

USOA STANDARDIZED COMPETITIVE RULES

As of March 2016

ARTICLE I - INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Underwater Society of America (USOA), hereafter referred to as the Society, is the United States National Governing Body (NGB) for Underwater Sports.

1.1.1 The Society is a charter member of CMAS, the World Underwater Federation, which is the International Governing Body and

1.1.2 is a member of the United States Olympic Committee.

1.2 The Society sanctions competition by US athletes at the local, state, regional, national and international levels in sports which include (but are not limited to) Skindiving and/or Scuba Spearfishing, Underwater Hockey, Fin Swimming and Underwater Rugby.

1.2.1 Underwater sports are either team or individual sports.

1.2.2 Teams sports are uw hockey and uw rugby; individual sports are skin/scuba spearfishing, fin swimming and uw photography.

1.3 Final authority and oversight of the Society rests with its membership.

1.4 Policy for Society activities is decided by the Board of Governors who represents all Society member Councils and Clubs.

1.5 Activities related to underwater sports are governed by the Board of Directors composed of the Elected Society Officers and Elected Competitive Directors.

1.6 The membership, Board of Governors and Board of Directors meet annually

1.6.1 but may also hold special meetings as provided for in the Society Bylaws.

1.6.2 The daily operation of the Society rests with the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE II - COMPETITIVE DIRECTORS & COMMITTEES

2.1 Competitive Directors - Each competitive sport governed by the Society shall have an elected Competitive Director (see USOA Bylaws). The elected Director shall appoint an Assistant Director and Secretary as soon as possible after election and communicate their names to the Society's office.

2.2 The Society's elected Competitive Directors shall normally preside at all competitions sanctioned by their committees.

2.2.1 If the Competitive Director is unable to attend a Society sanctioned competition, the Assistant Director shall preside at the competition.

2.2.2 If neither will be available, the Competitive Director, with the approval of the Executive Committee, shall designate a person to act as Director at the Competition.

2.3 Competitive Committees - Each Society competitive sport shall have a Competitive Committee. The Competitive Committee shall adopt required rules specific to their competitive sport not otherwise herein provided for or in conflict with these rules.

ARTICLE III - SOCIETY SANCTIONED COMPETITION

3.1 Proposals for Society sanctioned competitions shall be submitted to the appropriate Competitive Director, with one copy to the Society's mailing address, as early in the competitive year as possible.

3.2 The Competitive Director, with approval of the Executive Committee, may approve such proposals that are in the best interest of the Society.

3.2.1 Proposals for National competitions must, in addition to the following, meet the requirements of section 7.

3.2.2 A proposal for a Society sanctioned competition shall address the following:

3.2.2.1. The date(s), times(s) and location(s) of the competition and its individual events, required meetings, awards presentations, etc. The location of the competition's headquarters and the date, time and place of the Competitor/Captains briefing shall be included in the proposal.

3.2.2.2 The entry deadline shall be specified. It shall not be more than three weeks prior to the competition and must be completed no later than one hour prior to the Briefing.

3.2.2.3 All required and appropriate information on the competition and diving area/venues proposed for the competition, to include any and all specific information required in the individual rules for the sport. Charts or maps of open water competition areas shall be provided.

3.2.2.4 A summary of applicable national, regional, state, and/or local laws and regulations.

3.2.2.5 Any special rules or requirements proposed for the competition.

3.2.2.6 A detailed list of awards and prizes to be presented.

3.2.2.7 A list of any commercial sponsors.

3.2.2.8 An outline of any proposed publicity.

3.2.2.9 A list of recommended accommodations for participants, officials, and spectators, including the location, cost, and registration requirements.

3.2.2.10 A detailed budget for the competition, to include sources of income and expected expenses.

3.2.2.11 Each request for Society sanction of a sports competition shall be accompanied by completed USOA Competition Proposal Form or USOA Event Application.

3.2.2.12 A statement of understanding of the acceptance of complete financial responsibility for the successful conduct of the competition.

3.2.2.13 A performance deposit may be required of the host to assure that the competition is held in accordance with the proposal and applicable Society rules. This will be deposited to the Society's accounts.

3.2.2.14 Any required sanction fee must accompany the proposal.

3.3 Excepting official USOA Championships, all players and/or teams who wish to participate in USOA underwater sport events are invited, encouraged and welcome.

3.3.1 All players in these events must be members of their federation.

3.3.2 All players in these events must sign the USOA waiver of liability

ARTICLE IV - GENERAL RULES

4.0 The following rules and procedures shall apply to all Society sanctioned competitions.

4.1 An official competition *Protest Committee* shall be selected by the Competitive Director, to rule on any protests by competitors during a competition.

4.1.1 The Protest Committee shall be chaired by the Competitive Director/designee and be comprised of one person from each Council and/or Club represented in the competition, and all Society Elected Officers and Society Regional Vice-Presidents present at the competition.

4.1.2 All members of the Protest Committee shall be present at the Competitors/Captains Briefing and at the competition.

4.1.3 All protests shall be submitted to the Competitive Director or designated authority, in writing, signed by the complainant, and shall be accompanied by a \$50.00 protest fee, which will be refunded if the protest is upheld.

4.1.3.1 All protest fees not refunded shall be submitted to the Society.

4.1.3.2 All protests shall be made within one hour after the completion of the game, event or action in question.

4.1.4 Upon receiving a protest, the Competitive Director/designee shall convene the Protest Committee, examine the evidence available and call for a vote of the Committee.

4.1.5 Each Protest Committee member has one vote.

4.1.5.1 The Competitive Director votes only in the case of a tie.

4.1.6 All protests shall be decided within two hours of receipt and prior to the start of any event affected by the protest.

4.2 Special photographers, observers and the press shall only be allowed in the water with the permission of each team and/or individual competitor involved, the sponsor(s), the host's Competition Committee, and the Competitive Director.

4.2.1 In open water events, they shall be allowed in the meet area only in special boats.

4.2.2 In pool events, they shall only be allowed outside the playing area/court.

4.2.3 All persons present shall sign the Society's Statement of Understanding, Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability form, as if they were competitors.

4.2.4 There shall be no other divers/persons allowed in the water, excepting underwater referees, coaches judges and/or safety divers, as specified in the rules of each particular event.

4.3 Appropriately qualified First Aid personnel and equipment shall be available at all Society sanctioned competitions.

4.4 Rules, which do not conflict with the Society's Rules, may be set at the discretion of the host's Competition Committee.

4.4.1 National, regional, state, local and/or venue rules may supplement or further restrict the activities beyond the rules of the Society.

4.4.2 Such rules shall normally be part of the competition proposal but may be set at anytime prior to the Competitors/Captains Briefing

4.4.3 It is strongly recommended that any additional rules be provided to each competitor in writing.

- 4.4.4 The non Society rules shall be read to all competitors or their representatives at the Competitors/Captains Briefing.
- 4.5 All printed material and publicity information shall include the official competition title, to include the words "sanctioned by the Underwater Society of America, a member of CMAS (The World Underwater Federation), and of the United States Olympic Committee", the Society's address, the name of the hosting Council or Club, and the date(s) of competition.
- 4.6 The scheduled day, time and place for the Competitors/Captains Briefing shall be specified in writing to each Council or Club by the hosting Council or Club at least two weeks prior to the competition.
- 4.6.1 The day for said briefing/meeting may be specified in the Competitive Rules for each Society sport.
- 4.6.2 A roll call shall be taken at all Individual Sports Competitors' Briefing.
- 4.7 Prior to the beginning of competition activities, the Competitive Director, with the approval of the Executive Committee, may approve changes proposed by the host to an accepted competition proposal. [See additional requirements for National Competition changes in Sect 7.6]
- 4.8 Once competition activities begin, the Competitive Director or designee, with the approval 80% of the Protest Committee shall have the authority to change the location(s) and conditions of

ARTICLE V - COMPETITOR ELIGIBILITY

- 5.0 Eligibility refers to two levels of competitions, events or even championships:
- 5.0.1 Recreational, regional or other events that are NOT official USOA National Championships AND
- 5.0.2 Official USOA National Championships - classically a single annual event intended to designate the national championship teams in a specific sport.
- 5.1 All competitors in the **Society National Championships** shall meet the following minimum requirements:
- 5.1.1 All competitors shall be Society members in good standing prior to their date of competition.
- 5.1.2 Competitors shall be citizens or legal residents of the United States or its territories excepting:
- 5.1.1 **UW Hockey** allows one (1) non-citizen or non-resident per team

- 5.1.2 **UW Rugby** allows up to two (2) non citizen or non residents per team.
- 5.1.3 Non resident teams in uw rugby may play at all events but may not win the National Championships.
- 5.2 All competitors shall be amateurs in the underwater sport in which they are competing. An amateur athlete is one who engages in competition solely for pleasure and the physical, mental, and social benefits derived there from - one who does not intend to earn a livelihood by their competition.
- 5.3 All competitors shall be a minimum of 13 years of age.
- 5.4 No competitor may represent more than one Council or Club at any given Individual Sport competition nor compete on more than one team per competition event.
- 5.5 All competitors and others involved with a Society sanctioned competition using SCUBA, or breathing a compressed gas, shall be appropriately certified.
- 5.6 The Society's sports competitions may involve both individual and/or team events as stated in each sport's competition rules.
- 5.7 Each participating Council or Club shall determine the selection method of their competitors.
- 5.8 The Society requires that all competitors at a USOA Sanctioned Competition be briefed on the rules of the competition.
- 5.8.1 Each Competitive Committees Rules shall specify the process by which this briefing is accomplished.
- 5.8.2 UW Hockey and UW Rugby are played by International Rules with variations as required by the host and/or venue. (ie international uw hockey rules allow for diving in by substitutes but often aquatic venue does not)
- 5.9 All competitors are personally responsible for understanding and properly interpreting all Society rules governing the competition and any additional rules read at the Competitors' Briefing.
- 5.10 All rules shall apply equally to all divisions
- 5.11 All competitors equipment must meet recognized US safety standards and practices and all safety requirements stipulated in International Rules.
- 5.11.1 The Competitive Director may call for a ruling from the safety subcommittee chair on the safety of any piece of equipment constructed, used or worn by the competitor.

5.12 All competitors shall display good sportsmanship during the meetings and events of the competition. Infraction of any of the following may be considered reason for individual and/or team disqualification: use of alcohol or illegal drugs, use of unauthorized drugs, use of oxygen, rough or unsporting conduct, and/or disregard for safety.

5.12.1 Infractions shall be brought to the attention of the Competitive Director.

5.12.2 The Protest Committee shall meet to determine the validity of any infraction, shall provide an opportunity for all involved to testify and determine the course of action to be taken.

5.13 All competitors and/or teams shall complete a Society approved entry form.

5.14 The entry fee, which shall be set by the Host Meet Committee in accordance with any applicable Society rules, shall accompany the completed entry.

5.15 The Society's Statement of Understanding, Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability form shall be completed and signed by each competitor.

5.15.1 The Liability Form may be signed on-line or submitted hard copy.

5.15.2 If a competitor/participant is under 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian shall also sign the waiver.

5.15.3 Underwater hockey and rugby players must also sign the Safety Guidelines.

5.16 The Competitive Director shall have the authority to waive the rules of eligibility if warranted.

5.18 A competitor and or team who does not fully comply with these entry requirements shall not be considered to have entered or competed in the competition.

ARTICLE VI - POST COMPETITION REQUIREMENTS

6.0 The hosting Council or Club for all Society sanctioned competitions shall be responsible for the following post competition requirements:

6.1 Complete all competition publicity releases both during and immediately upon completion of the competition.

6.2 Report and certify the complete results of the Competition, including the standings of all teams and/or individuals, to the Society's Competitive Director and the Society's mailing address, within 15 days after the completion of the event.

- 6.3 Return all original signed entry forms, and Statement of Understanding, Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability forms to the Society's mailing address within 15 days after the completion of the event – excepting on line forms.
- 6.4 Pay the Society's entry fee (which is currently \$5.00 for every competitor entered in each event) to the Society's Treasurer no later than 15 days after completion of the competition.
- 6.5 Pay all un-refunded protest fees to the Society's Treasurer no later than 15 days after completion of the competition.
- 6.6 Make a complete financial accounting of the competition, to include all receipts and expenditures, to the Society Treasurer and the Competitive Director within 60 days after the completion of the competition.

ARTICLE VII - USOA NATIONAL COMPETITIONS

7.0 COMPETITIVE REGIONS & ROTATION –

7.1 The Society desires that its National Sports Competitions (National) rotate among the Society's Competitive Regions. The Competitive Regions, and the order of rotation are as follows:

- SOUTHEAST - Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, southern Texas, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands;
- NORTHEAST - Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and the District of Columbia);
- INLAND- Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wisconsin
- NORTHWEST - Alaska, northern California (from Monterey area north), Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming;
- SOUTHWEST - Arizona, southern California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Texas and the Pacific Trust Territories.

7.1.1 PRIORITY REGIONS - In order to distribute the Individual Sports National Competitions among the regions, priority regions are established. For 1992 the starting priority regions will be as follows:

- SCUBA & PHOTO - Southeast
- SKINDIVING - Northwest
- FIN SWIMMING - Northeast
- U/W RUGBY - Southwest
- U/W HOCKEY - Inland

7.1.2 The priority order will not be altered regardless of a sports previous National site, except that no region shall be allowed to sponsor the same National two years in a row if any other region wishes to sponsor it.

7.1.3 Team Sports require appropriate/adequate venues. Therefore, priority rotation does not apply, but it is preferred hosting moves around if possible.

7.2 **ELIGIBILITY** - An active Society Council or Club may submit a proposal and be awarded a National Competition. Each Competitive Committee may include other eligibility requirements in their Rules.

7.3 **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION** - By February 1st of each year, the Society Secretary shall notify the each Society Council and Club of the priority region for each National to be held in the coming year, and of their eligibility to submit a competition proposal.

7.3.1 Proposals shall be submitted to the appropriate Competition Director, with a copy to the Society's mailing address. If an acceptable proposal (see section 7.5) from the priority area is not received by April 1st, or if no Council or Club within the priority area is eligible to make a proposal, all Society Councils and Clubs will have until July 1st to submit a competition proposal.

7.3.2 If an acceptable proposal is not received by July 1st, then the Competitive Director, acting with the approval of the majority of the Executive Committee, shall have the authority to waive such proposal requirements as necessary to acquire an acceptable proposal.

7.3.3 No waivers shall be granted until this time.

7.4 **PROPOSAL SELECTION** - If more than one acceptable proposal is received or if any proposal is of questionable nature, then the Competitive Committee shall examine all proposals and, within 45 days, vote to determine who shall host the National.

7.4.1 When voting on the location of the National Competition, the Competitive Committee shall base their decision upon the best interests of the Society, these rules, and equality to the competitors.

7.4.2 Within fourteen days of selection, and no later than the Society's Annual Meetings, the appropriate Competitive Director shall distribute a copy of the selected proposal to all Regional Vice Presidents and to all Society Councils and Clubs.

7.5 **NATIONAL COMPETITION PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS** - In addition to the requirements for a Society Sanctioned Competition Proposal (see article III and IV), an acceptable proposal for a National shall address the following additional requirements:

7.5.1 A detailed list of awards and prizes to be presented, including the required Society championship awards.

7.5.2 For Individual Sports, a performance deposit check, made out to the Society, for a minimum of either twenty-five percent (25%) of the expected cost of the National or \$250.00 whichever is more. This check will be deposited to the Society accounts until either the proposal is rejected or the selected Council or Clubs National is completed and all records and reports submitted as required.

7.5.3 Team Sports do not require a performance bid.

7.5.4. Copies of the each proposal are to be submitted to the Competitive Director by the proposing Council or Club. An additional copy shall be sent to the Society mailing address along with the required deposit check.

7.5.5 A complete Website site can be substituted for submitting hard copies.

7.6 CHANGES TO NATIONAL COMPETITION PROPOSALS - The Society discourages changes to National Competition proposals. When changes are required, the following procedures shall be followed:

7.6.1 Prior to 60 days before the Competitor's Briefing, the Host Council or Club shall submit a written request detailing the required changes and the justification for the changes to each member of the appropriate Society Competitive Committee and the Society Executive Committee.

7.6.1.1 Each Competitive Committee member shall, within 30 days, notify the Society Competitive Director of their vote on the changes. An 80% vote is required to approve a change in a National Competition proposal.

7.6.1.2 The Society Competitive Director shall within 15 days of the vote, notify the Host Council or Club and the Executive Committee of the decision on the changes.

7.6.1.3 The Host Council or Club shall notify all Society Councils and Clubs and any registered competitors of the approved changes.

7.6.2 Within 60 days of the Competitor's Briefing, only emergency changes shall be considered.

7.6.2.1 Emergency changes, preferably in writing, shall be proposed to and approved by an 80% vote of the Society Competitive Committee Members and Executive Committee Members present at the Competition.

7.6.2.2 All competitors participating in the competition shall be notified of the approved changes.

ARTICLE VIII - NATIONAL COMPETITION AWARDS

8.0 The award winners for each National shall be determined as stated in each set of the Society's Sports Rules.

8.1 Announcement of first, second, and third place per division shall be made at the awards presentation.

8.2 Where an official Society Award exist, it shall be obtained from the Society and presented for first, second, and third places. If there are fewer than three teams participating in a given event and division, there will be one less place given than the number of teams participating.

8.3 First place will be given regardless of the number of entrants, as long as at least one eligible entrant completes the event.

8.4 All competitors, alternates, and officials shall receive one Society championship patch.

8.5 Teams shall assume their titles 30 days following the National and shall retain their until 30 days following the next National for their sport.

8.6 Various other awards may be presented as approved in the Competition's proposal.

ARTICLE IX - PENALTIES

9.0 Upon completion of the post competition requirements, to the satisfaction of the Competitive Director and the Society Treasurer, any competition proposal performance deposit money shall be refunded.

9.1 If a competition proposal is not fully executed or requirements of the sanction are not fulfilled part or all of the deposit may be kept as a penalty.

9.2 The Competition Director with the approval of the Executive Committee shall determine the amount of any penalty.

ARTICLE X - UNDERWATER ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

10.0 Annually, each Competitive Committee/Director shall determine, for their sport, one male and one female nominee for Underwater Athlete of the Year.

10.1 Each Competitive Committee's Rules shall establish a procedure for selection of that sport's Underwater Athlete of the Year.

10.2 The nomination shall be made on the Society's Underwater Athlete of the Year Nomination Form and shall include a one-page biography, a picture (preferably an 8x10 action shot), and any other supporting material.

10.2.1 It shall be sent to each member of the Executive Committee no later than October 1st.

10.2.2 If no nomination is received from one or more of the Society's Competitive Committees by the deadline, the Executive Committee may submit its own nominations.

10.2.3 From these submissions, the Executive Committee shall select one male and one female to be the Society's Underwater Athletes of the Year.

10.2.4 The selection shall be based primarily on athletic performance with consideration given to other contributions to the sport and the Society.

ARTICLE XI - INTERNATIONAL TEAM SELECTION

11.0 Each Competitive Committee's Rules shall establish a procedure for selection of that sport's International Team(s).

ARTICLE XII - COMPETITIVE COMMITTEE RULE CHANGES

12.0 While the Board of Governors and Membership has the authority to change the Rules adopted by each Competitive Committee, the process shall normally be as follows:

12.1 Proposed changes shall be submitted to the Competitive Director and/or Competitive Committee with a copy to the Society's mailing address

12.2 For Individual Sports: rule changes are presented and voted at the annual national championships.

12.1.1 The Competitive Director shall provide notice of all such proposals, other agenda items, and the date, time and location of the Competitive Committee meeting to all members of the Competitive Committee at least 30 days prior to the National.

12.1.2 At the National, on the day, time and place as designated in the Competitive Committees rules and/or meeting notice, the Competitive Committee shall meet and make recommendations concerning the proposed changes for final action by the Board of Governors. The host Council or Club shall make the necessary arrangements for the meeting

12.1.3 Each member of the Competitive Committee shall be allowed one vote.

12.1.4 A simple majority of the Competitive Committee passes any agenda item.

12.1.5 A four-fifths majority is required to pass any item not on the agenda.

12.1.6 Written proxies from either appointed committee members or a Council or Club President may be voted at a Competitive Committee meeting. [NOTE: Anyone may sit in and express opinions at these meetings.]

12.1.7 Rule changes may be voted via a mail vote by the Competitive Committee.

12.2 For team sports, Committee Rules are proposed and enacted at a Committee meeting.

12.2.1 The Competitive Director shall provide notice of all such proposals, other agenda items, and the date, time and location of the action meeting to all members of the Competitive Committee at least 30 days prior to the enacting meeting.

12.2.2 All team sport councils and/or clubs must also be notified of the proposals, of the enacting meeting date and meeting location - physical, phone conference or other.

13.2.3 Proxies are allowed for Committee Rule Changes Meeting but must be in writing (hard copy or email) and signed by known council/club executive.

12.3 No rule change shall be official until acted upon and approved by the Board of Directors at the next annual meeting, unless advance approval of the change was granted at the previous Board of Directors meeting.

12.4 If immediate Board of Governors' approval is required, the Competitive Director shall, within 10 days of their approval, forward to the Society Board of Governors a copy of the rule or rules requiring action

12.4.1 The copy of the rule or rules needing voting is presented with a ballot to be returned to the Society Secretary within 45 days of receipt.

12.4.2 The Society Secretary shall within 10 days of ballot closing, notify the Board of Governors of the result of the vote.

ARTICLE XIII - SAFETY

13.0 Safety in underwater sport is the primary goal – the first purpose is the safety of the athletes and participants.

13.1 All safety requirements stipulated in *Rules of Play* MUST be met,

13.2 All reported incidents/accidents of any magnitude must be recorded.

13.2.1 The USOA Incident/Accident Form must be fully completed and returned as indicated. *Appendix F*

ARTICLE XIV - AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDARDIZED COMPETITIVE RULES

14.0 The Society's Standardized Competitive Rules shall be treated as the Bylaws of the Board of Directors. They may be amended as part of the normal business of the Board of Governors and/or Membership meetings.

Adopted January 15, 1990

Amended 2/91, 1/92, 1/93, 1/94, 1/95, 10/02, 3/05, 3/06