

USATOWA Annual Membership Meeting
March 27, 2021
La Crosse, Wisconsin

Meeting was called to order by President Shelby Richardson at 10:10 a.m.

President's Opening Statement

President Shelby Richardson addressed the membership by thanking everyone for attending the meeting today and glad to see there is such a good turnout. It's been a long year with the pandemic. The Association and teams should prepare as if we are having a season since we do not know anything for sure. Let's prepare and get ready to go safely to events. Even though this last year we did not have any tournaments going, the Association was active. One of the things we did is take the DJ's approved vest and found someone who could make these vests and will continue making them going forward. I was hoping to have the finished product here today, but he is finishing up our women's vest and then will start on the men's. Bill Gallagher has a sample vest here today using the pattern from the Rule Book. We will discuss more on the Rule Book later which Herb Warren has finished. We ordered a stamp to use at weigh-ins. We got the mechanics of the scale situated and everything is up to date. Joe Hunter and Dave Kruse came up with guidelines for COVID that we need to discuss later today. All of these items will be discussed as we go through today's agenda. We haven't been sitting idle, but have not been able to do as much as we would have liked due to the pandemic. I look forward to conversing and comparing ideas today. It is nice to see everybody after so long at being stuck in the house. We will get started and the first thing on our agenda is the Secretary's minutes from last year.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Kim Warren read the minutes from the 2019 Annual Membership Meeting. Motion by Herb Warren to accept the minutes. Seconded by Joe Hunter. Motion carried.

Due to the COVID pandemic, the membership numbers are the same as 2019. They are as follows for voting purposes today:

Mt Vernon:	15 + 2 Lifetime
Power Train:	11
Muddy River:	18
Oregon:	13 + 2 Lifetime
DJ's:	29 + 3 Lifetime
Girls Love Dirt:	1 + 2 Lifetime
Independent:	Keenan Campbell, Katie Campbell, Jake Hammel, Alexis Harris, Bruce Ebnet
Other Lifetime:	Herb Warren, Kim Warren, Harold Heindel, Larry Heindel

President Richardson asked Loren Long and Joel Larson to collect votes and count when we get to the Officer Nominations on the agenda.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tim Feller presented a spreadsheet of the breakdown of expense and income totals to the membership. Current checking account balance is \$8,519.16 and CD's at \$16,910.76.

Motion by Herb Warren to approve the Treasurer's Report. Seconded by Loren Long. Motion carried.

Vice President's Report

Discussion on outdoor events for 2021. Currently, these are the tentative dates and locations.

06/12/21	Greeley, Iowa
07/10/21	Monticello, Wisconsin
07/24/21	Monroe, Wisconsin (Depending on Nationals bid)
08/14/21	Tug Fest / Illinois & Iowa
08/28 or 29	Princeton, Illinois (Depending on Nationals bid)
09/12/21	Princeton, Illinois (Sunday)
09/25/21	New Glarus, Wisconsin
10/9 or 10	Mt Vernon, Wisconsin-Celebrating 175 th Anniversary of Mt Vernon. (Depending on decision of Mt Vernon's Board)

Due to a conflict, the decision was made to remove the August 14th tournament in Irishfest-La Crosse, Wisconsin this year. Joe Hunter talked to the committee and they are excited to have teams attend in 2022.

The Royal Air Force is coming over for two weekends in August and will be here for Tug Fest on August 14th. We would like to create another event while they are visiting. President Richardson is talking to the Belleville Community Club for a possible pull on Saturday, August 7th.

There is also a team from Northern Ireland coming over in October. While they are here, we will try to schedule another competition for them around the Mt Vernon event.

Insurance for Events . Treasurer Tim Feller needs a minimum of a 30 day lead time to submit a tournament schedule to the insurance agent. Dave Kruse confirmed the Greeley, Iowa event on June 12th is a definite date for the first USATOWA sanctioned pull of the season. For anyone having an event, if you find out it is being cancelled, please inform Tim before the end of April. He will send a list to the insurance agent around May 1st and receive a quote back.

Sanction fees for the tournaments. Please send a sanctioned fee check to Treasurer Tim Feller a few weeks before the scheduled event if you know the tournament is definitely on. Should an event get cancelled, a refund check will be issued.

National bids. All bids should be submitted to Vice President Joe Hunter by April 15th and a decision by the Executive Board will be made after that.

- One bid was received from Mt. Vernon to be held at the Green County Fairgrounds in Monroe, Wisconsin on July 24, 2021.
- Keenan Campbell is working on a bid, to be sponsored by the Bureau County Fair and Princeton Tug of War for August 28, 2021.

International Report

International Representative Bill Gallagher provided the membership with written reports and documents containing TWIF Congress proposals and questions, Doping, and Tenders for future championships.

Results of Congress 2019 proposals:

- The proposals that passed include changing the juniors age limit to include 14-18 year old's, the u23 age limits changed to 16-22 and the senior men category dropped their age limit to 16 years to match the senior women.
- The men's senior 720 kg class was dropped.
- In future championships the mixed class will not be put together with the heaviest class on the program.

Upcoming Championships. There are no European Championships, these were changed to World:

2021	World Outdoor Championships	September 15-19	Gexto, Spain
2022	World Indoor Championships	February 24-27	Singapore
2022	The World Games	July 14-16	Birmingham, USA
2022	World Outdoor Championships	September 14-18	Holten, Netherlands
2023	World Outdoor Championships	August 31-September 3	Sursee, Switzerland
2024	World Outdoor Championships	Dates TBD	Mannheim, Germany

We hope to have a communication soon on whether or not the 2021 World Championships can be held. Bill will keep us informed as this situation is updated.

In regards to COVID and traveling overseas to championships or a qualifier, decisions/requirements will have to be made off of the feedback from Congress. USATOWA will prepare as if teams are going over.

There were three proposals for TWIF Congress 2021 as follows:

1. Proposed by England.

Protective Clothing and belts. Clothing or elasticated, with a Velcro fastening, used to protect the skin may be worn under the sport clothing subject to the judge's approval. No construction may be attached to clothing or belt. If a protective rigid belt is worn, the lumbar support should be in the correct position with the centre of the lumbar support in the centre of the back and the buckle at the front. When worn, either inside or outside of the sport clothing, the belt should not be moved from its original position, if the belt is seen to be worn incorrectly (loose enabling movement), this will be classed as an infringement (locking). This may result in a caution. **It is the puller's responsibility to ensure that the belt is worn correctly for this not to occur. Under no circumstances will the rope be permitted to run BETWEEN the protective clothing or belt and the**

puller's body. Any protective clothing and/or belt should be made available for inspection by a judge at any time during a tournament.

The lumbar support should not exceed a third of the length of the belt and each of the sections either side of the lumbar support should be approximately equal. The lumbar support should not be any wider than 150mm and the sections either side no wider than 60mm.

Reason for permitting a rigid belt outside of the sport clothing: It is felt that lumbar support is important for pullers to avoid any damage to the spine, thus avoiding any potential injury claims against TWIF, (as is happening in World Rugby due to neck injuries resulting in dementia).

- As per the verbal agreement of the USATOWA Membership in attendance at today's meeting, International Representative Bill Gallagher will 'accept' this proposal.

2. Proposed by South Africa.

Awards presented at Close Competitions (page 35 of Organisers' Manual). The current prescript is that for the Closed Competition, every team that participates, must get an Award, indicating its position during the competition.

It is proposed that Awards for the Closed competition, ALSO be limited to four awards only (as it is currently prescribed for the Open competition). This implies that only those teams that participated in the finals, will get awards (no's 1 to 4).

Motivation: To procure Awards for a TWIF Championship, is a costly affair. During the 2018 World Championships, quite a number of countries did NOT bother to come and collect their awards, resulting in a financial loss for the organizing country. In addition to this, it is difficult to correctly determine the number of Awards to be procured beforehand.

To limit the number of Awards/Trophies to four in the case of the Closed competition as well, will not only lead to eliminating uncertainty regarding the number of Awards to be made, but will also result in a cost saving. This cost saving might even be used to procure higher value Awards.

- As per the verbal agreement of the USATOWA Membership in attendance at today's meeting, Bill will 'accept' this proposal.

3. Proposed by Belgium.

Promotion of Inter-regional junior tug of war events. To promote mid-level junior tug of war, between TWIF top-level and National base-level. TWIF can provide a maximum amount of £5,000 a year for interregional junior tournaments. Each full member of TWIF may submit a project 6 months before the start of the event. (This proposal included a breakdown of project requirements and how the budget would be divided).

- As per the verbal agreement of the USATOWA Membership in attendance at today's meeting, it is left up to Bill's discretion on how to vote.

Tenders for future Championships:

WIC 2024	Sweden
EOC 2025	England, Sweden
WIC 2026	Chinese Taipei
WOC 2026	Italy, South Africa, Sweden (to be voted on before EOC 2025)
EOC 2027	Italy

As per verbal agreement of the USATOWA Membership in attendance at today's meeting, Bill will vote for Sweden for the EOC 2025. And per verbal agreement, Bill will vote for Italy for the WOC 2026.

Doping Control. TWIF has adopted their Anti-Doping Rules (ADRs) 2021. These were published on the TWIF website January 1, 2021 and must be ratified by USATOWA at this meeting. They also approved the Data Protection and Privacy Policy which we have signed.

It is extremely important to go to the TWIF website and get familiar with the Doping section. Everyone is subject to testing (athletes, coaches and trainers). There is a link to click on for over the counter medications and banned substances. However, it is best to get approval for all medications whether they be prescribed or over the counter to hopefully prevent a positive test. You will need to fill out a TUE Form (exemption form) which has to be approved by TWIF or National Doping Agency at least 30 days prior to the event. If someone needs a medication/prescription a week or two before the event, you can submit an emergency form to TWIF.

- If you get a positive test, you are banned for two years if it is unintentional, four years if intentional.
- If a team has two positive tests at a championship, they can target test the whole team. If an individual tests positive, the whole team loses any medals or points accumulated.

Motion by Bill Gallagher to accept TWIF 2021 anti-doping rules as written. Seconded by Herb Warren. Motion carried.

Chief Judge's Report

We went through the judges that are eligible and have provided a handout with a list of the current judges. Some of these people will need to take a refresher course. This would also be good timing to push some of our younger members to take the Judges Course. If you are interested, please contact President Richardson about taking the Judges Course.

Herb Warren got the USATOWA Rule Book updated and finished. A special thanks from President Richardson to him for doing this and getting it done. It is printed and set up in a 3-ring binder so when TWIF adjusts rules, we can easily update; make copies, 3 hole punch and replace pages. The judges can keep all pertinent information in this binder concerning judging and individuals. Herb mentioned to the membership, he had one smaller size Rule Book printed for his own use, 5½ x 8½ (using his own monies which was just under \$10). If interested in getting a smaller copy printed, please see Herb to view the sample and get a cost estimate. The more copies printed, the cost goes down. Currently, for 10 copies with no color the cost would be around \$6.00 each.

TWIF has come out with a new rule book for 2021 which is not being mailed out until Fall. There are very few rule changes. If anyone is interested in a judging instruction DVD, President Richardson has a copy that may be "borrowed" (it does need to be returned). This gives an idea of what goes on with judging. Each Club that has a judge on their team, utilize them during practices to get them used to calling cautions. This will also help to get teams used to having cautions called on themselves as well. Or if you know a person not on your team but is a judge, invite them to your practice. The only way we are all going to get better is if we all work together.

The TWIF Technical Committee sent a proposal to the TWIF Executive Committee to add two anchor judges at World Championships. There would be five judges: Center, 2 side judges and 2 anchor judges. The two anchor judges would be added to prevent the anchor from moving the rope to an illegal position or using an improper vest. They would also have the ability to call cautions. The anchor vests and boots will be checked at weigh-ins and tagged accordingly. These added judges will confirm all anchor vests are tagged properly before taking the field. If a puller removes the tag from the approved vest and puts it on an old or cheating vest, the vest will be confiscated and not given back until the end of the tournament. It would be the responsibility of the judge to check the vest every time that anchor comes out.

By-law – Olympic Report

Updates for this section were covered under World Championship.

Youth Teams Report

We would like to get something going with Youth teams by creating a weight class this year and see what kind of participation develops. The age limit is not set in stone but could be anywhere from 10 or 11 years old to 18. Possibly a weight class for 10 to 12 years old and then a high school class.

There was a discussion on awards for the youth teams and providing incentives to keep them involved. We have approximately 1,000 USATOWA patches. A patch could be given to each puller and a bar or pin with the year or something along that nature that they can build on each year. The patch could be sewn on a tug of war jacket or jersey.

Loren Long is the chairman of the youth committee and has been working mainly by himself. Moving forward, it is agreed one person from every Club will assist with helping put together these youth teams. If a team doesn't provide a volunteer to help Loren, President Richardson will assign people.

Equipment Report

The Association has purchased a new laptop for the Secretary. The former laptop and two camcorders are currently for sale and will be noted (with pictures) in the newsletter coming out in May, 2021. The laptop has an old program on it and has not been used lately and the camcorders are lightly used. If there is any interest, please contact President Richardson and a price will be negotiated.

The meter-head and scale have been gone through and are working fine. Upon inspection, the meter-head had loose wires causing an issue and the scale required heavier wires for the elbow connection to the weigh bars. It was good news nothing major needed to be fixed.

We currently have two tents. The third tent was sent back and is being replaced since it had incorrect printed lettering on it.

Promotional Report

We are looking to create an amateur weight class by working with cross fit gyms to get more people interested and involved. Even if we had two teams at Nationals, that would be sixteen more people to compete. Possibly a co-ed, all men or all women. We would want to keep them in tennis shoes, no boots. President Richardson is working on putting together a flyer. If you have a cross fit gym in your area, talk to them about throwing together a team. Hopefully down the line it will evolve into something else and keep growing.

Web Site, Newsletter Report

There will be a newsletter released in May. President Richardson has been keeping the facebook page active with a lot of information. Every Club has somebody on facebook that has access to the information so Clubs should be communicating and working with each other to keep up to date.

Ethics/Disciplinary Report

There is nothing to report at this time, other than the Code of Conduct is in the Rule Book.

Membership Report

Please get your membership information into Secretary Kim Warren, money to Treasurer Tim Feller. If you are at an event, contact Kim or Tim first and if they are not available then either Vice President Joe Hunter or President Shelby Richardson. It is important to turn in your memberships as soon as possible as it makes everything run a lot smoother. We do have a policy that 2 days prior to the competition/event, you must have the membership form submitted. This policy has not been followed at all and with the secretary getting information late, it makes a mess at weigh ins. Whoever the secretary is, they should be able to look at their notes and have an accurate, paid current Club list when weighing in on the day of the event. This goes back on to the Clubs. Get your memberships in and get it done two days prior to the event. We would hate to turn somebody away.

New Business

- Motion by Shelby Richardson: No proposal passed or failed can be brought forward to the Annual meeting agenda for two years unless brought forward by the Executive Board.

What this means, and it is a TWIF rule also, is if we make a ruling here and it passes it will not be changed for two years. It has been confusing over the years to keep up with all the changes.

Seconded by Herb Warren. Motion carried.

- Joe Hunter presented a handout on 'Draft Points to Consider for USATOWA COVID-19 Event Protocol'.
There was discussion on each point. Joe will update the document to what was agreed to following the lengthy debate.

Motion by Herb Warren to approve the USATOWA COVID-19 Event Protocols. Seconded by Dallas Halvorson. Friendly amendment by Joe Hunter: At the Executive Board approval, to

accept the changes that are being made here, discussed and agreed upon. Taylor Bold seconded. Motion carried.

- **Medals for Nationals.** This does not need to be decided today, but we will need to purchase additional medals. Currently, the number of medals that are not engraved are 2 gold, 125 silver and 22 bronze. There are approximately 100 engraved medals. President Richardson suggested the engraved medals be used for the Novice classes. Paper could be printed up and put on the back of the medal to cover up the engraving to be divided out by first, second and third placings. This would help to use them up and not be wasted. Another idea to consider is we currently give out 11 medals per weight class, perhaps we could cut this back to 10 medals since a lot of times the trainer and coach are the same person. So it would be 8 pullers, substitute and coach. The polled verbal consensus of the membership at the meeting was to go with 10 medals per weight class.
- **USATOWA Policies.** President Richardson provided a handout regarding policies for the Association. This was written in 2012 and she is asking everyone to look these over and let her know if anything is missing.
- **Youth Council.** This started a lengthy dialogue to get younger, interested parties involved with USATOWA administration, officials duties, coaching, judging, etc. Parties could volunteer to help on committees or shadow any current officer whenever possible. Read up on Roberts Rules of Order for meetings as well as Association bylaws and policies. It was decided that any Club with interested persons wanting to learn more about USATOWA administration, should contact Dallas Halvorson.

Officer Elections

President: Herb Warren nominated Shelby Richardson. Joe Hunter seconded. No other nominations. Shelby is President by acclimation.

Chief Judge: Shelby Richardson nominated Herb Warren. Loren Long seconded.

Dave Kruse nominated Larry Heindel. Joel Larson seconded.

No other nominations. The association voted and Larry Heindel won the election for Chief Judge.

Treasurer: Shelby Richardson nominated Tim Feller. Herb Warren seconded. No other nominations. Tim is Treasurer by acclimation.

Motion by Herb Warren to adjourn the meeting. Joel Larson seconded. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.