2022 USATF National Annual Meeting

Hilton-Lake Buena Vista, Florida

December 1-December 4, 2022

Cris Houston(pa.youthXC@gmail.com)-Coaches Committee-High School/Youth:

The 2022 USATF Annual Meeting, including a complete voting delegation from all associations, marked a successful return to in-person meeting. The time footprint of the meeting has been reduced from previous years. This year's meeting was noticeably shorter and more rushed than in my previous experience. The rushed schedule caused conflicts in scheduling and overlaps in meetings forcing attendees to choose between sessions. Orlando is an EXPENSIVE destination. The $900/funded delegate is insufficient to cover the expenses of those traveling to Orlando. Real expenses are closer to $1200-1500/delegate with double occupancy.

The ongoing battle between the USATF Board of Directors and the voting membership was worked to a mutually acceptable/unacceptable compromise. Both sides remain significantly dissatisfied with the result which is a small indication of mutual compromise. Being that the democratic principles and organization of USATF were the attributes which originally enticed me to volunteer in support of the organization, I am highly concerned at the Board of Directors continued lack of respect for the democratic authority that is and should be bestowed upon the members of the organization it depends upon for its continued existence and success. I suspect the compromises will continue to reduce USATF's influence in Track and Field, LDR and RaceWalking.

The Coaches Committee meetings expressed the national push toward "exclusivity." There was a motion to remove the NFHS (High School) Track and Field Education program as an education qualification to the National Coaches Registry. The strength and success of national track and field and cross country meets like Nike, New Balance and others are a reflection of this trend. High school coaches can take their high school athletes to these meets without additional memberships, or training. In contrast, to participate in the Junior Olympic series, a coach would need to pay for USATF membership for themselves and their club as well as each participating athlete on top of completing a background check and SafeSport training.

Safety continues to be a primary concern. It has been asserted by USATF safety-and-security consultants that ALL meets should have some level of sworn-law-officer presence, regardless of size. At the association level, we need to look at supporting all our club's efforts for safety, and security and adding funding to support the contracting of appropriate security vendors.

One of the most concerning themes which was expressed during multiple meetings was the expectation from the national committee leaders that "leadership be started at the grassroots level". This is reflective of the absence of effective leadership at the national level in many committees. My suggestion that the grassroots efforts need to be given structure and supported by resources provided by the national committees fell on deaf ears.