

**MINUTES of the
International Relations Committee Conference Call
NOVEMBER 15, 2010**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair John Wilson called the conference call meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. mountain time on Monday, November 15, 2010 with the following members participating:

PARTICIPANTS:

John Wilson, Chair
Fernando Canales
Sid Cassidy
Tyler Clary
Maddy Crippen
Peter Daland
Gregory Eggert
Devin Howard
John Leonard
Tim Liebhold
Mike Saltzstein
Richard Shoulberg
Bruce Stratton
Chris Thompson
Ron Van Pool
Bill Wadley
Phil Whitten
Bruce Wigo
Jim Wood
Carol Zaleski

ABSENT:

Jack Bauerle
Kalyn Keller
Michael Lawrence
Bill Maxson
Steve Munatones
Dale Neuburger
Aaron Peirsol
Eddie Reese
Bill Rose

STAFF:

Lindsay Mintenko
Kathy Parker
Mike Unger
Chuck Wielgus

John Wilson stated that the purpose of the call is to discuss John Leonard's letter "Call to Action" (Attachment #1), and whether to move to the USA Swimming Board of Directors for discussion and vote at their November 21, 2010 meeting. John Wilson did note that at the September IRC meeting it was voted to put a group together to discuss the rewrite of the FINA constitution.

John Leonard spoke to his memo. He is asking that USA Swimming put forward the motion of a Bureau formed from the Five Continental Presidents, an elected elite athlete from each of the five disciplines and an elected elite coach from each of the five disciplines (15 total). He would like a vote by the IRC on this proposal for a new method of selecting the FINA Bureau, with an eye to including it in the USA Swimming submission to FINA for new Constitutional items.

International Relations Committee members commented in support of addressing FINA with John Leonard's proposal and concerns. Comments were also made against the proposal.

MOTION: *That the International Relations Committee ask that the USA Swimming Board of Directors put forward the motion of a FINA Bureau formed from the Five Continental Presidents, an elected elite athlete from each of the five disciplines and an elected elite coach from each of the five disciplines (15 total). Seconded. Verbal vote taken: 14 Yes 6 No. **APPROVED.** Details of votes are included in Attachment #2.*

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Concern was expressed about several coach members of the USA Swimming International Relations Committee not being able to participate with this call, and therefore unable to vote. The USA Swimming Board of Directors will discuss this item put forward at their meeting in New York on Monday, November 22, 2010 at 11:15 a.m. eastern time (time certain). IRC members are welcome to attend and speak to the board. A conference call-in number will be provided for those unable to be there in person. John Leonard's "Call to Action" document will be emailed to the USA Swimming Board of Directors and posted to the private BOD web page. An email will also be sent to IRC members notifying them of the board meeting discussion concerning this taking place on Monday, November 22, 2010 at 11:15 a.m. eastern time, and also of the call-in information.

This conference call was adjourned at 12:20 p.m. mountain time.

Respectfully Submitted:

Kathleen E. Parker
Executive Coordinator

Nov. 8, 2010

Dear **IRC Members**,

I have come to the conclusion that the only way to cure what ails our International Federation is a restructure of the key decision making body, the FINA Bureau. I'd like to lay out my thinking for you to read and ask you to relay your personal opinions and sentiments to President Bruce Stratton and Executive Director Chuck Wielgus. (if you will be comfortable forwarding them to me as well, I'd appreciate it, but if not, I will also understand that position.)

The tragic death of Fran Crippen is a direct result of the culture of "go along to get along" that has been FINA's primary method of operation for decades.

Neither the UAE Federation, nor the FINA Open Water Technical Committee fulfilled their obligations to the safety of athletes. The Executive Director was told on multiple occasions by athletes, coaches and observers, that safety precautions in open water swimming were inadequate. He did not take this seriously. As we all know, appointments from the Executive Director to committee members to represent FINA at FINA events are social and political "plums" that he awards to gain political favor and the ONLY expectation that he ever has of these "representatives" is that they compliment the host and speak well of the FINA office. No oversight responsibilities are ever assigned. We all know that that is the truth and the way that everything operates at FINA is to appease and satisfy the Executive Director. The Bureau is dependent on the ED for "favors" and therefore does not direct him or "supervise" his activities, they simply rubber stamp the overwhelming majority of his decisions and accept his gift envelopes. The USA representative on the Bureau, has repeatedly told us that very few of the existing Bureau members ever even SPEAK at a Bureau meeting. This has led to the culture that we now know not only creates unsafe and illegitimate racing conditions for athletes, it also kills them. ***What more impetus do we need to take a stand, than the death of an athlete due to the negligence of the Bureau, the relevant committee, the office of FINA and the local host?***

(I'd like to wait for the results of USA-Swimming's independent investigation also before issuing this call...but the timing of results may well be too late for delivery of USAS recommendations to the Constitutional Congress in January. I'm quite sure that I have the majority of these facts, as they relate to who failed in what manner, correct.)

THE MAJOR ISSUE WITH THE BUREAU IS THAT THEY ARE POLITICALLY ELECTED and POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. Athletes DO NOT COME FIRST, EVER. Coaches are an inconvenience and irritation, and ANYONE who knows anything about the actual sport activity is NOT welcome.....as witnessed by the total disregard of the motions of the Athletes and Coaches Commissions. CORNEL MARCULESCU wants the only information the Bureau receives to come

from him and the Bureau abdicates its responsibilities by accepting this. CORNEL MARCULESCU wants to hear from the Athletes and Coaches Commissions ONLY on those issues that he instructs them to take up. He specifically dis-invites comment on substantial issues from the Athletes and Coaches.

The only solution is to change the makeup of the Bureau. I expect that a differently constituted Bureau will also select a new staff, beginning with the replacement of Mr. Marculescu.

I would like to see a FINA Bureau that would support the notion of FINA becoming “Athlete Centered, Coach Directed, and Administratively Supported.” This expresses the unique position that the sport would be run by those with the expertise to know how to run it, operate it and grow it.

I would ask that USAS put forward the motion of a Bureau formed from the Five Continental Presidents, an elected elite athlete from each of the five disciplines and an elected elite coach from each of the five disciplines. (15 total)

This new Bureau makeup can elect their own President and the level and number of Executive Committee members as it deems important.

This puts the voting power on the Bureau in the hands of athletes and coaches. It also means that every member is responsible to a specific constituency within the ranks of FINA. It means that we are guaranteed that at least 10 members of the Bureau are in daily touch with the real world of their sport. It puts the reason for being of the FINA organization, squarely on the best interests of the athletes.

No honest person can today say that the FINA Bureau is “athlete centered” or even “athlete interested”.

I recognize that:

- 1) This is radical change.
- 2) This will be fought tooth and nail by the FINA loyalists.
- 3) This could well be a losing fight. (and that there will be a price to pay for the proposers of this change....if it loses.)

I also know:

1. That today’s FINA is non-functional...we ALL know that, if we are honest. They are a disaster. Now, quite literally, it has cost a young life.

2. That if the death of an athlete due to incompetence is not enough to make us “take the risk” of standing up for what is right, then what WILL cause us to do so? (and yes, sending people without courage or voice to oversee a dangerous competition is indeed incompetent since it is all about maintaining the cash flow and not about protecting the athlete.

I would like a vote by the IRC on this proposal for a new method of selecting the FINA Bureau, with an eye to including it in the USAS submission to FINA for new Constitutional items.

I have heard some people tell me that “we need FINA for some favors too”. While I hear that, I respectfully disagree.....an Olympic Games without USA-Swimming participation is a ludicrous thought....especially if its’ because of a FINA Administrative Deadline that stands in the way.

We don’t need FINA for anything as much as we do need them to be “athlete centered”. It’s time to stand up to FINA Bureau and Staff about what is RIGHT. I have also heard that this is impossible. So was changing the swimsuit rules. So was getting a handle on serious anti-doping efforts...(Ok, so we’ve still not arrived, but at least we persuaded FINA to take doping seriously.) I don’t believe it is impossible. It will be hard to win. But my reading of the global swimming community is that they see the same issues we do, and if the USA will LEAD, as we have traditionally done, we can win a new FINA organization in a vote in Congress.

And if we lose, and if we pay a price, we still will have done the right thing. I have personally reached a point where “go along, get along “is no longer possible. When incompetence and corruption result in the death of an athlete, we are no longer debating stupid sport politics, we are failing in our duties to our athletes by “go along, get along”.

I’ve had it. What about you?

Respectfully,

John Leonard