



Newsletter

March 29, 2006

2006 AGM

Nationals are scheduled to begin on April 7th and the AGM is on April 6th. AGM agenda items including proposed bylaw and/or constitution changes along with a voting proxy were distributed to each team representative and posted on the USQRA website. For those teams that will not have a representative at the AGM, you can submit your votes via proxy to Charles Ray. Proxies must be received prior to the start of the AGM. Deadlines and fax information are included on the proxy.

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President's Message:

It is with both sadness and fondness that I look back at the last two years of my position on the board. When I first got involved with the sport I always said I hope to leave it as well as I found it. When I accepted the position of President I had no idea of the shoes I would be trying to fill with Ed Suhrs. Thanks Ed for your help in putting them on – I hope the shoes don't smell too bad now.

Over the past 2 years we have seen an incredible amount of exposure to the sport. Growth in the areas of membership, international development, youth, as well as league play, have all seen numbers increase over the past two years. It would also be important to note that the movie *Murderball* has made the sport a household name.

International development has seen the USQRA reach out to Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. Clinics as well as competitions were held in all these countries. While new to the game, all of these countries have caught the rugby bug and are busy expanding their knowledge base to compete on the international stage.

Youth development has been a focus of this past year. With an Under 22 clinic, a division 3 resolution, and the retiring of seasoned veterans, tomorrows ruggers have taken the next step in becoming the best they can be. An under 22 clinic was held in Tucson AZ and plans are underway for an under 25 clinic and competition.

Clinics have been held featuring new ways to reach the membership. Traditional clinics i.e. beginners, intermediate, as well as advanced clinics still continue; however, youth as well as “team clinics” have been a focus over the year. All in all they are helping to excite and promote the sport to old and new players alike.

Team USA competed in and placed 1st and 2nd over the past year in the World Wheelchair Games held in Rio de Janeiro. Many of the new players from these teams are competing for spots on Team USA World Championship Christchurch. As the coach for that team, many great athletes are taking the necessary steps to represent the red, white, and blue. Look for great results in the summer of 2006 as well at World Championships in Christchurch.

Finally, I have no words that can describe the amount of effort, time and wisdom that has been put in over the last 2 years by this board. As stated earlier we all have had big shoes to fill in our rolls. Each of the board members has stepped up and worked tirelessly to improve, promote, represent and govern the sport that we all so dearly enjoy. As you come across them at Nationals and other tournaments – THANK THEM. They have done the work because they love it and want to see our sport succeed. I say thanks to Tom, Ed, Jason, John and Charles you have been good friends and a great group to work with.

It has been an honor to represent you over the past few years. I hope I have left the sport as well as I found it. And remember – Try on the shoes. I know they will fit you like they did me.

James T. Gumbert
President USQRA

Vice President’s Update:

My report is tied with Jason Reiger’s report as we – along with John Ershek – worked closely over the past 12 months.

We developed a marketing plan. The list of what we accomplished with that plan is detailed in Jason’s report. In addition, we wrote a series of flyers with the help of John Bishop and Kevin Orr. These flyers can be found online and help with frequently asked questions, to starting a team, to drills, to fundraising, and to joining the USQRA and what that means to you. These can be found on quadrugby.com under Team Resources, or go to Murderball.quadrugby.com and check out the outreach to players, sponsors, and volunteers.

We are in the process of producing a new brochure for the league and posters that teams can give out and post in hospitals, rehab centers, centers for independent living, etc., etc. We also hope to update the web site’s look and ease of use. A video is also on the burner and could get done by 2007 if we can get people interested in helping.

As a board, we have started a partnership with Disney. On November 10-12, 2006 we will host the first North American Wheelchair Rugby Challenge at Disney’s Wide World of Sports complex in Orlando. We are excited about this opportunity to showcase the best quad rugby in North America. Disney is also excited, and even sent a representative over to watch the Sectionals in South Florida.

As Jason mentions, we also have worked very hard to get quad rugby on TV as a reality series.

Let me conclude by saying that it has been a pleasure working with all the current board members. It’s been a great year and I hope 2006 and 2007 keep that momentum going.

Ed Hooper
Vice President

2nd Vice President's Update:

It's been a busy year on the board. 2200 e-mails later I finished my first year as USQRA vice president. My primary focus for the last year has been marketing. With Murderball's theatrical debut in July 2005 and DVD release in November we really tried focusing on marketing our sport with the movie. Our goals from the beginning were to help increase awareness about our sport to gain new players, volunteers, sponsors and fans. We formed a marketing committee which included Ed Hooper, John Ershek, and Gumby advising. We have met every week since last May in an effort to capitalize on this unique opportunity with the movie. We partnered with ThinkFilms, Murderball's owner/distributor on a coordinated marketing campaign to utilize all the teams across the US to promote the movie and our sport.

We developed an extra web page to target people who had seen the movie and would be interested in finding more out about the sport. <http://www.murderball.quadrugby.com/> was visited thousands of times and generated a lot of interest in our sport from new fans and volunteers.

The marketing committee also helped the Team Rio raise funds by helping to design a T-shirt and wristband. Both sold very well and helped raise team funds.

With the release of the Murderball DVD, we were able to do a fundraiser by pre-selling the DVDs to our membership. We sold over a thousand DVD is in the first offering.

We have talked with various networks like ESPN, HBO, MTV... about doing a reality series. A production company out of Austin called Action Figure is currently pitching the reality series to other networks. We've spent the last three months working on a deal for a potential reality series.

It's been an exciting year and I look forward to helping our organization and sport grow even more in 2006!

Jason Regier
USQRA vice president
Director of Marketing

Commissioner's Report

This has been a busy year for all of the USQRA. Like every other board member, the summer was busy with the marketing of Murderball, followed by marketing the DVD and attempting to stretch our recent notoriety onto television. While Murderball received generally good reviews, we responded to a negative review in Dealer/Provider Magazine with a letter to the editor. In conjunction with IPC, we selected James Gumbert as national team coach from three very strong candidates. Two developmental teams were selected and sent to Rio de Janeiro where we won gold and silver. From almost 50 trialists, twenty-four athletes were selected for the national team program, including eight members of the developmental team.

There were 30 member teams and two developmental teams this year, with Connecticut and Indiana returning and the Arizona Predators starting play. The real Murderball bounce is still in development as New York and Columbus should be playing again next year and we know of teams developing in Upstate New York, DC, Eastern Virginia, Raleigh, South Carolina, Omaha, Billings, Loma Linda and Santa Barbara. Most of our existing teams experienced growth this year as well. 26 teams played postseason with 4 making a timely withdrawal from postseason. Minnesota withdrew from postseason after Regionals for a second time in four years; therefore, they are subject to a \$500 fine for this year and a suspended fine from 2003.

A regional tournament was held in the Heartland North in Milwaukee. Four Sectional tournaments were held in West Palm Beach, Florida; two in Montgomery, Alabama; and Loma Linda California. We are expecting that Kelly Gumbert has put together an awesome National Championship in Austin. The Sectionals in West Palm and Montgomery were put together at the last minute and helped us out tremendously, but finding postseason hosts has become a major issue. To remedy this, the board will propose that unbid postseason tournaments will be assigned on a rotating basis. Denver and Atlanta transferred Sections this year, with Denver winning the Atlantic Section. Phoenix earned their first #1 seed, Portland won their first Pacific championship, Northridge returned to Nationals for the first time in nine years and Michigan qualified for their first Nationals.

Seven players transferred teams this year, while three transferred up, they were postseason eligible because they hadn't played the 2005 postseason. No players requested relief from the transfer up rule. Four players were granted medical exemptions from the games played requirement. Ten international players were rostered. No players were protested under the 150 mile rule. Only one team required a hosting exemption. One player was declared ineligible for failing to play required games and one was declared ineligible for failing to file a transfer request. Two conduct policy complaints were filed: one is pending; and one was resolved by internal discipline by the player's team.

Rulings were made on a number of front ends in conjunction with the IWRP and our equipment committee and the referee's committee made a ruling on players grasping the ball with their legs. The RACs were asked in November to advise teams that legal chairs are a player's responsibility. Still, several illegal chairs were identified at a number of the Sectionals. We will need to address the role of referees in equipment checks for the future.

Overall, the league and sport are strong and poised to get stronger. Several club teams have wins over major international powers and competition was strong all year. Keys to success in the future will be keeping our enthusiasm up and taking responsibility for our sport.

Tom Hamill
Commissioner

Treasurer's Report

The marketing committee continues to work with Action Figure and At It production companies to find a new home for a reality television series based on our sport, as A&E has decided not to pursue this project any longer due to low ratings of the premiere of the film on their network.

Thank you to the post season hosts this year, Dan Lehman, John Bishop, Coratio Vinson, RJ Bunnell and Kelly Gumbert. We couldn't have done it without all of you.

Post season sponsorship was good once again. Returning sponsors were the PVA, Coloplast, Eagle (chair donation), Vesco (chair donation) and Spinergy (wheels). New sponsors are CCS Medical, Therapeutic Alliances Inc., Fusion Medical (wheels, tubes, tires, push rims) and THINKFilm (DVD donation). Please make sure to visit them at Nationals and to check out their websites for information and great deals. We need to support those organizations that support us. Also make sure to bid on the equipment you want and need.

DVD, apparel, caps and bracelet sales have been great. We have raised an unprecedented amount of revenue this year for the organization. The Christopher Reeve Foundation also awarded us a grant to be used to conduct clinics next year. We should all take a moment to say a prayer for Dana Reeve, who has recently passed away. This foundation is her legacy.

Rugby Store items continue to be on sale. We will have new items available for Nationals.

Good luck to all the teams that qualified for Nationals. See you in Austin.

John Ershek
USQRA Treasurer

National's Seeding

Division I
1 Phoenix
2 Lakeshore
3 Texas
4 Denver
5 Hoveround
6 Portland
7 Quake
8 TNT

Division II
1 OGS
2 Philly
3 Tampa
4 U of A
5 Chicago
6 Northridge
7 Michigan
8 Pasadena

Ed Hooper

Running for President

When I heard James Gumbert was going to step down as President, I decided to step up and run. He has done a fine job. However, Gumbie has a full plate and a big job ahead of him getting Team USA ready to win gold in Christchurch.

My background is marketing, advertising, and organization. I will continue to use those skills to keep the momentum going that was established by this board. We were fortunate to have had the success of Murderball the movie – a major catalyst that helped quad rugby grow. Murderball has positively affected us all. Personally, I think those penguins cost us the Oscar and much more success and exposure.

This is a brief overview of my experience:

- I started playing quad rugby in 1989 and played for 15 seasons. I've been the player/coach (mainly coach) for 5 seasons.
- 1 year as 1st Vice President USQRA.
- 4 years as USQRA RAC.
- Founding player and manager of Hoveround Gunners rugby team in Sarasota
- 4 year member Sarasota Handicapped Advisory Board
- Long time board member of the Arthritis Association.
- Principle and Marketing Director, and Consultant in Hoveround Corporation 1992-2003.
- Founding chairman (1989) of the Suncoast Center for Independent Living, Inc. 8 year Board member of the center.

I can affirm to everyone that we have had a hard working board. But we need more than that. We need volunteers from every area of quad rugby to pitch in when and where they can. We will work with the board and players to expand and grow the USQRA with outreach efforts and making good use of PR, media, and visual resources to accomplish this goal.

We can't do it alone. This is a familiar refrain, but it's true. The task is to get committed people working toward our goals. The more we get, the more that we will accomplish for our sport.

I would like to see an Advisory Board created in conjunction with the reestablishment of the Developmental Committee to deal with specific developmental projects. The Advisory Board would consist of sponsors, volunteers, and perhaps representatives of the referees and classification committees. This board need not meet every month, but could meet bimonthly and conduct much of its business via email.

It is also a goal of our board to find enough money to hire an Executive Director. The idea is to have someone who works full time for us to handle a lot of the USQRA business, including finding the funding for his/her own salary and money to help promote and develop quad rugby both here and internationally.

Those are our goals. If I am President, I will continue the work we started. But we need workers. We need people who want to pitch in and make a difference. Murderball opened a lot of doors. We must not let those doors close. Help us grow this great, great sport.

Bob Crandall

I respectfully announce my candidacy for the position of USQRA Secretary. I have been involved with quad rugby since 1995 and a member of an active team since 1999. I have been a player, team representative and tournament director for club level, regional and sectional tournaments. I served as RAC of Heartland North for four years and since moving to Montana have stayed involved in the USQRA by lending a hand in updating the quadrugby.com web site. My involvement with wheelchair sports goes back thirty years. I played many years on various basketball teams and competed in NWAA track and field for several years. While a member of the Eugene, OR Lowrider Wheelchair Sports Club, I served a term as club president, was tournament director of NWBA sanctioned sectional and regional tournaments, and was involved in fund raising and community awareness activities. As USQRA Secretary, I would continue the current efforts of the secretary to update the player database while transferring all records to electronic media. I will endeavor to assist the other members of the Board of Directors in keeping the USQRA membership informed of on going issues and upcoming events in the USA and other countries around the world. I will actively pursue the duties of the USQRA Secretary.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Bob Crandall

North Atlantic RAC Report

3 teams officially rostered this season, Maine, Philly, Connecticut although New York attended 2 tournaments as a team.

Three tournaments held in the region. Beast of the East, Connecticut Classic and the Brockton Brawl.

First 6 point tournament held in Brockton which appeared to be a success. Lot's of new players in the region that got more court time then at other tournaments.

I think the Murderball movie brought a lot of old ruggers and new quads back out on the court. There was an influx of veteran players coming back out to practice in Brockton and Connecticut.

Only two teams went to Sectionals, Maine & Philly, although CT showed a late interest in attending. Philly went on to DII Nationals.

Good luck!!!

New league (NQRL) is forming within the region. Details are not worked out yet but the league is basically going to consist of monthly one day tournaments within the region which will allow new players and bench players a better chance to get court time. One day events will make it less expensive and more viable for those that can travel 3-4 hours. Teams will be balanced by shuffling players around to make the best teams for that day. You don't have to attend these tournaments as an entire team (although teams are allowed to sign up) which will make it easier for the dedicated player that doesn't mind to travel a bit a chance for more court time. Lots of details are still in the process of being worked out. We had our first meeting on 3/28 with reps from 3 teams attending as well as Bob Lopez representing the referees. Lots more coming on this in the months ahead.

4 teams are hoped to be rostered within the USQRA next season.

2 new Level I classifiers in the region. Kim Gorham & Louise Sarofeen.

Referee clinic planned for late summer.

Hopes for a beginners/intermediate player clinic within the region.

Bill Bouffard

Mountain West RAC Report

Phoenix Heat - advance to nationals as #1 seed after strong regular season. Hosted a 6 team D1 tourney in February and added 2 rookie players to roster.

Arizona Predators - combination of former Heat players with several new players. Traveled to Chicago and Portland tourneys, but withdrew from postseason due to player injuries.

U of A Wildcats - advance to Nationals after #3 finish at sectionals. Hosted 22 and under camp in July 2005, plan to repeat in July 2006. Hosted Phoenix players for round robin tourney in December. Added 4 new players and also rostered a D3 team.

Denver Harlequins - advance to nationals as #4 seed, via transfer to Atlantic sectional. Strong regular season, including hosting February tourney.

Utah Scorpions - traveled to 5 events, fulfilled host requirement by sharing costs with Denver tourney, have own tournament on schedule for October 2006. Continued improvement through season, including first postseason win over Atlanta at sectionals.

Las Vegas Gamblers - hosted own tourney in October, traveled to San Jose tourney but withdrew from post season play.

Continuing issues in Mountain west - need to develop additional officials, need to plan for hosting of regional/sectional playoffs.

Mark Hansen