

USOC to Take over Fencing High Performance Program

Contributed by Craig Harkins
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Athletes from the US Fencing team are owed thousands of dollars by the United States Fencing Association and the US Olympic Committee is ready to step in and figure out just where that money is going.

The USOC issued a press release which states;

The United States Olympic Committee will coordinate and oversee USA Fencing's High Performance Program for the 2008 Olympic Games and will supervise and guarantee the funding for athletes, coaches and programs leading up the Games.

Due to recent financial difficulties experienced by USA Fencing, the national governing body of the sport, the USOC in cooperation with USA Fencing has stepped in to make sure that the programs and financing are in place to sustain the NGB's High Performance Program. Paramount for the USOC is making certain America's fencers have the support and resources they need in preparing for and competing in the 2008 Olympic Games.

The USOC and USA Fencing will develop and implement the long-term solution for the NGB after the Games in Beijing.

In article posted today on SI.com, the now public US Fencing budget shortfalls and mismanagement are put to more detail. The article also implicates mismanagement by the current USFA President, Nancy Anderson and several phantom appointments to committee chairs in which the "committee chairs" did not even know they were on a committee!

Current members of the US Olympic team have confirmed that they were told by representatives of the USOC that they would need to step in to make sure that athletes are getting paid what is owed to them for Olympic preparations. Many of the athletes are footing the bills themselves, with at least one lawsuit having been filed to gain access to promised funds.

The Sports Illustrated article concludes:

An intercession from the USOC was inevitable and will be announced on Wednesday. In addition to conducting a widespread independent audit of the USFA and overseeing funding for athletes, the USOC will essentially run the association's high performance group leading up to the Beijing Olympics. Beyond that the committee will make sure a board is in place that will run transparently and be accountable to its membership. "We absolutely want to make sure athletes have the full support they need to reach their potential in Beijing," says USOC spokesperson Darryl Seibel. "Going forward, we will start to identify where changes may need to be made within the organization."

You can read more of the SI account at:

http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/writers/brian_cazeneuve/06/25/fencing/index.html

For more background reading, the forum threads on the Recall Attempt contains a good deal of source material that is referenced in the article.