

2020 USPA FALL COMMITTEE, BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING RECAP



During the week of Monday, October 5 through Saturday, October 10, 2020, the USPA convened for the annual Fall Committee, Board of Governors and Annual Member Meeting. Due to the pandemic the USPA decided to postpone the in-person meetings which were set to be held in Mulvane, Kansas, at the Kansas Star Hotel. The virtual meetings gave a unique opportunity for all USPA Members to attend meetings they may not have been able to join in the past.

The following Committee's met throughout the week from Monday, October 5 through Friday, October 9, each hosting a Zoom meeting open to the committee members, Board, staff and USPA membership: 1.) Armed Forces Committee, 2.) Club and Membership Administration Committee, 3.) Young Players Committee, 4.) Constitution Committee, 5.) Women's Committee, 6.) Intercollegiate/Interscholastic (I/I) Committee, 7.) Rules Committee, 8.) Safety Committee, 9.) Arena Committee, 10.) Equine Welfare Committee, 11.) Tournament Committee, 12.) Audit Committee, 13.) Finance Committee, 14.) Board and Staff Development Committee, 15.) Executive Committee, 16.) and International Committee. In addition, the Umpires LLC, Polo Development LLC and Communications/Marketing gave hour long presentations.

During the Annual Member Meeting on Friday, October 9, Chairman Armstrong presented his vision for the future of the Association. In addition, the Delegates received information regarding the proposed changes to the 2021 By Laws, Rules and Tournament Conditions. The staff also disseminated some friendly reminders including Member Benefits, the 2021 Helmet Mandate and the process for submitting tournament results.

Below please find a recap of the Saturday Fall Board of Governors Meeting with highlights from the Committee Meetings and Division Presentations:

Secretary's Report

Mr. Smith, USPA Secretary, ratified the previous actions of the Board in his Secretary's report.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Rudolph, Treasurer, presented a brief financial report and acknowledged the strong relationship with USPA Global Licensing. He stated that the USPA is in a solid financial position but must continue to remain vigilant in exercising prudence in spending.

Finance Committee Report

Mr. Ramirez Jr., Finance Committee Chairman, provided an overview of the recent Finance Committee meeting. He stated that the USPA's Investment Portfolio is performing in accordance with the investment plan. Aaron Lally of Meketa Investment Group discussed the portfolio. The portfolio handled the 2020 first quarter correction well. There is potential for uncertainty in the next four to eight weeks, but the liquidity available allows for short term action if needed. Mr. Ramirez Jr. informed the Board that the Finance Committee recommended approval of the 2021 USPA Annual Budget and the International Budget in the recent Finance Committee meeting. Mr. Puetz, CEO, stated that both budgets were widely discussed during the budget renewal process. Included in the 2021 budget is an extension of the well-received COVID-19 Tournament Stimulus Program. In the International Budget, event planning and costs related to the FIP World Championships (previously scheduled for 2021) were moved to 2022 and will be presented to the Board at the Fall 2021 meetings. Funding for International events that were postponed due to the pandemic will remain in the investment portfolio. The Board approved the 2021 Operating Budget and International Budget.

USPA Global Licensing

David Cummings, USPAGL Chairman, opened the meeting by discussing the strong financial performance and health of USPAGL during these challenging times with COVID-19. He also mentioned how the retail and apparel industries have been negatively impacted with significant financial losses, store closures and layoffs. David also thanked Michael Prince and his team for USPAGL's strong financial results and management of the crisis over the past year.

Michael Prince, President & CEO of USPAGL, provided an update on U.S. Polo Assn. and the global impact of COVID-19. First, he thanked the USPA and the USPAGL Board for their tremendous support during these unprecedented times. He mentioned that approximately 95 percent of the global business had reopened and that the overall business was trending better than originally forecasted in March and that USPAGL would outperform the revised 2020 plan. The aforementioned positive financial momentum will result in higher revenues, lower expenses, higher gross profit and more USPA royalties. He noted that this is occurring while many other apparel brands and retailers have incurred hundreds of millions of dollars of losses and closed thousands of stores. Mr. Prince also mentioned that USPAGL has worked very hard to manage cash flow working with licensees, vendors and the USPA, to ensure a long-term stable foundation and future. He shared that all licensees had paid USPAGL in a timely manner for the past seven months. Some other highlights included that retail stores were starting to rebound with outdoor locations doing better than malls. Also, USPAGL has been aggressively expanding its digital presence launching nine e-commerce sites and 15 brand sites, which has doubled the e-commerce business and grown to almost 6 million social media followers worldwide. He

expects the holiday season will be challenging based on the tough economic environment and that more department stores and retailers will close their doors. This will result in e-commerce being more important than ever before as well as looking at new distribution channels for the future. Mr. Prince mentioned that U.S. Polo Assn. remains on the offense with strong marketing that includes global photoshoots and commercials on top rated shows like Yellowstone to supporting the Silver Cup® at Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club (Santa Barbara, California) and the Collegiate Partnership Program for intercollegiate polo clubs.

Executive Committee Report

Chairman Armstrong gave a brief overview of the actions of the Executive Committee since the April Board of Governors Meeting. The Board approved the ratification of those actions. Mr. Armstrong reported that with the approved Budget Option One the Board had agreed to the extension of the Tournament Stimulus Program (TSP) through 2021. He presented the revised COVID-19 2021 USPA Polo Tournament Stimulus Package Guidelines and the Board approved. Updated TSP Guidelines can be found [here](#).

Services Reports

Ms. Sanchez, Chairman of the Arena Committee, emphasized that arena polo is experiencing a boom with arenas at 60 percent of USPA Member Clubs and 63 percent of the membership playing at clubs with arenas. Polo schools are able to increase volume, Intercollegiate/Interscholastic teams and middle school competition is growing and arena leagues are gaining interest and attendance. The Polo Development Initiative (PDI) arena improvements coupled with the USPA Polo Tournament Stimulus Package have increased the quality of and interest in USPA arena tournaments. Ms. Sanchez noted that all 2021 USPA National arena tournaments have been awarded with multiple requests. Recently Great Meadow Polo Club played five national arena tournaments in a four-week period and had a huge success. At the USPA Women's Arena Open hosted by Great Meadow Polo Club, Lezlie Hiner was presented with the 2019 Russ Sheldon Award for outstanding contributions to arena polo.

Mr. Stanislawski, Audit Committee member, presented the Audit Committee report. There were no inquiries in the previous six months. Mr. Stanislawski noted that his personal term on the Audit Committee would be expiring in April and they continue to look for a replacement member, who ideally would be a USPA member with a CPA degree.

Mr. Rizzo, Chairman of the Board and Staff Development Committee, gave a summary of the Board and Staff Committee annual accomplishment. They continue to work on various initiatives including revising various policies. Mr. Zach Grob, currently also serving on the Young Player's Committee, was added as a new member of the Board and Staff Development Committee.

Mr. Hilberg, Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee, presented an overview of the military events that took place this year. The Committee is exploring a partnership with the George S. Patton legacy sports. The Board approved six motions from the Armed Forces Committee, which included two new National Armed Forces tournaments, one new Circuit Arena Event and additions to the Tournament Conditions. To read the approved motions click [here](#).



National Arena Commander-In-Chief Cup Final at Great Meadow Polo Club, Army Black's Joe Meyer, Former Major, U.S. Army Reserve, prepares for a long shot down the boards. ©Joanne Maisano

Mr. Armour, Chairman of the Club and Administration Committee, summarized the actions of the Committee. The Board approved a new mission statement for the Club and Membership Administration Committee which aligns with the new revisions to the By Laws.

Dr. Manno, Chairman of the Equine Welfare Committee, gave an overview of the changes to the Equine Drugs and Medications Rules. The Board approved the revised Equine Drugs and Medications Rules for 2021.

Mr. Carlucho Arellano, Executive Director of Services, spoke on behalf of the Handicap Committees and summarized the proposed changes to the Handicap Policy. The changes include: 1.) allowing Women's 0 goal and Arena -1 goal handicaps to change at any time, 2.) automatic adjustments to Women's Handicaps based on changes in their mixed handicaps, 3.) a trigger for an automatic review if a player's foreign handicap is 2 goals higher or lower than their USPA handicap, 4.) an increase in the number of At-Large Arena Handicap Committee Members from four to six (specifying that two At-Large Arena Handicap Committee Members shall be representatives from Intercollegiate/Interscholastic), 5.) the ability to assign a Women's Arena Handicap automatically based on their Women's Outdoor Handicap, and 6.) updated language regarding the High Level Outdoor Disclosure for players who receive a handicap change after playing in a qualifying tournament. The Board approved the proposed changes to the Handicap policy as presented.

Mr. Hall, International Committee Chairman, led an hour-long meeting. The Committee discussed the 2021 proposed International Events which include Polo in the Park, the postponed

Women's Nations Cup and other miscellaneous invitations. Proposed to be held at the historic Hurlingham Park in London, England, the United States has been invited to bring two teams (men's and women's) to compete in the 2021 Polo in the Park Event. It was announced that the USPA, FIP and their partners have all agreed to postpone the FIP World Polo Championships until Fall of 2022.

Mr. Paul Jornayvaz, Constitution Committee Chairman, outlined the revisions to the proposed 2021 By-Laws which include: 1.) the addition of a Preamble, 2.) the addition of a provision describing the role and responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer of the USPA, 3.) updates to the Advisory Committee language, and 4.) additional language to clarify the timing and process of membership classifications. One significant change to the membership classifications is that effective January 1, 2021, an Active Member Club must conduct annually a minimum of either four Club Events or two USPA Events. Another notable change for 2021 is that a club (except for those that participate primarily in interscholastic polo at the high school level) may only remain provisional for one year. The Board approved the proposed 2021 By Laws. The Constitution Committee also proposed amendments to the Polo Development LLC and Umpires LLC Operating Agreements. The Board approved the revisions.

During the two-hour Rules Committee meeting attended by more than 40 guests, the Committee welcomed new members Cecilia Cochran, Anna Winslow Palacios and Billy Raab. It proposed several substantive changes for 2021 to the Outdoor Rules, Arena Rules, and Tournament Conditions that were each approved by the Board of Governors: (1) establishing forfeiture as the penalty for heel calk violations (OR 6a, AR 2e); (2) clarifying that any "next game" suspension in a USPA Event must be served in that or another USPA Event (OR 33b-e); (3) allowing team captains to question the scorekeeping or timekeeping in the final period until 15 minutes after the final whistle (OR 11c); (4) clarifying that the arena roof structure is out of bounds (ARs 7, 9); (5) eliminating the use of shootouts for seeding purposes (TC VI); (6) enabling the use of Dartfish video for Umpire Reviews only (TC VII); and (6) clarifying "calling the advantage" (OR 21b).

The Rules Committee also proposed, and the Board approved, three new Optional Tournament Conditions for Host Tournament Committees (HTC) to use in 2021 if they choose: (1) an expansion of Outdoor Rule 26A that prohibits blocking in live play as well as on set plays; (2) an alternative to the 3/4 rule in USPA Events with an upper handicap limit between 4- and 6-goals that has been used successfully by many HTCs as a variance in 2020; and (3) a "fair-play" throw-in to restart play when it has been interrupted unexpectedly to the significant disadvantage of the team in possession.

The Women's Committee had a productive first meeting under the leadership of new Committee Chair, Ms. Meghan Gracida. Ms. Gandomcar-Sachs presented the Women's Tournament Reimbursement Program on behalf of the Women's Committee to the Board. The Board approved the Reimbursement program which can be found [here](#).

On Monday, October 5, the Young Players Committee held a virtual meeting via Zoom to discuss various topics and initiatives that the Committee had been working on under the leadership of Chairman Todd Thurston. The meeting predominantly focused on Diversity in USPA polo and how the Young Players Committee could interact with other various committees of the USPA to cultivate diversity-specific initiatives. In closing, Chairman Thurston thanked everyone who attended and stated he would be reaching out to the committee members to discuss the next steps and overall direction of the committee.

The Board approved the National and Sanctioned Tournament Applications as presented. [Please see list here.](#)



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USPA Umpires, LLC

The USPA Umpires, LLC presented on Tuesday afternoon and gave a full report on the initiatives and areas of focus throughout the year along with plans for the future. Umpires LLC highlighted the success of the Tournament Stimulus Program which has yielded 120 tournaments as of Tuesday, October 6, 2020. Mr. Gose, Umpires LLC Chairman, presented five points at the forefront of the USPA Umpires, LLC.

1. Recruitment and international recruitment
2. Retention (contract labor/employee, bonus)
3. Training – outside monitors/regional managers
4. Evaluations – game management, play calling, non-calls
5. Mindset

The Board ratified the actions of the Umpires LLC.

Communications Department & USPA Marketing, LLC

The Board of Governors approved a motion from USPA Communications and Global Polo Entertainment to support changing the branding of USPA Events on [Global Polo TV](#) as “USPA Polo Network” to “USPA Official Event.” For all USPA Events hosted on Global Polo TV (GPTV), the USPA will remain at the forefront of all references related to owning the events and have sign off rights prior to usage.

Ms. Shannon Stilson, Assistant Vice President of Marketing for USPA Global Licensing Inc., gave an update on Global Polo TV’s plans to transition to a subscription-based platform. She stated that beginning November 3, 2020, GPTV will roll out three polo passes ranging from \$49.99 - \$175.00 for 2021 USPA Live Games. The premium polo pass, which has a value of \$225.00, will be free to all USPA playing and lifetime members and the polo pass, which has a value of \$75.00, will be free for all USPA Social Members. The GAUNTLET OF POLO® Pass will exclusively include the top three USPA tournaments and have a value of \$150.00. The goal is to continue to offer on-demand content, player interviews and horse stories for free to all current subscribers that are not interested in purchasing a polo pass. Currently the platform has over 8,000 subscribers (25% of them USPA Members) and has had high engagement during times of no polo. The Global Polo TV platform offers custom content offerings with USPA Vault games, Polo News and other inside polo stories. For more information visit [globalpolo.com](#).

USPA Polo Development, LLC

Over the past year and a half to two years, the committees of the USPA Polo Development, LLC have been going through program-specific strategic planning discussions and implementation. On Wednesday October 7, Polo Development LLC presented the key points of the strategic planning efforts, goals and objectives moving forward into 2021 and beyond.

Highlights from this presentation include:

In the Polo Development Initiative (PDI) Committee, the presentation homed in on the impact the PDI program has made on club infrastructure, specifically arena developments and enhancements. Moving forward, the PDI Committee, under the leadership of Chairman Bob McMurtry, look to help support new strategic opportunities at the club level such as instructor/academy development and the continual promotion of regional cooperative efforts such as the Chicago Polo Association.

Team USPA Chairman, Mason Wroe, discussed how the Team USPA program is on track with the scale down of the number of participants in the program with a benchmark of achieving a 4- to 5-goal handicap by 21-22 years of age. During the summer, the Committee began having discussions on a female-specific development track and will begin the strategic planning process for this initiative in the first part of 2021.



National Youth Tournament Series Qualifier at Aiken Polo Club - Hope Arellano prepares for a nearside as Reagan Leitner hustles to defend. ©Pam Gleason

Ms. Chrys Beal, Junior Polo Committee Chair, briefly discussed plans to play the 2020 National Youth Tournament Series Championship® in Florida in early 2021. The Junior Polo Committee continues to work on plans for a Junior U.S. Open Polo Championship. The Board approved revisions to the NYTS Tournament Conditions for 2021.

The Intercollegiate/Interscholastic (I/I) Committee met on Wednesday, October 7, led by I/I Chair Liz Brayboy. Ms. Brayboy reviewed the I/I Strategic Planning process that occurred in the spring and summer of 2020 and the outcome of a new I/I committee structure. The new structure includes three sub-groups, each led by its own chair: I/I Tournaments & Regular season, chaired by Cindy Halle; I/I Funding & Awards, chaired by Miranda Luna; and I/I Program & Club Sustainability, chaired by Liz Brayboy. These three chairs along with the two coaches' representatives make up the I/I Leadership Group. Ms. Halle reported on the 2020 I/I Season as it related to COVID-19, and the cancellation of both the National Interscholastic Championships and National Intercollegiate Championships and the process and steps the committee and staff are taking for the 2020-2021 I/I Season. Additionally, Ms. Halle reported on the Educational Outreach to the clubs that has been ongoing through the summer and fall. Lastly, Ms. Halle reviewed the 2021 I/I Tournament Condition changes and the 2021 I/I Season Addendum. Ms. Luna reported on the new I/I Fundraising Guidelines and plans for a second tier of fundraising grants available. Ms. Brayboy discussed the different working groups within the Program & Club Sustainability group including alumni outreach, horse donation and rehoming, I/I value metrics and I/I club sustainability. The I/I Committee had the record number of attendees at the meetings.

The Board approved revisions to the I/I Tournament Conditions, along with the COVID-19 addendum for the 2020/2021 I/I Season.

New Business:

Mr. Armstrong reported that the chairs for the Armed Forces Committee, Safety Committee and Junior Polo Committee would be stepping down. He thanked Mr. Hilberg, Mr. Norreguard and Ms. Beal for their extensive contribution and leadership on their respective committees. The Board approved all Committee Chairs including: Mark Gillespie as Armed Forces Committee Chairman, Dr. James A. Ulibarri as Safety Committee Chair and Tiger Kneece as Junior Polo Committee Chair.



Newly-appointed Junior Polo Committee Chair, Tiger Kneece.

Ms. Liz Brayboy was appointed to fill the Governor-at-Large vacancy.

The Spring Board of Governors Meetings will take place the week of Monday, April 12 through Friday, April 16, 2021, and each committee will have a virtual participation component.