



**AAC**

Athletes' Advisory Council



# 2020 Impact Report

## **Executive Summary**

The United States Olympic & Paralympic Athlete’s Advisory Council (“AAC”) serves as a source of athlete opinion and advice to the USOPC Board regarding both current and contemplated policies of the USOPC and helps ensure a strong and effective athlete voice in sport governance. In 2020, there was meaningful reform within the AAC that has set up the council to effectively fulfill the duties of the AAC as stated in the Ted Stevens Act and the USOPC Bylaws. The AAC also spent 2020 advocating for the athlete voice within the U.S. Olympic Movement and on the International stage.

### **The AAC Had 6 Key Focus Areas in 2020**

- 1. Professionalization of the AAC**
- 2. Membership and Stakeholder Engagement**
- 3. Governance**
- 4. Athlete Advocacy**
- 5. Anti-Doping**
- 6. Elections for the 2021-2024 Quadrium**

# **1. Professionalization of the AAC**

## **Memorandum of Understanding Between the AAC and USOPC**

The scope and nature of the work of the AAC required more resources than had been at the AAC's disposal, putting difficult demands on its volunteer leadership and membership. As such on January 17, 2020, the USOPC and AAC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with the USOPC to provide resources to the AAC such that the AAC can effectively fulfil the duties as stated in the Ted Stevens Act and the USOPC Bylaws.

## **Hiring of an Executive Director- Elizabeth Ramsey**

The AAC hired its first executive director ("ED") who directly reports to the Chair of the AAC. Elizabeth Ramsey was hired in July of 2020. Additionally, a few months after Ramsey's hire, she initiated the hiring process for a coordinator who would further support the needs of the athletes. Dedicated staff for the AAC allows it to operate more efficiently and effectively.

## **400% Increase in the AAC Budget**

Another major component of the MOU was a budget increase. The USOPC will provide the AAC with an annual budget of \$525,000 to support staffing, projects, and travel for the AAC. Each year the annual budget from the USOPC will increase by 2%.

## **Technology Update: Salesforce & Box.com**

The AAC focused on acquiring new technology to better equip the membership with the resources they need to be successful as well as to track AAC outreach. The AAC acquired Box.com, a document sharing platform, to house meeting notes, meeting recordings, as well as other resources for athlete representatives. The AAC also acquired Salesforce for staff and began tracking communications and outreach with athletes and other stakeholders.

## **Established a Stipend for AAC Leadership**

During the October 2020 AAC meeting, a proposal was passed to allow no more than 3% of the AAC's annual budget to go toward stipends for its six members of leadership. Because AAC leadership dedicates a significant amount of time sitting on various committees and working groups, it was determined they should be compensated for that time.

### **Strategic Planning**

In the second half of 2020 the AAC initiated the Strategic Planning Process for the 2021-2024 quadrium. Current and past AAC leaders participated in the initial drafting of the plan by participating in a survey that identified the top AAC strengths and weaknesses, influential environmental factors and barriers, key opportunities and challenges, and the vision for strategic success. The plan will be finalized in the first half of 2021.

## **2. Membership and Stakeholder Engagement**

### **AAC Representatives**

The AAC has increased engagement among our own members by implementing new streams of communication and improving established communication mechanisms. The AAC utilizes Slack, an online communication platform, an AAC Email Distribution List, and monthly meetings to engage with the membership.

### **USOPC Staff**

To engage with the USOPC the AAC has an established monthly cadence with USOPC staff. The Chair has bi-monthly meetings with the USOPC CEO and AAC Leadership has bi-weekly meetings with Athlete Services & Ombudsman. Additionally, the mental health staff presented to AAC and the AAC met with new Chief Ethics & Compliance Officer and new Diversity Equity & Inclusion Officer. Additionally, the AAC staff communicates daily with USOPC staff.

### **Other Stakeholders: SafeSport and United States Anti-doping Agency (“USADA”)**

The AAC has made more a concerted effort to engage with other stakeholders within the U.S. Olympic Movement to better advocate for athletes. In 2020 SafeSport and USADA presented to the AAC body at Assembly and the AAC ED presented to SafeSport. Moving forward, increased communication with these and other stakeholders will continue.

### **Media**

The AAC Increased contact with the media and implemented a more strategic approach to public statements. The AAC made plans to have a media consultant that present to the full AAC in the first quarter of 2021, provide one-on-one session to members of leadership, and when needed provide guidance to AAC staff.

### **3. Governance**

#### **USOPC Governance Changes**

Phase Two of the USOPC governance changes were adopted in June 2020. These governance reforms included: an increase in athlete reps on all USOPC Committees/groups that impact athletes from 20% to 33.3%, the adoption of direct election of AAC athlete representative to USOPC Board of Directors (“BOD”), a change in the hearing panel appointment responsibility from USOPC CEO to USOPC BOD, and an expanded NGB certification requirements to include anti-retaliation policies.

Phase Three Governance Changes were adopted in October 2020. These governance reforms include changes in the process for filling 2 at-large athlete positions on USOPC BOD and the creation of the USOPC BOD NGB Oversight & Compliance Committee, which reviews NGB audits and can recommend action including sanctions.

#### **Adopted New AAC Bylaws**

In 2020 the AAC Adopted bylaw revisions that included staggering AAC Leadership terms. This change allows for more continuity from Quadrium to Quadrium.

#### **Established Athlete Representation Working Group**

To ensure that there is an athlete voice it is important for there to be 33% athlete representation on all committees. The Athlete Representation Working Group was created to review requests from NGBs for exemptions from the provisions for athlete representation where the Group deems such an exception should be granted. The process is set up to allow NGBs to request approvals in the short term to achieve compliance.

The working group is comprised of representatives from NGBs, USOPC AAC, and the NGB AAC. Representing the AAC on the panel is a member of leadership and the AAC ED serves as staff support to the committee along with USOPC staff.

#### **Passage of the Empowering Olympic & Amateur Sport Act**

After the sexual assault cases associated with Larry Nassar, members of Congress began the process of amending the Ted Stevens Act with a focus to establish more oversight of the Olympic movement in the United States. The Act allows Congress to decertify NGBs and dissolve the USOPC Board. Additionally, a 16-member bipartisan congressional committee was established that is charged with drafting a report outlining possible policy changes that could impact the Olympic movement in the United States. Further, the bill requires the USOPC to provide \$20 million annually to help fund SafeSport.

## **4. Athlete Advocacy**

### **Rule 50**

In July of 2020, the AAC sent a letter to the IOC asking for the removal of Rule 50 from the Olympic Charter or for the rule to be replaced with something more athlete-centric. As a result of the letter and the work done by USA Track & Field (“USATF”) athletes, the AAC was asked to meet with the IOC Athletes’ Commission to discuss its concerns with Rule 50 and athletes’ experiences with racism and discrimination in the context of sports. Shortly after this meeting and a couple of town halls (including at least one held by USATF athletes), the USOPC formed the Team USA Council for Racial & Social Justice.

### **Team USA Council for Racial & Social Justice**

In 2020 the AAC was heavily involved with the USOPC Team USA Council for Racial Social Justice. Moushaumi Robinson, a member of last quad’s AAC Leadership, serves as chair and the AAC ED serves as a Council Champion. Additionally, Greta Neimanas, then AAC rep and current member of AAC Leadership serves as member of the Council’s Core Team. In December of 2020, the Protests & Demonstration Steering Committee developed Rule 50 Recommendations, which were then endorsed by USOPC.

### **Human Rights**

The AAC continued its international advocacy work for an 8<sup>th</sup> Pillar of Olympism focused on Human Rights. Human rights are universal and inalienable; indivisible; interdependent and interrelated. Ensuring respect for these rights in sport is essential for athletes as competitors, but more importantly it guarantees and recognizes as people first and athletes second. The AAC calls for an athlete-centered sports culture that is committed to athletes being seen as people first.

### **Athlete Marketing Platform (“AMP”)**

The USOPC began discussion about a new pilot of the Team USA Athlete Marketing Platform. One of the AAC’s top priorities is to help athletes increase their earning potential. As part of the AMP process, the USOPC AMP working group was formed that included athlete representatives, UOSPC staff and NGBs. The AAC recognizes AMP is in its pilot stage and a new platform, so its impact is unknown; however, it is a step in the right direction towards the AAC meeting one of its main priorities of increasing earnings for athletes.

### **COVID-19 Working Group**

When the realities of the COVID-19 Pandemic became apparent the USOPC launched a COVID-19 Working Group that included three athlete reps appointed by the AAC. The

AAC assisted in the COVID-19 Team USA Athlete Survey that was used to assess COVID's impact on athletes. One thousand seven hundred and eighty Team USA Athletes completed the their responses were used to help shape how the USOPC responded to COVID-19's impact on athletes training for the Tokyo Games.

### **COVID-19 Athlete Assistance Fund**

The AAC was also involved in the development of the USOPC COVID-19 Athlete Assistance Fund, which raised \$1.2 million and resulted in athletes receiving a lump sum payment of \$1,163.

### **Mental Health Taskforce**

The USOPC formed a Mental Health Taskforce to support Team USA athletes, to address mental health concerns, and to promote sustained and holistic well-being of athletes. The 13-member taskforce is comprised of four athlete representatives.

### **Collegiate Athlete Think Tank**

In the fall of 2020, the AAC was involved with the launch of the USOPC Think Tank. The pandemic and budget cuts resulted in more than 100 division I college sports programs being dropped. The AAC supports protecting the opportunity for athletes to partake in Olympic and Paralympic sports at the collegiate level.

### **International Work**

In addition to spending 2020 advocating for the athlete voice within the U.S. Olympic Movement, the AAC championed for athletes on the international stage. In January of 2020, the International Paralympic Committee ("IPC") released a statement stating that International Wheelchair Basketball Federation's failure to comply with IPC Athlete Classification Code could see the sport removed from the Tokyo 2020 Games. In response, the AAC wrote a joint letter along with athlete commissions from across the world asking the IPC asking for the reinstatement of all wheelchair basketball athletes for the 2020 Tokyo Games. The AAC advocated for consideration of the athletes' interests.

In the fall of 2020, the AAC released a joint statement with USA Weightlifting and the athlete advocacy group Global Athlete asking for the immediate suspension of the International Weightlifting Federation ("IWF"). The IWF leadership was negatively impacting the athletes' livelihood while endangering the sport's reputation and Olympic Games' standing. In conjunction with an immediate suspension of the IWF the AAC asked for the IOC to take control of 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games qualification, oversight of the management and organization of weightlifting at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, and for the installation of an independent led athlete organization to represent weightlifting athletes in reform negotiations.

Additionally, in 2020 the AAC strongly advocated for athletes and teams who earned their

spots for the Tokyo Games to be able to retain those spots while international qualification procedures were changing.

## **5. Anti-Doping**

### **Anti-doping Advisory Group**

The AAC anti-doping group continues to track on issues impacting Team USA athletes. In 2020, the AAC worked with USADA, the USOPC and the Office on National Drug Control Policy (“ONDCP”) to continue pushing for policies that allow Team USA athletes to compete on a level playing field both domestically and internationally.

### **Passage of the Rodchenkov Act**

The Passage of the Rodchenkov Act was a huge step for athletes as it allows the U.S. to prosecute individuals for doping schemes at international sports competitions involving American athletes, broadcasters and sponsors. The AAC wrote letters of support for the Act.

### **World Anti-Doping Agency (“WADA”)**

In the fall of 2020, the AAC in conjunction with the USOPC and the ONDCP, secured a U.S. representative to sit on the WADA Athlete Committee. By having an American on the athlete committee, we can ensure that Team USA athlete concerns about anti-doping are presented to those who can effectuate change in the anti-doping space.

Additionally, the AAC released multiple statements calling for reform of WADA. The AAC called for more independence, transparency, and accountability at WADA. The AAC reaffirmed the need to strengthen human rights and eliminate conflicts of interest in the anti-doping system. The AAC supports substantive change and meaningful reform at WADA. Athletes bear all of the anti-doping testing, and National Anti-Doping Organizations carry out a majority of it, yet neither are properly represented in WADA’s governance structure nor the review of it.

To help advocate for meaning reform at WADA the AAC continued its relationship with the ONDCP. In 2020 the AAC supported the U.S. Government pulling a percentage of its annual WADA dues until WADA makes substantive changes and meaningful reform to its governance model.

Additionally, in November of 2020 the AAC joined athlete representative groups from 13 other countries and 14 leading National Anti-Doping Organizations (“NADOs”) in a joint statement to collectively call on meaningful reform at WADA.

For the anti-doping governance model to be beyond reproach, WADA reforms must embrace independence, transparency, and accountability. The AAC stresses that the anti-doping governance model must eliminate conflicts of interest and have independent



athlete representatives. Such reforms are indispensable to the integrity of sport and the Olympic and Paralympic Movements.

## USADA

The AAC worked with USADA in making amendments to their protocols that benefits athletes. The revised dispute resolution structure assigns an arbitrator from a yet to be determined pool of no more than eight arbitrators to hear a doping matter on a rotating basis. The introduction of the arbitrator pool model is designed to resolve cases more efficiently while maintaining due process and fairness for all athletes within the Olympic and Paralympic movements.

## 6. Elections

In 2020 the AAC held elections for the new Quadrium. Due to the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Games the AAC did give NGBs the option to delay the election of the 2021-2024 USOPC AAC representative until after the Tokyo Games in 2021. Some selected that option, but a majority conducted elections as normal.

The AAC elected new leadership in 2020: Bree Schaaf (Bobsled), Greta Neimanas (Paracycling), Chuck Aoki (Wheelchair Rugby), Tony Ervin (Swimming), Mark Ladwig (Figure Skating), and Cody Mattern (Fencing).

One of the major athlete centric governance reforms of the USOPC in 2020 was the adoption of direct election of AAC athlete representative to USOPC BOD. With that the AAC elected a new athlete representative for USOPC BOD, Daria Schneider (Fencing). Additionally, John Naber and Donna de Varona both were elected as At large Athlete Representatives. With the addition of Schneider, Naber, de Varona, and Muffy Davis (ex-officio), the International Paralympic Committee representative, the USOPC board of directors gained four new athlete representatives to join five returning athlete members: Cheri Blauwet, Anita De Frantz, Steve Mesler, Kikkan Randall<sup>1</sup>, and Brad Snyder. That puts the USOPC over the recommended baseline of 33% athlete representation. The current board features 22 members.

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<sup>1</sup> In June of 2021 Kikkan Randall resigned as an IOC member; therefore, she is no longer a member of the UOSPC BOD

## AAC 2020 Recap and 2021 Budget

### 2020 Expense Summary Recap

	<u>2020 Actual*</u>	<u>2020 Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Personnel	\$ 49,302	\$ 93,801	\$ 44,499
Travel, Business Meeting & Prof. Development	48,428	144,000	95,574
Dues, Subscriptions & Licenses	221	-	(221)
Postage, Freight, & Handling	15	438	423
Supplies	83	1,312	1,229
Miscellaneous	472	10,188	9,716
Professional & Outside Services	400	400	-
Rental	12,066	12,066	-
Software, Repairs & Maintenance	1,728	-	(1,728)
Utilities	153	853	700
Total	<u>\$ 112,868</u>	<u>\$ 263,058</u>	<u>\$ 150,192</u>

#### Key Takeaways:

- Actual personal costs were lower in 2020 than budget due to the timing of the hiring of the Executive Director.
- COVID-19 impacted the budget by lowering the Travel, Business Meeting & Professional Development costs as there was a shift to remote environment for meetings.
- The Software expenditure was for the Salesforce license to tracking communications and outreach.

## 2021 Expense Summary Budget

### 2021 Expenses Summary Budget

	<u>2021 Budget</u>
Personnel	\$ 272,156
Travel, Business Meeting & Prof. Development	196,500
Dues, Subscriptions & Licenses	3,000
Postage, Freight, & Handling	1,000
Supplies	-
Miscellaneous	1,200
Professional & Outside Services	111,250
Rental	-
Software, Repairs & Maintenance	-
Utilities	1,500
Total	<u>\$ 586,606</u>

#### Key Takeaways:

- Personnel costs includes salaried, taxes and benefits for the two fulltime staff positions.
- Travel, Business Meeting & Professional Development costs include remote and in person meetings for the full AAC body and professional development for the AAC staff.
- Profession & Outside Services includes \$15,000 stipend for AAC Leadership and \$52,500 in rollover funding from 2020.