



Executive Board Meeting via Zoom Minutes February 24, 2026

Meeting Minutes

Remembrances & Personal Notes

- Chuck Buettner was found unresponsive in his front yard and was down for approximately 30 minutes before receiving care. He suffered a heart attack and is currently in the ICU with brain function present but in critical condition.
 - For updates, contact John Bustone, who has been designated as the family's point of contact for all track community members.
- Joe Keever, a longtime Stanford meet official, has passed away. His Emeritus certificate will be presented to his family.
- Sandy Backer, a long-serving racewalk official, has also passed away.

Minutes Approval

- The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously.

Season & Operations Update (Phil Leake — Pacific Association)

- The indoor season is wrapping up this weekend; the outdoor season is just beginning.
- Meet directors have had varying demands, ranging from requesting fewer officials to asking for extensive support.
- Membership has grown, with a notable influx of new (rookie) officials.
- Bill Bartel has done outstanding work collaborating with Scott Phoenix (Oregon Association) on Clinics, and the Cal Track Starters Association has completed all of their starter Clinics.
- The Mountain West Championship in Fresno is the only major championship on the near-term horizon.

Training Report (Bill Bartel — Pacific Training Chair)

- The training schedule has been active, with contributions from both the National office and the Pacific Association.
 - Reno hosted introductory track and field Clinics.
 - Grant High School hosted starter Clinics (three sessions, well-attended).
 - All rule updates were delivered through the National office.

- John Lilygren held a Pole Vault Clinic at Stanford (attendance lower than hoped).
- A World Athletics referee program tutorial was held (lower attendance than desired; effort to enroll more officials will continue).
- A Para Clinic was held at the National level.
- Rick Berman conducted an LDR Clinic, which was well-attended.
- The All-Comers meet at Cal Berkeley took place the prior weekend.
- The umpire Clinic (previously scheduled for Monday night) was canceled and will be rescheduled as an in-person event.
- Upcoming: A Referee Clinic for Association referees is scheduled for April 12th.
- Fall focus: In-person training will be prioritized in the fall to mirror the success of last year's horizontals Clinic (~30 attendees), as the spring calendar is becoming too crowded.
- Bill is recovering from a right knee replacement and expects to return to the field by late spring.

Awards & Emeritus Recognition (Ryan Cowley)

- The Association Awards Recognition Banquet was held on January 24th, attended by approximately 50–60 members (mostly LDR, with some track & field and youth).
 - Award slides from the August Davis meeting were presented.
- 24 Emeritus certificates have been received from the NOC, which has now formally established National Emeritus criteria.
 - Certificates will be mailed or presented at meets as appropriate.
 - Certificates for deceased members (e.g., Joe Keever) will be presented to their families.
 - Ajay Padgaonkar clarified that due to Safe Sport restrictions, Emeritus officials are no longer permitted to officiate on the field.
 - Each Emeritus honoree will receive both a certificate and a pin (pins are held by Ajay).
- A presentation is being planned at the Stanford meet for Joe Keever's family and other Emeritus honorees (e.g., Mr. Hawkes, the Siegel brothers (Jon Siegel & Mike Sands), Dick Iwamiya, Dan Davidson).

Certification Report (Ajay Padgaonkar)

- 3 new officials have been certified so far in 2026 (as of mid-February). The Association has been averaging approximately 30–40 new officials per year for the past four to five years.

- 8–9 officials from the 2025 and 2026 cohorts now hold LDR Apprentice certification following Rick Berman's Clinic.
- Total official count: 262
 - Apprentice: 115
 - Association: 54
 - National: 93
 - Master: 60
- A Racewalk Clinic is being planned for May by Jon Price, with Ajay, Sangram Singh, and Jim Manha organizing a Bay Area session. Localized Clinics are expected to improve attendance.

Succession Planning

- A call for interest in leadership succession (for Ajay's role) was sent out; no formal responses have been received beyond one individual already in informal discussions.
- A similar call for Bill Bartel's Training Chair position has not yet been sent broadly; Phil will issue a formal email soon to ensure a fair and open process.
- A deadline/timeline for receiving succession candidates will be established to formalize the selection and training process.
- Multiple successors working in tandem (e.g., one in the Bay Area, one in Reno) is considered a viable model.
 - Tom Schirz (Reno) has expressed informal interest in supporting the training role in the northern region.

Resource Coordinators & Mentoring (Scott Kostka)

- A mentoring survey was sent to all National and Master level officials; response rate was below 20%.
 - The group believes actual field mentoring is occurring more frequently than the survey reflects; officials simply did not complete the form.
 - Informal, on-the-spot mentoring by crew heads at events appears to be the most common form.
- An RRC meeting is scheduled for approximately March 5th–6th to review results and next steps, with Phil and Ajay attending.
- Ajay proposed a reverse survey targeting Apprentice and Association level officials (potential mentees) to better understand demand. Dennis will discuss this at the upcoming RRC meeting.

Foundation & LDR Report (Rick)



- The Foundation is in a quiet phase; the next board meeting is in a couple of weeks.
- Upcoming focus areas:
 - George Kleeman Grants for athletes heading to Nationals this spring.
 - Youth JO travel fund grants (fast follow-on after the George Kleeman grants).
- LDR season is also in a quiet phase. The first event is a 10-mile race in Redding in a couple of weeks, managed by Ken Hunter, James Wang, Christine, and John Luaces.
- Approximately 4–5 road races are scheduled between now and the 4th of July, followed by cross-country races and remaining road races in the fall.
- A call for LDR officials will be issued imminently. Coordination with Robert and the PA website Calendar is in progress (calendar access needs to be resolved with John Lilygren).

High School / CIF Update (Mike Brown — via Phil Leake)

- The CIF registry (Arbiter) is now required for officials working Sac Joaquin Section meets, as a pilot program, for liability and payment purposes. Other Sections are not yet at the same level of obligation.
- Electronics rule update for high school meets:
 - Meta glasses are banned.
 - GPS/pacing watches that do not allow coach-athlete communication are permitted for running events.
 - All electronics are banned for field events (consistent with NCAA rules).
 - Electronic communication between coaches and athletes is strictly prohibited.
 - Mike Brown (High School Chair) is the point of contact; members should monitor his emails for further CIF enforcement guidance.

Racewalk Report (Robert Hooper)

- Current Official count: 29 (Master: 6, National: 5, Association: 7, Apprentice: 11).
- Upcoming Clinics and events:
 - May 17th — Racewalk Clinic and practice at John & Beth Pricer's home in Reno.
 - June 7th — Golden West Invitational: 1,500m and 5,000m racewalk championship (5K is a Pacific Association Championship). New Clinic attendees are targeted to gain practice experience here.
 - March 21st — 3K racewalk at Berkeley.

- October 25th — 10K racewalk championship + concurrent 5K racewalk + 1K and 3K power walk events at William Pond Park, Carmichael (hosted by Sierra Race Walkers Club).
- Notable performances:
 - Francisco Guzman (Sierra Race Walk Club) set an El Salvadorian age group (60–64) record at the MLK 1500 on the 18th, and broke his own record again on February 15th at the USATF Pacific Association 1,500m/3,000m meet.
 - Karen Starwinski also set an age group record.
- The Cal Berkeley All-Comers meet served as an outreach event for new and first-time race walkers; no entry fee was charged to stimulate interest.
- Jon and Beth Price are also exploring Clinics in the Sacramento area, Bay Area, and potentially Central California (pending the Central Cal Association situation).
- Youth coach incentive program: Coaches who complete the online racewalk course, teach athletes to race walk, and have at least one athlete finish without disqualification in 2026 are eligible for a \$300 award (top three coaches receive \$100 each). Contact: Nicole Goldman.

Central California Association Update

- Central Cal was effectively merged into the Southern California Association by a board-only vote, without full Association awareness or consent.
- The National Associations Committee has granted them a one-year stay within the Southern California Association, with the situation to be revisited.
- A grievance is being considered by Charlotte Sneed and the exec board.
- The Association currently lacks the infrastructure to operate independently under the new structure. The outcome remains uncertain.

Old Business

Election Policy Update

- John and Dave conducted an initial review in December; work had stalled but was resumed.
- A timeline chart was presented showing key milestones (committee appointment, nomination close, term start on June 1st, etc.) back-calculated from Association requirements.
- Decision: Remove specific dates and references to odd-year cycles from the internal document; instead, reference the Association bylaws directly (similar to the approach used by the coaches group). An example timeline chart will be included for clarity.

- John will share his draft edits with Dave and Phil for review. The revised language will be brought to the next meeting for approval.

Officials' Grievance Procedures

- Current procedures are vague and need clearer timelines, step-by-step processes, and defined recourses, prompted in part by a recent issue involving a shared official with the Track Starters Association.
- One committee member has already drafted a revised Article 7 (Appeals, Grievance, and Complaint), modeled after the CTSA format, which is more streamlined and step-by-step.
- Phil will schedule an offline meeting with the relevant subgroup (Phil, Mike Brown, John Busto, Ajay, and the drafting member) to review and finalize the language before presenting it to the full committee.

Apprentice-to-Association Upgrade Criteria

- A proposal has been drafted (by Mike, Ajay, and Phil) to allow high school meets (e.g., Stanford, Arcadia, Meet of Champions, CIF division meets, Masters meet, state meet) to count toward an Apprentice's resume for advancement to Association level.
- The proposal is intended to be applicable nationally (e.g., Indiana High School Association officials).
- It will be signed by Ajay, Phil, and Association President Charlotte Sneed and submitted to key NOC stakeholders (Jamero Rainey, Len Krsak, Mike Armstrong, Scott Phoenix, and others).
- Phil will circulate the final draft to the board before submission.

New Business

Pole Vault Officials Development & Training Funding

- A significant shortage of active pole vault officials was identified, particularly at the National and Master levels. Most senior officials are in their 70s–80s, creating an urgent succession need.

Pole Vault Officials Development (John / New Business)

- A review of certification levels revealed a critical shortage of active pole vault officials:
 - Only 8 masters-level officials exist across the association, but several do not actively work pole vault.
 - Among those who do, the youngest active master is 62; most are in their 70s–80s.
 - Only ~3 national-level officials regularly work pole vault.
- Actions already taken by John:
 - Targeted ~142 apprentices without a declared specialty; received 9 responses.

- Held a small Clinic at Stanford (3 in-person attendees); distributed a PowerPoint to all 9 respondents.
 - Produced a follow-up video summary of Clinic content.
 - Provided hands-on mentoring at the Pole Vault Summit (Reno) and at the Cal Berkeley All-Comers meet.
- Strategic discussion:
 - Ajay emphasized the need to identify association-level officials who have done high jump but lack pole vault experience, and use the pole vault requirement for national certification as leverage to bring them up.
 - Doug Bradley was cited as a strong candidate — experienced in high jump, beginning to work pole vault.
 - Ajay and John will work offline using the full certification database to identify the best candidates.
- Funding ideas discussed:
 - Partially reimburse officials attending the Pole Vault Summit for training purposes.
 - Explore a Colorado Springs training Clinic tied to an Air Force meet, potentially funded through national-level training grants (requires a written proposal).
 - Reimburse all new officials for the cost of the USATF rule book (~\$12 + postage); officials would purchase and apply for reimbursement.
- Next steps: John will work with Scott, Mike (Bower), and Ajay to develop a comprehensive training plan covering all specialties and bring it back to the next meeting.

Succession Planning

- A call for interest in succession roles was sent out by Phil; no formal responses have been received beyond one individual already in informal discussions with Ajay.
- Bill also expressed interest in training a successor for his training coordinator role; Phil has not yet sent a formal open call for Bill's position and will do so in the coming weeks.
- Key principles agreed upon:
 - The process should be open and fair to avoid the appearance of hand-picking successors.
 - A deadline for expressions of interest should be set, after which candidates will be evaluated and training will begin.

- Multiple people can be trained in tandem (e.g., Tom Schirz in Reno expressed interest in supporting the Reno area).

Calendar Updates

- Rob is coordinating directly with coaches and working closely with John Milligan to keep the PA calendar current.
- John Lilygren commits to turning around calendar update requests within 48 hours.

Action Items

@Phil to reach out to John Busto for updates on Chuck Buettner's condition.

@Ryan to contact Joe Keever's family to arrange presentation of his Emeritus certificate at Stanford (tentatively during the Lori Maynard race on Saturday lunchtime).

@Phil to send Ryan the full list of emeritus recipients typically present at Stanford for coordinated presentations.

@Phil to collect the Emeritus pins from Ajay before any certificates are distributed or mailed.

@Phil to send a formal open-call email for succession candidates for Bill's training coordinator role (within the next few weeks), including a submission deadline.

@John (Lilygren) / @Dave / @Phil to revise election policy language — remove specific dates and "odd years" references, defer to association bylaws — and bring updated draft to next meeting for approval.

@Phil to schedule an offline meeting with Mike Brown, John Busto, Ajay, and the grievance document drafter to review the revised Article 7.

@Ajay / @Mike / @Phil to finalize the Apprentice-to-Association upgrade criteria proposal and circulate to the board before submission to NOC stakeholders.

@John (Lilygren) / @Scott / @Mike (Bower) / @Ajay to develop a comprehensive Pole Vault (and broader specialty) Officials Training Plan and present progress at the next meeting.

@Ajay to share the split Vertical Jumps certification database with John to help identify Pole Vault advancement candidates.

@Rick (LDR) to send out the call for officials for the Redding 10-mile road race.

@Rick / @John (Lilygren) to resolve PA calendar access and ensure upcoming LDR road races are listed.

@Phil to send out an email with the date of the next meeting.