

Metropolitan Swimming

Athlete Report on the United States Aquatic Sports Convention Junior/Senior Athlete Representative: Erin McGowan Kiernan

The United States Aquatic Sports Convention took place from Tuesday, September 25th, 2007, through Sunday, September 30th, 2007. As the Metropolitan Senior Athlete Representative, I arrived in Anaheim, California on Tuesday afternoon. A four day affair for athletes, the convention was filled with enthralling meetings where athletes were able to immerse themselves in the governance of their sport. And I must note, it was both a great honor, and pleasure to serve as the athlete representative for the Metropolitan LSC.

*Please Note: This is an Athlete Report. Consequently the notes that were taken at the meetings were limited to those that most significantly pertain to athletes. For further summaries of meetings such as the Eastern Zone and House of Delegates, please reference the reports of Metropolitan Administrators.

Wednesday, September 26th, 2007

Lets Get Started (1pm-3pm – Primarily for New Delegates)

- ✓ This meeting was an introduction to the convention for all novices to the program. Run by the Convention Education Committee, it was a combination of rules, simulations of meetings, and swimming jeopardy.
 - All meetings at the USAS Convention run under the strict code of “*Robert’s Rules of Order.*”
 - “*Robert’s Rules of Order*” provide common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language. The conduct of all business is controlled by the general will of the whole membership - the right of the deliberate majority to decide. Complementary is the right of at least a strong minority to require the majority to be deliberate - to act according to its considered judgment after a full and fair "working through" of the issues involved. Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the assembly (Mr. Devine’s Power Point.)

Most of the other meetings for the day were exclusive to the committees in which they concerned. I stopped by the National Team and Olympic International Operations Committee, but after sitting in for 30 minutes, realized that it was exclusive to committee members.

Thursday, September 27th, 2007

Sports Medicine/ Science Workshop (10am-12pm – Open to Everyone)

- ✓ Run by the Committee for Sports Medicine/Science, this workshop was filled with videos and simulations; all demonstrating what swimming does to the human body. Highlighting the benefits of swimming, and briefly touching the dynamics of how muscles move in water, this meeting was very interesting, especially from an athletes perspective. So interesting that the room was filled!
- ✓ The most important lesson I derived from this workshop was that there is no proven evidence to suggest that stretching is helpful to the body prior to a swimming workout. Although it may feel better, it does not necessarily aid the body in any way.
- ✓ The committee claimed to have posted all of the information on the USA Swimming website

Athletes Meeting (3pm – 4pm – Primarily for First Time Athlete Representative)

- ✓ Run by the Athletes Executive Council, this meeting was a friendly, casual introduction to the Council and the convention.
- ✓ Made up of noted athletes such as Olympian Chris Thompson, and Linda Riker, the Athletes Executive Council is the holistic representation for all athletes in USA Swimming
- ✓ Council members urged us to act appropriately and voice our opinions
- ✓ In addition, the AEC explained to the athletes why we had such a presence at the convention. Citing the US Senate's declaration after the disassembly of the Amateur Athletics Union in the 70s, the Council members informed us that all executive decisions in athletics must be voted on, with 20% of the vote being comprised by athletes
- ✓ The AEC tried to teach us what we needed to know, so we could be more well versed in the decision making that would be taking place over the course of the week

Athlete Leadership Workshop - Dwight Stones Lecture on Leadership (4pm-6:15pm – Primarily for Athletes)

- ✓ Dwight Stones, a charismatic Olympian, world recorder holder, and member of the track and field hall of fame, came to brief the athletes on leadership. What was noted to be strictly a talk on leadership, quickly turned into a didactic speech from one of America's greatest, but also most hated athletes – a speech in which I very much enjoyed. Some of the highlights included the following points:
 - In being a leader, one must always be right and practical
 - The most essential ability for success is the ability to lead oneself
 - One must always learn to listen
 - Dwight noted that in his youth, he did not like the way US Track and Field was run. True to his infamous puerile ignorance, Dwight said he “was hitting (his) head against the building.” It was only when he was sage with age that he realized, if he wanted to change US Track and Field, he had to “go inside the building.” He then credited the athletes for participating in the convention and urged us to stay active in USA Swimming.
 - When trying to make it to the top, take the path of least resistance
 - Dwight told us that as one develops into an elite athlete, he or she must learn to let go of friends who may hold you down. He used Michael Vick as an example of an athlete whose demise was rooted in his inability to let go of old friends
 - Any athlete must ALWAYS be aware of who they are surrounded by. Dwight stated, “I don't care if they have been your best friend since you were born, when you get to the top, even your closest friends will try to take you down...whether out of pure jealousy or hatred, your friends are looking for a way to make you look bad. Keep your guard up!”
 - It is the impulse of the United States to build an athlete up to be so great and virtually immortal, so when that athlete makes a mistake, the public may knock them down even more. Dwight urged us, “Don't let the fear of being knocked down prevent you from pursuing greatness...and if you do reach greatness, be smart! Don't do anything you wouldn't want people to know about you if you were on trial for murder!”
 - On society promoting the notion that with greatness comes great problems Dwight commented, “I don't care what anyone says. Follow your dreams. Aspire to greatness - worry about the problems once you make it big.”
 - There is large connectivity between sports and politics. More athletes should be involved in politics so they are in the public eye, promoting their sport

- Although society tells us that if we don't win, "we suck," Dwight pleaded that we resist such a notion. "Shame on you if you believe that," Dwight said. "They are ignorant. Society doesn't understand the amount of work it takes to achieve greatness in a sport. Listen to me, if you did your best, you won."
- It is always worth it to make a great sacrifice to illustrate a point. Dwight Stones was suspended from Track and Field for life after refusing to concede \$33,000 in prize money he had won, and donated to a high jump clinic. "It wasn't about keeping the money," he continued, "it was about showing them 'Hey, I earned this and there is no reason why I should give it back'" Dwight's sacrifice, although devastating in that it suspended him from his sport, made great strides for professional athletes for it broke the barrier and allowed athletes to segue into competing as an occupation. Dwight's sacrifice was not only admirable, but also memorable, as he was recently thanked for his actions by professional hockey player Wayne Gretzky.
- In closing, Stones disclosed his nostalgic thoughts on the Olympics. Claiming that representing one's country is a feeling, "words cannot describe," Stones wished us the best in our sports.
- ✓ Dwight Stones was an amazing speaker, and individual. I had the opportunity to speak with him one on one after the meeting, and his advice on both life and athletics are words which will forever resonate in my mind. It is not only his accomplishments, but his unforgettable character, with which he pursues with gusto and zeal, that make Dwight an iconoclast of American athletics in the 1960s and 1970s.

Athletes Welcome Reception (6:15pm – 7pm – Primarily for Athletes)

- ✓ Also run by the Athlete Executive Council, this reception was a combination of hors d'oeuvres and various name games.

Eastern Zone Meeting (7pm-9pm – For all representatives from the Eastern Zone)

- ✓ The Eastern Zone meeting was a great lesson in politics; in order to be taken seriously, one must present their opinion in an appropriate manner.
- ✓ In this meeting, as LSC's and as a Zone, we collectively made executive decisions such as location of championship meets, zone standard times, and established "open" and "closed" policies for the two sectional meets in the eastern zone
- ✓ In addition, the Adirondack LSC proposed a New York State Championship for Age Group swimmers. This proposal was heard, and appealing to the body and will be addressed in the future

Friday, September 28th, 2007

Athletes Meeting (8am-8:45am – Primarily for Athletes)

- ✓ Following breakfast after morning practice, this meeting was virtually void of any notable points. It consisted most of the Council members engaging in small talk with the crowd and warnings for poorly behaved representatives

College Swimming 101 (10am-12pm – Primarily to Athletes)

- ✓ Run by the Convention Education Committee, this meeting was a summary of college swimming, the NCAA (including the NCAA clearing house), and the recruiting process
- ✓ Targeted at those athletes who have not yet experienced the recruiting process, the meeting was an instructional lesson in how to speak with coaches without violating NCAA rules

- ✓ Most everything that was discussed in this meeting is of common knowledge and can be found on the NCAA website

Athletes Board of Review (12pm – 2pm – Primarily for Athletes)

- ✓ Run by the Athletics Executive Committee, this meeting was run in compliance with “*Robert’s Rules.*” At the beginning of the meeting, every athlete received the 2006-2007 USA Swimming Rule Book. For the duration of the 2 hours, we sat and discussed every minor detail of all of the rules that were up for modification in the house, and developed a cohesive opinion; should we motion to pass the rule modified by the Rules and Regulations Committee, or leave it the way it was?
- ✓ The athletes deemed approximately 99% of the changes worthy of merit, and thus voted to comply with the decision of the Rules and Regulations Committee. Most of the changes were EXTREMELY minor and irrelevant, as most changes were for better word choice

Eastern Zone Meeting (3:30pm-5:30pm - For all representatives from the Eastern Zone)

- ✓ In this meeting, the Eastern Zone Representatives continued the discussion of business brought up in the first meeting
- ✓ In addition, we voted on new administrative representatives

House of Delegates (7pm-9pm – For all Representatives of USA Swimming)

- ✓ As a voting member of the house, this was a very interesting meeting to attend. While most matters of business concerned issues that were not directly related to athletes, it was still a great experience to formulate an opinion on subjects, such as the budget, and be able to voice my opinion via vote

Saturday, September 30th, 2007

Athletes Meeting (8:30am – 9:30am- Primarily for Athletes)

- ✓ Very similar to the meeting the day before, this meeting was virtually void of any notable points. It consisted most of the Council members engaging in small talk with the crowd and warnings for poorly behaved representatives

House of Delegates (10am -2pm – For all Representatives of USA Swimming)

- ✓ Contrary to the night before, athlete representation was essential in this meeting for our ability as a body was under inquiry. The two main issues that concerned athletes were as follows:
 - Should Athletes under the age of 18 be able to serve on the National Board of Review?
 - The National Board of Review, or a body which makes rulings on issues such as recruiting violations, is an extremely important body as its decisions resonate within the entire body of USA Swimming
 - While many adults suggested that athletes under the age of 18 should not be able to make important decisions that affect individual’s livelihoods, the athletes were successful in defending their abilities to make sound decisions by noting the dedication to USA swimming LSC representatives have, and also the maturity, integrity, and intelligence of those athletes who are elected. In addition, the athletes were sure to point out that the athlete representative on the board is appointed, and it is implied that the board would select an athlete for an age appropriate case.
 - Should there be more athlete representation in USA Swimming?

- This issue had more to do with USA Swimming on the LSC level, as opposed to the national level.
- The proposal that was presented suggested the creation of an athlete board in every LSC. Such a board would consist of at least one athlete from every team in the LSC.
- Although some athletes thought the proposal was a great way to provide a more accessible interim between the athletes and the administrators of LSCs, ultimately, the proposal was struck due to the inconvenience that such a board would employ. It was the belief of the House that the job of the LSC Athlete Representatives included hearing opinions of athletes from every team in their LSC, thus the creation of an athlete board would be unnecessary.

Aquatic Awards Banquet (7pm-10pm)

- ✓ Hosted by Olympian Rowdy Gaines, the Banquet was a great, cheerful conclusion to the week.
USA Swimming Awards included:
 - Swimmer of the Year: *Michael Phelps*
 - USA Swimming Award: *Adolph Kiefer*