quinn presented the Nominating and Governance Committee on behalf of Tracie Foster. With Jen Armbruster joining the USABA staff, the Judicial Committee will need to find an athlete replacement for Jen. The committee is currently working on that. The two current committee members are deciding if they will continue as their terms are up. Committee is vetting candidates for board election in November as four board seats for two-year terms are expiring.

Gary Remensnyder presented the Audit & Finance Committee report on Q2 finances. The committee met and reviewed information for the final report. The detailed financial and narrative report was sent to board prior to the meeting. Gary read the executive summary from the report. At the end of Q2 results, the staff re-forecasted the full year forecast for 2022. The organization has invested in infrastructure to shore us up as a National Governing Body and also make the investments we have to make to fulfill our obligations to launch blind soccer nationally. Some of the revenue side has developed more slowly than we had hoped. Our external 2021 financial audit is going smoothly.

Motion made to approve all committee reports. Motion seconded. Motion approved.

Revenue Development & Opportunities

Molly mentioned that John Kusku, Eliana Mason and David Brown will be guest speakers during the October 28 Breakfast in Champions in Colorado Springs and encouraged board members to host watch parties around



the live-streamed event. Gary recommended identifying Paralympic athletes who may be available to attend the remote watch parties and serve as keynote speakers.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:44 PM Mountain Time and went into Executive Session and discussed personnel matters.