

USA Masters Weightlifting Board Conference Call - Decision on Master's National Championships

7/3/2020

1. Call to order and Meeting Agenda (Michael Cohen)

Michael Cohen called the teleconference meeting to order at 9:00 PM. The purpose of the call is to make a final decision regarding the 2020 Masters National Championships.

Attendees included Michael Cohen, Sheryl Cohen, Joe Triolo, Corinne Grotenhuis, Les Simonton, Van Cramer, Jeff Scott and Jerry Dunne.

Given the challenging situation with COVID-19 and the difficult decision about scheduling the 2020 Masters National Championships, the board invited several additional master lifters to participate in the call to ensure transparency and input from the master's community. (Mario Dispenza, Dianne Crudeli and Lauren Hatmaker.)

After calling the meeting to order and explaining the agenda Michael Cohen handed the meeting over to **Les Simonton** to chair. Michael explained that because he was the 2020 Masters National Championship meet director, he wanted to avoid any conflict of interest concerns. He also indicated that he and Sheryl would not vote in the decision regarding the master's Nationals.

It was recognized by all that no matter what decision the Board made it was unlikely that the 1000 master lifters who entered the meet would all have the same viewpoints.

2. Survey Results (Sheryl Cohen)

Sheryl Cohen updated the Board on the survey results from the June 30th Masters preference survey which gave every master lifter who entered the 2020 Nationals an opportunity to voice their preference.

The options were

- Hold the meet as scheduled in Orlando on September 3-6 with appropriate social distancing and other health practices
- Hold an online meet with further details to be determined
- Postpone the meet until December 16-20 to be held in Orlando and if that was not possible immediately move to an online meet.

The three options were also rank ordered to reflect relative preferences.

The highest percentage favorable response was for an online meet which was also the highest rank ordered preference. At the time of the Board decision meeting the online option was preferred by about 56% and had the highest rank order.

The survey was sent out on Monday morning June 30th and by that evening 500 lifters had responded. By Thursday evening July 2nd when Sheryl Cohen sent the latest results to the Board for use in the Friday July 3rd call there had been over 800 responses which equates to a remarkably high 80% response rate.

3. Medical Committee Recommendation(Melissa Doherty)

The master's medical advisor and medical committee chair, Melissa Doherty, send in a recommendation to hold the meet online. She felt there was no safe way to physically hold the meet and also noted that if even it was attempted it would be a tremendous burden on the meet directors, technical officials, coaches, and athletes. Unfortunately, she was working in her local ER during the call and could not present her findings verbally.

At the time of Mellissa's letter Florida was running at 10,000 new COCID-19 cases per day and has recently moved to a record 15,000 cases per day.

4. Other Factors to Consider (Les Simonton)

Les Simonton also noted a large number of significant challenges to holding a physical meet at this time. Aside from the greatly enhanced social distancing, masking, physical limitations and disinfectant protocols for the meet itself there are challenges getting enough officials, being able to safely travel for both athletes and officials, hotel accommodations and social distancing and sanitizing and multiple state quarantines getting to and from the meet. Many Olympic sport NGBs have canceled through the end of the 2020 year, especially those which are physical contact sports.

Additionally, there would also be significant shortage of technical officials and the support staff to provide the extra required cleaning, monitoring of social distancing, etc.

5. Voting Results / Next Steps (Les Simonton)

The board voted unanimously (without Michael or Sheryl Cohen voting) to move the master's National meet to an online format.

Detailed online format and procedures are TBD /a draft based on the existing USAW online procedures will be developed by Sheryl Cohen and circulated to the Board for review ASAP. A follow-up Board meeting will be booked for the final review and approval before sending out to the master's community.

It was suggested that a special category of records for the online meet (where they exceeded the National records) could be established to allow for recognition. However, they would be in a separate category from the existing National records and would not supersede the existing master's National records. (Separate category based on the lack of drug testing or physical verification of the weights etc.)

It was agreed that an online meet was the best choice available from a set of less than optimal options. While it is not possible to please all the 1000 entrants, who have a variety of desired outcomes and motivations, this option is likely to gather the most support. It is also a learning opportunity for a world

where future pandemics will provide similar challenges and online interaction is gaining tractions across a wide range of work, academic and sporting activities.

6. Next Several Year's Meet Schedules (Michael Cohen)

Michael Cohen updated the board as to the latest meet schedule for the next several years which is still COVID-19 dependent.

- 2021 Nationals in Orlando / 2021 HC Americans in Reno
- 2022 Nationals in Salt Lake City / 2022 HC Americans in Nashville
- 2023 Nationals in Fort Worth TX / 2023 HC Americans TBD

7. 2020 Howard Cohen American Championships – Savannah, November 11-15 (Sheryl Cohen)

Given the current COVID-19 situation, the plan is to wait until the last possible moment to purchase meet related items and be able to provide a full refund about a month out if the meet is not held. Currently, there are relatively few entries.

8. Adjourn (Michael Cohen)

Michael adjourned the teleconference at approximately 10:30 PM and thanked all for their attendance, contributions and acknowledged the extremely difficult circumstances COVID-19 presented for all the lifters, coaches, officials, and the meet director.