

WISCONSIN MASTERS SWIMMING

Convention Special Edition Newsletter

In September, Wisconsin Masters sent 6 delegates to the USMS Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. Following this are the convention reports. If you would like more detail about any of the sessions we attended, please seek us out. Attendees included Mary Schneider, Jeanne Seidler, Peter Allen, Jerry Lourigan, Melodee Nugent, and Carl Millholland.

2019 Convention Report – Mary Schneider

House of Delegates (HOD) Sessions

235 delegates had registered for the Convention. It was stated that since the last convention the number of gold clubs rose from 60 to 225.

Announcements:

- There is a partnership with Swim.com, which is a fitness tracking app
- College club swimming had 5500 swimmers involved in this last year
- Open Water Task Force made recommendations for safe, successful events
- USMS is now hosting websites for some LMSCs
- A New Forum is coming called Community
- New insurance carrier, IOA, which will save costs

The concept of a Unified Fee was presented. The advantage of one fee would be to standardize the membership fee across all LMSCs. It would be easier to administer, be easier to explain the registration fee to all members, plus reduce programming costs to the software. 50% of members would see a \$3 or more increase in their registration if using the Unified Fee.

Other ideas to promote membership:

- Partner with USAT
- Create a Premium membership category
- A 12 month subscription rather than an annual subscription, which would automatically renew
- Gift memberships

Membership in USMS is down all across the country. Only 50% of those who join, renew after their first year. Of those who have been members of USMS for more than one year, those under 35 renew at a 35% rate, those 40-60 renew at a 50% rate, and those over 60 renew at a higher rate.

Income from USMS partners is forecast to be \$524,000 this year, of which \$61,000 is for the 50th anniversary of USMS. There are 17 partners with USMS, of which 3 are shared with USA Swimming. The national office is looking at a new member kit, which would cost about \$20,000. College club swimming is expected to grow to 5700 swimmers this next year.

Spring nationals will feature relays with Olympians.

For anyone needing a medical exception for swimwear at a meet, a petition may be sent to the Rules Chair.

There was a Meet the Candidates Forum for those running for a national office, after which voting took place.

National Awards were presented, with Melodee Nugent receiving the Dot Donnelly award for her volunteer service.

Finance Committee

In going over the budget, there were a couple of areas where expenses have been reduced at the national office.

- Office space has been reduced, will save \$14,000 per year

- Use of IT contractors
- Use of EFT for payments to LMSCs, saves on paper checks and mailing costs
- Changed insurance liability company

Use of the standardized financial reporting form by LMSCs has aided in the unified fee analysis.

Dawson stated there were higher costs for the Fitness Events for mailing the goodies, but the expenses are absorbed by USMS, not by Swimming Saves Lives.

Great Lakes Zone Meeting

The Great Lakes Zone consists of Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Kentucky, Lake Erie, and Allegheny.

Reports were given by each LMSC in the Zone. Everyone reported some drop in membership, but Wisconsin had the highest.

In 2020, there will be an open water meet with clean water, in a harbor area in Cleveland. In addition, there will be 2 meets at Kenyon College. A LCM meet will be held in December, and a SCY meet in Spring.

Michigan hosted Janet Evans in the Spring, with a clinic, lunch, and a presentation. They also started an on-line store, with proceeds going towards a scholarship fund.

There was some discussion about having non-conforming events at a meet to garner more interest, and even having non-conforming relays for fun.

Member LMSCs can post information to the Zone website, although there are a number of links that do not function currently. The website also needs to be updated.

Elections were held for the Zone Chair, and Lisa Brown from Indiana was elected.

Open Water

This committee meeting talked about using the USMS website to promote open water swimming, although currently, it's hard to find information about the events. No new rules were proposed this year. Event management, best practices, and officiating were also discussed.

Best practices were discussed such as:

- Standard colors for turn buoys
- Life guard at finish to recognize distressed swimmers
- Use of safety tow buoys
- When to cancel or delay an event due to high winds or bad weather

A guidance document with lots of pictures was created to help with event management,

The event needs to have a certified Safety Official, along with a Referee, and other certified officials.

Several resources for open water swimming are the USMS Guide to Operations for Open Water Swimming, report from Open Water Task Force, PowerPoint on the USMS website on how to sanction an open water event. If questions, reach out to Mark Bruce, Chair of Open Water.

Officials

New this year is a USMS certified Referee position. Currently there are 152 USMS certified officials, with 82 starters, and 20 referees. Referees must all hold USMS membership.

To become a stroke and turn official, an open book test must be taken after viewing a video. Passing scores may be sent to Terri White, the Officials Chair.

In recapping Spring and Summer nationals, the conclusion was that the days were long, and especially in Mesa, the days were extremely hot. Officials can tolerate up to a 10 hour day, but beyond that, it's difficult.

A point was made that conditions could improve if there could be 2 shifts of officials at national meets. It was even stated that swimmers could become officials and at least help with stroke and turn when they are not swimming. Any help is appreciated.

Officials will need as much help as possible in San Antonio and Richmond next year.

Championship

There was a lot of discussion about the 2019 national meets. An experiment was tried to ask swimmers to opt-in for a printed program in Mesa (20% opted in), and to opt-out of the printed program in Mission Viejo. An analysis will be done as to what worked better for saving costs. Maintaining water in the jugs was a big issue for Mesa, as it went quickly. Mission Viejo had complaints from neighbors about the starting microphone so early in the morning. (The meet started at 7:30 am.) Mission Viejo also had 12% no-shows, and had a number of empty lanes.

San Antonio did a presentation and stated they have 20 competition lanes, 35 warm up and warm down lanes, 100+ toilets, and 100+ showers. Hotel lists should be coming out the end of September. This will be Fiesta time, and they want to encourage swimmers and families to participate in the events outside the pool. There will be a charge for parking, and there will not be any shuttles.

Richmond also made a presentation. They stated in addition to the main pool, which is an indoor pool, there will be a temporary pool set up for warm ups and warm downs. There will be speakers by the warm down pool to announce the events being swum. There will also be tents available around the warm up pool. Excursions will be set up for swimmers and/or families, and can be purchased at registration. There will be white river rafting through the downtown area, which is unique to any major city. The downtown hotels will be about 15 min away, for those who choose that option. A number of the hotels will be the Marriott brands. There will not be any shuttles at this meet either, but there will be free parking at the pool.

The second Championship meeting focused on NQTs and meet management. NQTs will continue to be based on the national Top 10 times. There was discussion on how to reduce the length of the meet because of a request from the Officials committee. One proposal wanted to require NQTs for both the 1650 and 1000 frees. After much discussion, it was decided to form a sub-committee to look at options.

Later in the House of Delegates, the 2021 national meet hosts were announced. The Spring nationals were awarded to Greensboro, NC, and the summer nationals to Spire Institute in Ohio.

Workshop – Developing Officials in your LMSC

- There is a need and a desire to develop officials with USMS.
- To become a referee, on-deck work needs to be done along with the recommendation of the LMSC Chair.
- Stroke and turn officials need to watch the videos at USA Swimming and take an online test.
- 70% of officials in USMS are only certified by USMS
- Ask people to become officials
- Able to officiate and swim in the same meet
- Can put on a clinic and talk about officiating
- Mentor people who want to become officials
- Ex-coaches make great referees
- As an incentive, we can pay officials travel expenses or comp entry fees if they swim
- Need for Open Water Referees
- USMS Open Water rules are different than USA Swim rules, must know differences

Workshop - Top 10 and Sanctions

- Looking to combine the position in 1 to 3 years.
- One streamlined role will help national office administration.
- National office can take over some of the functions and answer sanction questions
- Cons to more of a national role
 - ◊ Local control knows the meet director and sanction information
 - ◊ Local control knows swimmers relative times when reviewing results
 - ◊ Local control knows the pools to know history of timing issues
- Overall feeling from LMSCs is to maintain local control of Sanctioning and Top 10 Recorder

2019 USMS Convention Report—Carl Millholland

This was my first USMS Convention attendance. First impression: These people are pretty serious about the organization. It was, however, discouraging to hear that overall membership is declining despite the energy of the organization. I think every LMSC in the Great Lakes region was declining.

USMS Value Proposition

Despite many House of Delegate sessions, committee sessions and workshops on volunteer committee initiatives, I did not get a clear idea of what the value proposition is for USMS. Other than competing in sanctioned events, I didn't get a clear idea what USMS offers--only bits and pieces. I heard the phrase "our product" a few times, but never heard what the value of that product would be. There are fitness swims and challenges, and Adult Learning to Swim, which focus on the non-competitive member. I also see good initiatives in coaching and promoting certified coaches, but these activities (and open water competition) can all be done without membership. This could be because delegates are so involved in the details of USMS they may forget what the overall goal of the organization is.

In researching I did find some marketing materials on the USMS website, but, personally, found much of it to be, as we say, flufferbutter.

So here's my stab at a "value proposition" based on my own experience and involvement --

For adults looking to stay healthy in exercise activities that are sustainable in terms of financial and bodily stress, USMS membership facilitates a lifetime of good health and fitness through swimming. Members are able to learn how to swim and improve, and use this as a primary or supplemental form of exercise in a fun environment that encourages camaraderie and friendship. Participation enables members from the novice swimmer to the ex-Olympian to set goals, and gain a sense of personal pride through challenges and competition. With over 1,500 swimming programs, USMS is uniquely structured with certified professional coaching, officials, organized swim clubs and volunteers whose primary focus is encouraging adult swimming.

Membership Coordinator Role

While much of the HOD sessions didn't seem as relevant to me, mainly because I am not as involved in the swim committee as most delegates, I was very interested in the initiative to change the role of Registrar to Membership Coordinator. As a new member, I really had no idea what a Registrar did--I signed up, paid my dues and got a card. To me a role that connects the National office with my membership is valuable. Speaking from the position of a new member, I really don't understand the function of the LMSC versus the Club I'm assigned to. This may be due in large part to the fact that there is only one real Club in the LMSC--but both have boards and functions that I can't quite distinguish between the two. (My involvement in each gives me more clarity, but even then it has taken some time to understand the various roles). In summary, I think that the transition to a Membership Coordinator would be beneficial for communication and understanding. Finally, as a proposed Communication Chair, I see my role as one who facilitates communication and understanding working in concert with the Membership Coordinator.

Details, Details, Details

While attending the convention has some benefits, including social and networking, there were a lot of small details discussed. While I fully acknowledge that these details need attention, as a newbie it was challenging to get excited about them. This is probably because my role, currently, is focused on communication. And in that focused regard I did find value.

I also see some tension between allowing LMSCs to create their own organizations and expectations by the HOD as a whole. Some persons' positions are, "We're here to help. You know your organization better than we do." While others seemed to lean towards common agreement on common goals and rules. I, personally, am not much for rules for the sake of having rules. Communication and understanding should be fluid, but functional.

Joe Thomas Swimmer Magazine Cover

Some delegates thought we were quite fortunate to have an NFL star in our state, and that we should leverage that for publicity. Our response was: We've never seen this guy until he showed up on the cover of the magazine.

I sought and found an explanation from the Swimmer magazine editor. Joe had made a comment in a Sports Illustrated article that after leaving the NFL his weight went up, and that he was using swimming for weight loss. The editor, of course, was interested and pursued an interview. He had a hard time getting traction with Joe Thomas' publicist, but did know some ESPN

colleagues who could contact Joe. Joe agreed and the magazine sent a writer, photographer and USMS swim cap. It is doubtful that we will see him at a swim meet, and he is not listed with USMS. If we contact him, we need to tread lightly and try to capitalize on his Wisconsin roots. I will be in touch with the magazine editor to see if I can get a little something in an upcoming newsletter.

Integration with College Swim Clubs

USMS has ostensibly taken on College Club swimming, which makes sense. We have two clubs in Wisconsin, UW-Madison and Marquette. Going forward, the LMSC should look for opportunities to collaborate, perhaps a joint swim meet.

Convention Report—Melodee Nugent

Open Water Task Force

The goal of this committee is to help grow the number of USMS sanctioned open water events. The use of tow buoys was discussed. These should be used as best practice for race directors by providing visibility and safety for a swimmer. There are two swims in the US that require the tow buoys, however, they are more commonly used in Europe. I have personally used one for safety when swimming by myself in open water. Also discussed was the need for Certified Safety Directors and Safety Referees at open water events – help define roles of USMS officials so these events can run smoothly. Open water swim training was offered in a lake in Montana that is 28 miles across. Mark helps open waters swimmers in this lake to achieve their channel and ice mile dreams.

Fitness Education Committee

Discussed USMS membership and how only 30% of those registered with USMS compete in swim meets. There is a need to reach the 70% of those who are “fitness” swimmers. The Fitness Challenge Series was created for all USMS swimmers, but especially for those that swim for fitness. This includes the Winter, Summer and Fall Challenges. A good response was received from these events. Also discussed was developing a “Before and After” advertisement – “What a Master Swimmer Looks Like.” There are many different personal reasons why they join USMS; look better in clothes, make arms look better, feel better about themselves. Tell a story by a video to market this and discuss different goals of swimmers.

Sports Medicine Committee

Discussed the Sports Medicine Blog which swimmers can submit stories on mental health aspects, re-entering swimming as a sport or other topics. At Summer Nationals there was a “Roll it Out” booth that showed the benefits of foam rolling. They sold out of the foam rollers. The discussion of having an ambulance for onsite medical needs was discussed. Discussed Dr. Tanaka sexual study in 2010. Possibility of doing this type of survey for USMS swimmers in the future and need to figure out best way to send out a survey.

Diversity & Inclusion

Working on a profile of coaches and what are they doing to make a difference with their teams. Surveyed coaches about their current swimmers and what makes up their clubs. Approximately 70% of clubs are 80% or more Caucasian and are split on gender. There were 15 clubs that stuck out with regards to race and ethnicity. They had 11 interviews with coaches about what they are doing to make a difference and inspire. They will be sharing this information in the future.

Developing Officials in your LMSC

“Goal is to grow your own” – use our own swimmers as officials. USMS has over 150 USMS officials: 151 Stroke/Turn, 82 starters and 20 referees. Best way to recruit officials is just ask swimmers and welcome them! You can ask, “Would you consider becoming a USMS official to help our team? Officiating can be fun and is easy. An Open Water Safety Director is easy to do as well and deals with safety issues in open water. To become an OW Safety Director involves a 25-question test.

Thoughts and Observations from USAS Convention in St. Louis—Peter Allen

I was pleased to have the opportunity to attend. It was a great learning experience for me.

Some Observations:

USMS is a well-run organization. There are a lot of smart, committed, experienced people at both the national and local level. The overall professionalism and dedication to mission is impressive to see.

Even though the transition from all-volunteer to a paid, professional staff at the national office began almost ten years ago, it’s clear that there is still tension related to this transition. This tension appeared in different ways. One example related to

my role as registrar. As the national office plans to take over much of this role in the future, and to do away with the Registration Committee, some perceive this as a loss of power at the local level. The tension is very analogous to that between the Federal Government and the States, and it doesn't appear that it will go away anytime soon. Some of the older USMS volunteers were quite passionate in vocalizing their unhappiness with the trend. I'm perfectly OK with the planned changes to the Registrar role. I have no problem handing off the task of printing cards to the national office. I'm happy to take on the role of 'membership coordinator' but also concerned that I won't have the requisite knowledge to do this task well. I'm waiting to see what the true expectations are before deciding how best to handle it.

Being at the convention opened my eyes to the concept of 'mission'. USMS has, as part of its mission "teaching adults to swim". The importance of this mission was reinforced by the excellent keynote speakers, which highlighted the value and importance of this mission. Being exposed to this session created discussion in our LMSC group about our own role (at the local level) in fulfilling this mission. The reality is that it can only happen at the local level. For years I think we have been content to serve only our own needs and desires as Wisconsin swimmers... meets, records, etc. This session caused us to talk about our role in the larger mission of teaching adults to swim. It is a great discussion, and I'm excited to see where it goes.

One of the highlights for me was having the opportunity to sit with Jim and Patty Miller at the New Delegate luncheon. Two things stood out: one was reinforcement of the value of the mission to teach adults to swim. Jim shared statistics on the likelihood of kids learning to swim if their parents don't. It's clear that we have the opportunity to break the cycle that is perpetuated by adults who can't swim. A second highlight related to a discussion about doping in masters swimming. It seems (from body language) that I had raised a topic they preferred not to discuss. In short, Jim acknowledged that it happens, but that there is no desire to test for it... or even talk about it. He rationalized that testing would be so problematic that it would be impossible to manage. Further, he indicated that those doing it already understood the dangers, so there is no need for articles talking about it. He also admitted, however, that there is a certain group of people who will do *anything* to win and shared his own experience of 20 years ago when he was in the final heat of the 500yd free with two or three others he was sure were doping. He told me that they are now all dead! I was a little taken aback by the realization that doping is probably pervasive, that is no doubt distorting the records and qualifying times and endangering the lives of those who do it... but there is absolutely no intent to deal with the issue. This is troubling for an organization dedicated to health and fitness!

My final observation relates to the MISHOF induction dinner on Friday night. On the one hand, it was wonderful to see the inductees and hear their stories. Very inspirational. On the other hand, I was horrified by the completely inappropriate MC, and his off-color jokes. What he did was both dishonoring to the inductees and offensive to every woman in the room. Sadly, this is a reflection of the TRUE nature of USMS leadership, which purports to endorse 'Diversity and Inclusion' and strives to promote it within the organization. In reality, it is an 'old boys' network that is at least 15 years out of step with the rest of America. This was reinforced by the slate of candidates for office... a bunch of old white guys... with one exception. Something needs to change.