

# USFA DIVISION OPERATING GUIDE

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The original “Division Operating Guide” was written and distributed in 1989. It was a collaborative effort of Beverly LaFlamme and myself. Since Bev is no longer involved in fencing, it should assist the confidence of the reader to know that she is a *Certified Public Accountant* and was a Division Secretary/Treasurer. As for me, I have been the Chair of three different divisions, been a member of seven, was the Chair of the USFA’s Committee for Divisions & Sections for seven years, and then served four years as USFA Vice-President overseeing that Committee.

This new guide was prepared with the assistance and expertise of Dana Brown, USFA Director of Membership Services, who also focused in on the Secretary’s chapter.

The Treasurer’s chapter has been reviewed and updated by Robert Dumcum, the USFA’s Director of Financial Services, and the sample bylaws by Donald Alperstein, current Legal Counsel and past USFA President. Appendix B, *Care of Equipment* was written in 1989 by Eleanor Turney, who is no longer with us. She was, however, along with her husband Art, one of the most respected armorers in the USFA, even when it was still the AFLA. I have tried to update her work while keeping the essence and the tone of the original.

Obviously some things affecting the management of a Division have changed since this Guide was originally written, but many things have not. I hope that this re-write will bring our Guide sufficiently up to date so that it will once again be a major help to current Division officers, and an incentive to others to become Division officers in the future.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **CHAIR**

The Chair has overall responsibility for the smooth operation of the Division. The authority rising from that responsibility may be discharged through other Division officers and an Executive Committee, but you know where the buck stops.

The other officers are a Vice-Chair, a Secretary and a Treasurer. The offices of Secretary and Treasurer are often combined. The officers are obviously members of the Executive Committee, but the USFA's Bylaws stipulate that each Member of the USFA Congress (MOC) also sits on it. A Division always has at least one of these, but its size may dictate that it has several (a Division gets one MOC for every 75 members, or fraction over 50% of 75, i.e. 38). It is a wise Division that also elects Alternate Members of Congress (for reasons that will be explained shortly) and if you do, they too are Committee members.

If all the above does not constitute a Committee that has a least one representative from each USFA Registered Club in the Division, then we would strongly advise enlarging your Committee until it does. One of the most common sources of trouble within Divisions arises when a group that represents only one or two clubs takes over the Division administration, then uses a governing model based on, say, 19<sup>th</sup> century Paraguay, and precedes to favor their own interests and backhand the interests of those outside their group. The U.S. Fencing Association expects that those of its members who assume offices within a Division will always be guided by the ethic of doing what is best for fencing for the entire division, not just their corner of it. It is easier to observe that ethic when you can get input from everyone, and members are generally more willing to

accept decisions of the Division administration if they believe they had a representative who was involved in those decisions.

Now, how does one become a member of the Executive Committee? Well, you have to be elected at the Division's Annual Meeting. Mail votes in place of physically conducting the election at the Meeting are prohibited by the USFA Bylaws, but proxy voting is allowed. Once elected, the Chair, with the concurrence of the Committee, may choose to appoint certain persons to it who might bring a particularly needed expertise, but these persons would not have a vote. The only people who do are those who were elected, whether officers, Members of Congress, Alternate Members of Congress, or club representatives. Please note that if no Alternates are elected, then no one can take the place of a MOC who is unable to attend the USFA Congress or the Section Executive Committee meetings; Article VII Sec.3 of the USFA Bylaws makes this clear.

All right, you have your officers and the rest of your Executive Committee elected, so now what do you do? Well, a good first project would be to search for the Division Bylaws. Since this manual was first written, Divisions have done a much better job of writing or updating Bylaws, but some are still behind in this regard, and some do have current ones, but have mislaid them. The Executive Committee has a fiduciary duty to its Division members as well as to the USFA, and it is in a tricky position if it has no Bylaws to guide it. In fact, in a legal sense, it is like playing Russian roulette with a gatling gun. So, if you need to address this problem, we've tried to help by including a sample set of Bylaws as Appendix A. These Bylaws are patterned after sets that were created for both a moderately-sized Division (200+) and a large Division (500+). Sample or no, you should also read the USFA's Bylaws, Art. XV, Sec. 6,7,8,9 & 12. These have to do with Division management and it would be a really good idea to know what they say.

Please note an important feature of our sample: it makes clear that the management of the Division is vested in the Executive Committee. This is required by the USFA Bylaws (good old Art. XV again). Some Divisions have tried to create other bodies such as Boards of Directors to have authority over the Division Executive Committee, but this is not allowable. Your Bylaws could create other groups that report to the Executive Committee, but no group can operate outside of its jurisdiction or have authority over it.

O.K. Having now assured that your administration is organized and in compliance with USFA rules, your next project will probably be the preparation of the tournament schedule for the coming season. This is no easy task, as the number of USFA national and regional events has proliferated. Divisions are required to conduct Qualifying events for the Junior Olympics and for the Summer Nationals DIV II, III, Cadet (Under 16 for this one), and Youth 14. Note that a fencer's age as of midnight on Dec.31<sup>st</sup> of the current season defines his

“official” age for the entire season. We’ll come back to these events in Chapter 4, but for now just know that all other events on a Division’s schedule are optional.

Some Divisions are fortunate enough to have regular access to a facility like a high school or recreation center gym, and some even have a place to store Division scoring equipment. Others have a site, but ask member clubs to each bring a set of scoring equipment. This used to be what almost everybody did, but nowadays, most Divisions own at least a few of their own sets. Unfortunately, that usually means that Division officers end up having to haul the gear to and from competitions, and that prospect has tended to restrict the field of people willing to run for office, so it can be a mixed blessing. If you have several technically certified or oriented individuals, you might be able to form an Armorers’ Committee that will supervise tournament set-up, break-down and storage of the equipment.

The best idea is for Division tournaments to be run by the Division, and on neutral ground, and every effort toward this end should certainly be made for the Division Qualifiers. However, many Divisions simply can’t obtain a suitable facility, so they arrange with their member clubs that do have adequate space to host events. If this course of action is pursued, then it is imperative that the Executive Committee establish some written guidelines for how an official Division tournament is to be staffed and managed, and how results are to be reported back to the Secretary and entry fees forwarded to the Treasurer. Moreover, at least one member of the Executive Committee should be in attendance in an official capacity to oversee everything. We can’t recommend too strongly that you observe the foregoing; Divisions that have simply turned their events over to their clubs lock, stock & barrel have often seen civil war result, with clubs accusing each other of putting their thumbs on the scale whenever they host tournaments. Establishing clear guidelines, and then having an official Division observer there to ensure the guidelines are followed, will usually prevent this sort of conflict.

The Division should be responsible for obtaining the awards for all of its sanctioned events, and it should obviously ensure that the entry fees it establishes at least cover the total cost of them. Remember, that entry fees constitute the primary source of income for most Divisions, so a savvy Executive Committee will figure out the average cost of a tournament (medals, gym rental, officials’ stipends, etc.) and then add something over and above for the Treasury. When clubs are employed as hosts, arrangements must be made at the start of the season if entry fees are going to be shared and, barring exceptional circumstances, the split should be the same for everybody (need we say why?)

Along with arranging for venues, you’re going to have to decide on dates. This task is requiring increasingly adroit footwork, for the NAC schedule isn’t getting any smaller, the Regional and Super Regional Youth structure has been created, and many Sections are conducting their own senior & junior circuits. Top that off

with the USFA rule that you may not schedule any qualifying event on a major religious holiday or an SAT date; nor should a qualifier be held during the NCAA Fencing Championships, if you have college varsity teams in your Division. One of the easiest ways to retain your sanity is to hold Division tournaments on Sundays. Doing so automatically gets you around the SAT dates, as the exams are administered on Saturdays, and although the NCAA's take up an entire weekend, almost all college and high school fencing meets are held on Saturdays or weekdays, so you won't conflict with them. At first glance it might seem of minor importance that a Division tournament conflicts with a scholastic event, but remember that you may be competing for available equipment and referees, to say nothing of fencers.

Division Junior Olympic qualifiers should be held in December or the first half of January. Since you want to give your junior fencers as much development time as possible, November or before is a little too early. However, if you wait until just before the USFA deadline for submitting qualifiers, it becomes harder for your young fencers who do qualify to find an adequate hotel or a reasonable airfare.

The Summer National qualifiers have a little more flexibility, and are usually set in April or May. In larger Divisions, there probably will be enough entries in each category of event that two or more qualifying tournaments have to be scheduled over several weeks, but smaller Divisions are usually able to do it in one day. The trick is that you don't have to actually hold a competition in an event if the number of your entries are equal to or less than the number of qualifying places: you simply list the fencers who show up as having qualified. This often happens in the case of team qualifying, since the allocations are particularly generous.

However things are set-up, a key to holding smooth-running local tournaments is having at least a few rated referees. Longevity alone does not insure that someone really knows right-of-way and Rules (I think we have all seen calls made by long-time fencers that would unnerve the March Hare) and it is a wise Division that puts some effort into getting their fencers certified as referees. The way to do it is to contact the USFA's Fencing Officials Commission. They not only conduct the testing & certification, but can send a highly-qualified referee to your Division who can conduct clinics to train your local people and prepare them for the exams. Even for those attendees who do not wish to be tested, a clinic will bring them up to date.

One more thing that we need to bring up, because it seems to cause a lot of confusion in some quarters, is the concept of tournament sanctioning. To put it simply, an unsanctioned tournament is an uninsured tournament because it is, by definition, a non-USFA event. Not only would anyone acting as an official at such a tournament not have any liability coverage from the USFA, but it is an open question whether an individual member would even be covered by the USFA's Secondary Accident policy. Moreover, the Bylaws specifically prohibit members

from participating in unsanctioned competitions, and suggest that they could be expelled from the USFA for doing so.

So, now that we have your attention, let's talk about the mechanism of sanctioning, and who does it. First of all, a Division is the sanctioning authority for all tournaments within its boundaries except for National Events, and Section senior & junior championships. National Events, i.e. NAC's, National Championships or International Tournaments, are, not surprisingly, sanctioned by Colorado Springs, and Section championships are sanctioned by their respective Section Executive Committees. Every other event must be approved by the Division or it's a no-go, at least as far as the USFA and its insurer are concerned.

How does a Division sanction a tournament? Well, the easiest way is to publish a schedule for the season: every local tournament listed on it is automatically sanctioned. For events that you wish to sanction, but were not put together until after the schedule was promulgated, the EC must approve of them by majority vote, and that approval must appear in the minutes. If you have conducted the vote by e-mail, then make a hard copy of the result and put it in the Division files.

This segues nicely into a conclusion for this chapter with some comments about e-mail and its limitations. First, no one in your Division is required to have a computer, but the Executive Committee is required to make every reasonable effort to communicate with everyone. This means mail, and possibly telephone. Particularly, notice of the date and time of the Annual Meeting must be mailed first class, and with enough lead time so that it will arrive in mailboxes at least 15 days before the meeting. The Division Schedule should be mailed to everyone, and if you prepare Division Newsletters, these too should be mailed (you can use bulk mail postage for these, if your Division has a permit). On the other hand, it is not unreasonable to have your Executive Committee plugged-in electronically, or at least enough of them so that it is not burdensome to communicate by telephone with the remainder. This is especially important for geographically large Divisions, where frequent physical meetings are next to impossible. If you do go the e-mail route, always retain hard copies of all votes for the files, and remember that you are not really having a discussion. In face-to-face debates, people can many times be persuaded to change their positions; in e-mail exchanges people usually just state their positions.

Anyway, the frequency of Executive Committee meetings is a true variable. Some Divisions, with a lot of tournaments and a lot of other things happening may need to have some form of meeting every month or six weeks, while smaller, less active Divisions, or spread-out ones, may get by with only two or three. Ensuring that everyone is communicating with each other and with you is usually more important than how many formal meetings you call for.



Right. That brings us to the end of this chapter. We hope that all the foregoing will be of more than a little help to you as you guide your Division through the season. From here on out, you chair the Executive Committee meetings, work with the Secretary and Treasurer to ensure that the necessary reports are submitted to Colorado Springs, and supervise the execution of the tournament schedule.

We want to ensure that this manual continues to be a help to Divisions, so please let the USFA know if you think that things should be added or subjects expanded.

Have a good season!

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **SECRETARY**

#### INTRODUCTION

The office of Secretary is responsible for the official record keeping and correspondence of the Division. The exact nature of your new duties will vary according to how our Division is run, and whether or not there is a separate Treasurer function; however, chances are that you will maintain the Executive Committee minutes, keep track of membership in the Division, maintain tournament results, correspond with neighboring Divisions regarding Sectional events, and carry on necessary correspondence with the National Office. It is likely that you may also be involved with preparing and distributing whatever newsletter information or general correspondence goes out to the Division membership.

#### MEETING MINUTES

As Secretary, you will be expected to keep the minutes of Executive Committee meetings and any other meetings at which Division business is conducted. This responsibility is a very important one, as the meeting minutes provide documentation of the actions taken by the Division, issues voted upon, expenditures authorized, election results, internal policies of the Division and other important matters. The minutes are a legal document that can be examined by a court or auditor or by a Division member if the activities of the Division officers are called into question.

At a minimum, the minutes should include the basic who, what, where and how of each item discussed and resolved, and should include a BRIEF summary of any discussions or debates that result. They should conform to the agenda for the meeting (assuming that your Division prepares an agenda ahead of time) and should normally be no longer than a page or two. Attach to the "official" file copy of the minutes any exhibits or schedules submitted by the participants, especially listings of actions, equipment or expenditures that are part of issues voted upon by the Division or its officers. If the Treasurer prepares financial reports or statements for the meeting, these should also be attached to the minutes and kept in the official minutes file.

It is likely that no one will ever look at the minutes of past meetings unless there is a problem. Be sure to document the types of things that might be questioned: who attended the meeting, the exact nature of the issue being put to

a vote, the results of the vote (how many “yes” and “no” votes), actions to be taken by individuals and when they are expected to be completed, who is responsible for what tasks at the next event, any changes in Division policy or procedures (date and time of the next meeting, number of check signers and signing limits, etc.). You don’t need to include every dissenting opinion on actions taken, nor should you include long descriptions of philosophical discussions, even though these are often a part of Executive Committee meetings.

The minutes should be written up immediately after the meeting and printed up for distribution at the next meeting, or distributed to the Executive Committee for confirmation and acceptance. The Secretary keeps the “official” copy of the minutes (amended for any changes deemed necessary by the Executive Committee) in a notebook or file that is available for review by Division members or other people who may need access to this information.

Need I mention (oh, I probably should) that the minutes should NEVER contain any personal attacks on individuals or organizations, either within or outside the Division, nor should any comments appear in the minutes that you would not want read in open court.

## MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

The Secretary is also responsible for maintaining Division membership records. The National Office will provide you with a list of members of your Division at your request, and will send you updates as requested as they continually process renewals and new memberships. They can also provide mailing labels for your Division (up to four printed lists or labels are provided free of charge each season.) Processing of memberships in Colorado Springs does take some time, however, and it is a good idea for the Division Secretary to maintain a separate membership roster that can be updated independently, either a simple index card file or your own spreadsheet or database.

Most members will (should) send their fees and applications directly to the National Office, however many fencers still wait until their first tournament of the season to renew. When you accept memberships at a tournament, try to get a separate check, payable to the USFA (i.e., NOT the Division) to cover dues. This way, you can simply mail in the membership forms and checks right after the tournament, without having to make deposits and write checks on the Division account. (This also lays the responsibility for collecting the check on the National Office, should the check bounce!). You should keep a list of the memberships you collect (ideally, make photocopies of the membership form, or copy the information into your file) and make sure that these names show up on the next update from the National Office. In the meantime, you can add these names and addresses to your Division mailing list.

## QUALIFYING EVENT RESULTS

The Secretary normally is also the person who submits the results of qualifying tournaments to the National Office. The National Office will provide a spreadsheet template to document the names and ranking of ALL fencers in the event. Be aware that you will have to report all fencers in their order of finish, and that ALL fencers have to be current members of the USFA or the results of the event will be invalidated. Here is where your records concerning memberships taken at events will be the most useful, particularly concerning those fencers who renew their membership just prior to the qualifying event. (The National Office will check membership of all persons in a National qualifying event and send a list of non-members to the Secretary.)

## TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Although you are not required to submit the results of individual (non-qualifying event) tournaments to the National Office (unless classification changes are awarded), or Section or anywhere else, it is good idea to keep track of everyone who enters a tournament in your Division, as well as the results of each tournament. As Secretary, you should confirm any classification changes to the National Office (as well as to the fencers at the tournament.) In addition, you may be required to verify a fencer's eligibility for a qualifying event based on whether or not they have fenced for a given club or team within your Division.

Whether or not you are physically present at each event in your Division, you should make sure that you receive the following information at a minimum:

- Names of all fencers entered

- Division and club/team affiliation of each fencer entered

- Final results of the event (ideally you should keep all pool sheets in case of a later

- Dispute, but if those are not available, make sure you get a complete ranking of every entrant's finish signed by the Bout Committee chair or organizer of the event.)

- Classifications of fencers participating and any changes in classification earned

- Any memberships paid at the event

Other information that may be nice to have includes:

- Names and classifications of the directors

Nature and results of any protests or disputes raised

Come time for Sectionals and/or Nationals you may need to verify whether or not that "A" foilist has ever fenced for the Hometown Fencers during the current season. Having the records to quickly confirm or deny this can save plenty of time and aggravation just when tempers are flaring.

One other note worth mentioning here is that, as Secretary, you may be the one expected to file any insurance reports if there is an injury at a tournament. Make sure that this responsibility has been appropriately delegated if you are not going to be present at an event. You should ALWAYS, however, receive a copy of any insurance report that is filed and keep your copy in the file with the Executive Committee minutes.

## CORRESPONDENCE

From time to time, you will receive correspondence from the National Office or other Divisions within your Section. Much of this will involve general inquiries or information about regional events that should be passed along to the fencers within your Division. The mechanics of handling this type of correspondence will vary from Division to Division. You may also want to initiate some communication with other Division secretaries within the Section in order to coordinate schedules or exchange ideas for promoting fencing within the area.

Part way through the year, you can request from the National Office, a listing of all the Divisions in the country and the names and addresses of the Division officers. All of these people are in the same boat with you and the other officers of your Division so feel free to contact them for ideas or help or moral support.

## NEWSLETTERS

Ideally, every Division should have a newsletter or some regular means of communicating with the individual members of the Division. At a minimum, you should send a copy of the current season's schedule, along with updates or changes as they develop throughout the year. New members should be sent a schedule as soon as their membership is received.

If you have a regular newsletter, you should make sure that mailing lists are updated before each mailing, and that each issue of the newsletter lists the names of the officers of the Division and how or where they can be reached (phone numbers and/or addresses.)

It is possible to secure a Bulk Mailing permit from the Post Office if you will be sending out more than a certain number of each issue. This usually involves

pre-sorting our mailing by zip code, but can be well worth it in terms of postage saved. The National Office can provide you with labels for members of our Division in zip code order. Details and fees tend to change, so check with your local Post Office for specifics if you think you might qualify.

These days, most newsletters are produced and distributed electronically, but the level of sophistication varies tremendously. Some Divisions have been successful in selling advertising space in their newsletter, either to local merchants or to mail order fencing equipment suppliers. The editorial content of the letter can be virtually anything: tournament results, club or fencer profiles, explanations of recent rules changes or editorials about USFA or FIE actions, publicity for upcoming events, whatever may interest the fencers in your area. The main thing is to try to get as many people involved in producing the information so that you (or any one person in the Division) don't get "stuck" every issue.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **TREASURER**

### INTRODUCTION

As Treasurer, your main responsibility is to protect, control and monitor the Division's funds. If you get talked into taking this job because you are a CPA or a tax attorney, you can quickly scan this Section- just check out the specifics of the reports that the National Office will require you to send in and you're home free. For the rest of you, we are going to go over briefly what you need to know about accounting and "control" of financial information.

You don't need to know double entry bookkeeping to serve as a Division Treasurer. Everything is normally kept on a cash basis, sort of like a checkbook. You will need to sort out each receipt and expenditure of the Division's money to fit into categories so you can report your activities to the National Office at the end of the fiscal year. We'll go into this in some detail in a bit.

The most important thing to keep in mind when you are the Treasurer is the fact that you are responsible for the Division's funds. This responsibility can turn into a legal liability if money is missing or misappropriated or handled in an irresponsible manner. Your best strategy is to make sure you have effective controls in place.

There are two types of financial controls that you need to consider. The first set of controls safeguards the actual funds the Division has. Examples of this type of control are: keeping the funds in a checking and/or savings account, requiring your signature on checks written on the Division account, reconciling the bank statement each month when it arrives, depositing checks and cash promptly after receipt, etc. The other type of control is meant to document the nature of receipts and expenditures, so that the Executive Committee (especially the Treasurer) can show how and why they used Division funds. We'll point out more examples of these types of controls as we go along, but both types are equally important as you carry out the duties of the Treasurer.

### CASH

Cash is the most basic form of funds and, for the purposes of the Division, probably the most risky. Cash can be easily picked up, wandered off with, "borrowed", mislaid, and, once you have it, it can be very difficult to figure out where you got it from, or where it went. For this reason, you should make sure

the Division uses a lockable cash box at all events where cash is liable to change hands and one person (preferably you, the Treasurer) should have full responsibility for the cash box at all times.

Cash coming into the Division should ALWAYS be tied to some sort of written document so that you know how much you should have collected. At a tournament where entry fees are collected in cash, the entry form or list should clearly indicate how much each fencer paid and whether a check or cash was received (this is especially important if our Division has more than one entry fee, say a reduced fee for juniors). At the end of the tournament (or any other event where you are handling cash) you should count the cash you have and reconcile it to the total on your entry forms or other documents.

You should try to make it a practice NEVER to pay out cash at a tournament. If you need to make payments for the site rental or fees to the directors or armorers, WRITE THEM CHECKS! That way, you won't wind up short in the cash box, wondering who did or didn't get paid. If you absolutely have to pay out cash, make the person receiving it SIGN FOR IT. You can get little booklets for cash receipts at any stationery store, or just have them sign a piece of paper listing their name, the amount they are receiving and the reason they are receiving it (e.g., director's fee for XYZ tournament) and the date. This is an example of the kind of control that protects you. If the person comes back at the next tournament and says they are still owed money from last time, you will have their signature to prove that they were paid cash. If you didn't get that, it's your word against theirs as to whether or not they were paid. Of course, if you wrote them a check, you have all the information you need automatically, and you can see whether or not they cashed the check already.

Division cash should never be left lying around, either at a tournament or at your home or office. Deposit any cash received immediately after the tournament, using an ATM or night deposit if you can. The less time that you have custody of cash, the less chance there is that some of it will go astray. If you customarily cash a check to have change for a tournament or other event, do that just before the event, and include that amount in the cash box reconciliation form before you start.

## CHECKS

Every Division should have a checking account in the Division's name. He checks and deposits then form the basic financial records of the Division. If you are taking over as Treasurer of an established Division, the account probably already exists and you will receive the checks, deposit slips and memo record book to maintain. If you are starting up a new Division, you will have to open an account with a local bank in the Division's name and get checks printed.

## OPENING A NEW ACCOUNT



The Division account should be a “business” type checking account at an established bank. Try to get an account that pays interest. Some banks will charge reduced fees or waive some rules for community service organizations. The forms that the bank will require from the Division will include a signature card, to document who the officers of the organization are, and who has the authority to sign checks against the account. You will probably also be asked to reference or provide a copy of the Executive Committee meeting minutes where the officers were elected. It is always a good idea to record in those minutes what your check signing policy is. Include a motion to authorize specific officers as check signers and include a statement as to the number of signatures that will be required on checks.

Generally, you (as the Treasurer) will always have signature authority over the checking account, and there should always be at least one or two other officers on the signature card as backup. That way, if you are transferred suddenly, or are away on vacation when a bill comes due, someone else can sign a check. (By the way, anytime you are unavailable for an extended period of time, like a vacation or illness, you should arrange to have the checkbook held by one of the other officers who has check signing authority).

## AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURES

Once you have your checking account set up, and the current officers authorized to sign checks, you need to determine what checks to write. Obviously, you shouldn’t use the Division account to pay your home electric bill, or your mortgage payment or any personal expenses of the Executive Committee. Your main concern as Treasurer is to make sure that checks written on the Division account are for valid expenses of the Division that have been authorized by the Executive Committee.

One way to validate and authorize expenditures is to require that every bill or payment be approved by the Executive Committee prior to payment. Normally, the Treasurer would bring a list of the bills to be paid to the Executive Committee meeting, get approval of the list as part of the Treasurer’s report, and then write checks. This is great, as long as the Division E.C. meets regularly (e.g., monthly) so that the checks can be written promptly. Using this method for approvals, the E.C. can also “pre-approve” payment of tournament expenses for an upcoming event, by authorizing the Treasurer to pay out “no more than” a certain amount for directors’ fees, etc. and the tournament.

If the Executive Committee meets on an irregular or infrequent basis, the easiest way to authorize expenditures is to approve an annual or quarterly budget. In this way, the Treasurer is authorized to spend “no more than” the budget amounts in certain categories. If combined with the requirement that

checks over a certain amount need a second signature, this is a good way to ensure that the Division officers are aware of how funds are being spent.

The use of a budget can (and probably should) also be combined with the requirement that certain large expenditures must be individually approved by the Executive Committee. This is especially important when the Division purchases equipment, such as copper strips, or scoring machines, or when the Division underwrites travel or tournament expenses for individual fencers or Division officers. This type of large expenditure (over \$200 for a small Division or over \$500 for a larger one) may be called into question by a Division member (especially someone who did not get their travel expenses paid) and it is a good idea to make sure that most of the Executive Committee knew of and approved the expenditure of the funds. You can use e-mail to obtain such approval, but make sure that you keep a hard copy and include in the next set of minutes

## TAKING IN CHECKS

If at all possible, you should receive all payments to the Division in the form of checks rather than cash. True, you can run the risk of bounced checks (we'll discuss those in a minute), but again, you have a written record of every transaction and a much better record of who hasn't paid you.

You should have a stamp made up (if one doesn't already exist) to endorse the checks you receive immediately upon receipt. The stamp should read something like the following:

Pay only to account XXXXXXXXX  
First National Bank of Podunk  
Diddlesquat Branch

Take the stamp with you to tournaments and other events in the cash box, and as you accept someone's check, stamp the back of it just before you mark his/her entry form, or other document as "paid." This immediately "signs over" the check to the Division account so that even if the checks were to be taken by someone, in theory, they could only deposit them to the Division's account, not their own. (The whole issue of whether or not banks really abide by all of this can be discussed elsewhere. At least if you do your part, you can demonstrate that you have handled the transaction in a responsible manner. Another one of those controls to protect yourself!)

Just like with the cash, you should have some written evidence of how much you have taken in, in checks, either the entry forms or a list of participants. At the end of the event, count up how much you are supposed to have in checks (from the "paid" listing) and balance that against how much you have in checks in total. You need this information for the deposit slip. The checks should go directly into the account, along with any cash collected. Although checks aren't

quite as tempting as cash, you should get them deposited as soon as possible. It's good business practice and reduces the chance that a check will wander off, or get eaten by the dog.

## BOUNCED CHECKS

Ok, like we promised, here goes a discussion of bounced checks. Most of the checks you receive will clear with no problems. Every once and a while, however someone will inadvertently bounce a check to you because they forgot to make a deposit, they forgot to enter another check they had written, or for some other perfectly good reason. Normally, a phone call to these people will produce lots of apologies, a promise to make good on the check and, after a little scrambling, the funds to cover the bounced check within a day or two. Every Division though, has a couple of yo-yo's who bounce checks repeatedly and have to be pursued to make good on them. You need to have a published bounced check policy that makes reasonable allowances for honest mistakes, yet discourages the chronic bouncer from leaving you holding the bag.

When a check is returned to you for "insufficient funds" (the bank's euphemism for bouncing a check), you need to contact the person who gave you the check immediately, and let them know that you expect them to (a) make good on the check and (b) reimburse the Division for the bank fees charged by its bank. This can be done nicely with either a phone call or a letter. Be sure to tie them down to a specific date by which they will make good on the check, and write this date down. After that date has passed, if the check gets bounced again, or they have not come forth with the funds (including the service charge), you should notify them that the Division is putting them on its "Bad Check" list. Unfortunately, you cannot prohibit a valid USFA member from competing in your Division tournaments, but you can put him/her on a "cash only" basis. Your Executive Committee may request that the USFA Board of Directors sanction such a person, however.

## CHECKING ACCOUNT CONTROLS

Certain types of procedures concerning checking accounts seem almost too obvious to have to mention, but since we are on the subject of controls, we will go over a few basics anyhow. Remember you are responsible for the funds of the Division.

Always use the checks in numeric sequence. This way, if a check is missing, you should notice it right away.

If you have to void a check, do it right. Write "VOID" across the face of the check, cut out the signature block, or punch holes in the check so that no one can inadvertently cash it. Hold on to the voided check and attach it to your bank statement so you have a record of what happened to that check number.

Stick to the Division's check signing policy, even if the bank doesn't seem to look for a second signature or check to see that this year's officers have signed. If anything goes wrong, you can show that you were following the policy the way it was written.

Don't EVER "borrow" funds from the Division account, no matter how soon you intend to pay it back!!!! In fact, it is a good policy to require that any check payable to one of the checks signers be signed by at least one other authorized check signer (i.e., the payee and the signer should never be the same person.)

Record every check and every deposit as you make it and in the exact amount. Keep a copy of the supporting documents (the cash box form you used to tally the deposit or the bills you paid from) as well as any meeting minutes that refer to the transactions. Keep all the documents in chronological order in a notebook or file folder so you can find them when you need them.

Try to run ALL financial transactions through the checking account. This means depositing ALL cash receipts untouched, and writing checks for all expenditures. That way you know that any cash coming in or going out will appear somewhere on the bank statement.

## SAVINGS ACCOUNT

If your Division is in the enviable position of having some "excess" funds, you should consider opening a savings account or depositing the funds in a Certificate of Deposit (CD). This will allow the unused funds to collect interest.

As with any major expenditure, the Executive Committee should approve the transfer of funds into a savings account or CD. The account must be held in the name of the Division, and you should be sure that the current officers' names appear on the signature card for the account. Be sure to update the officers' signatures at the end of the year or whenever officers change.

## THE DIVISION FINANCIAL STATEMENT

As Treasurer, you are responsible for filing a Financial Statement with the National Office each fiscal year. The fiscal year of the Division should be the same as that of the USFA (August 1 to July 31.) Although this only needs to be done once a year, you can save yourself a lot of scrambling if you keep the financial records during the year in the same format that you will need to file a statement at the end of the year.

When you first take office, you should get a copy of the most recent financial statement filed with the National Office. (Actually you should get a file with ALL of the financial statements filed for the Division- at least the last several

years.) At the very least, contact the National Office to find out when the last financial statement was filed (if no statement has been filed for a past year, they are probably holding dues that would otherwise go to your Division.)

Take a look at the form that the National Office wants you to use to file your financial information. On the left side are categories for Revenue, and on the right side are the categories for Expenditures. Basically, all the incoming funds have to be fit into one of the Revenue categories, and all your outgoing funds have to fit into the Expenditures categories. Total revenue for the year minus total expenditures for the year equals the change in your bank account balance from the beginning of the year to the end. Simple? Remember what we said about running everything through your checking account? If you don't, it is going to be a royal pain to try to get this simple little formula to work out.

OK, if you are either Division's resident CPA or work in accounting in your job, the rest should be fairly simple. If you have a computer with accounting software, just set up your account titles to match the categories (no balance sheet accounts, except Cash and Checking) and you're all set.

For the non-accountants in the bunch, the easiest way to track all this stuff is to set up a spreadsheet for yourself. (Hint: those of you with computers and spreadsheet software can save yourselves a lot of number crunching by putting this on the computer. It works exactly the same way.

Each time you write a check, put the check number at the start of a new row on your spreadsheet, then put the amount of the check in the appropriate column or columns. (Make sure that the total in the row adds up to the total amount of the checks you wrote.)

When you make a deposit, write the date of the deposit in the next row available and spread the amount to the proper revenue categories.

Whenever you need to produce a financial statement, just add up the totals in each column and report in the same format as the form from the National Office.

## CATEGORIES ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT

### REVENUES

#### DUES

This category is for the portion of the membership dues that the National Office sends to the Division (i.e., NOT for USFA dues that you collect at tournaments). Each quarter the National Office will send the Division a list of members processed within that quarter along with a check for the Division's

share of the dues paid to the USFA. The statement will break the amount into types of memberships, and that information should be entered into your spreadsheet with the deposit.

## ENTRY FEES

Tournament entry fees collected by the Division. Report these fees in total- NOT net of expenses. (Expenditures for tournaments are reported separately.)

## INTEREST INCOME

Interest earned on bank accounts or certificates of deposit held in the Division's name

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Cash contributions made to the Division

## SALES BROCHURES, DECALS, ETC.

Revenue for the sales of items, usually at tournaments. Include sales of refreshments, if the Division runs a concession booth.

## OTHERS

Any revenue received that does not fit into one of the above categories. You will need to explain the source, so keep good notes. Examples: advertising in the Division newsletter, miscellaneous fundraising events, etc.

## EXPENDITURES

### NATIONAL DUES/SECTIONAL DUES REMITTED

Dues paid by the Division to the National Office or the Section, if reported on the revenue side.

### STATIONERY & PRINTING

Paper, miscellaneous office supplies, photocopying fees, expenses for producing newsletters, announcements, ballots, etc. for the Division

### POSTAGE

Cost of distributing mailings, newsletters, etc. Mailings to the National Office or other Divisions, etc.

## TELEPHONE

Cost of phone calls made to the National Office or other calls made in support of Division activities.

## MEDALS, TROPHIES, ENGRAVING

Cost of awards presented by the Division to tournament participants or volunteers.

## TRAVEL

Cost of airfare, accommodations, meals, etc., for Division personnel traveling on Division business. Includes travel support paid to Division fencers for sectional or national tournaments; also any travel costs paid for any out-of-Division officials.

## COMPETITION EXPENSE

Cost of holding a tournament, including site rental, fees for armorers, officials, permits or bonds required for the event, decorations, transporting of Division equipment or rental of equipment, etc.

## EQUIPMENT PURCHASED & REPAIRS

All costs of securing or repairing equipment by the Division. (Note that the Division is not required to prepare a balance sheet. The Treasurer and/or Secretary should maintain a list or file of equipment owned by the Division.)

## DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Any memberships or subscriptions to associations or publications that are maintained by the Division. Examples: membership to a local business association, subscription to a regional events magazine that lists the Division's activities, etc.

## BANK CHARGES

Fees levied by the Bank for maintaining an account. Include bad check charges here.

## OTHER

Any expenditure that does not fit into the above categories. Be ready to describe these items in detail. Examples: expenses for a fund-raising event, cost of producing t-shirts or other souvenir items not considered competition expense, etc.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT**

The indispensable element one needs in order to hold a fencing meet is fencers, therefore, always see to it that adequate notice about a competition has been tendered to the fencing community (see Chapter 1). Ensure that time (usually close of check-in time), date and location are clearly delineated, and if the Division uses several locations, a basic map to the competition sites is not a bad idea.

It is a good idea to include the rules for proper attire in each schedule that you promulgate. Never underestimate the ability of someone out there to be completely non-conversant with safety rules that have been established in the last 20 years or so, or to think that you are. First, nothing on a fencer should have any holes in it that aren't there by design of the manufacturer. Second, make certain that everyone has an under-arm protector, and that he or she is wearing it on the strip. Third, each competitor must be wearing fencing knickers: no warm-up pants and no baseball/football pants (these last may look like fencing pants, but they do not rise high enough on the waist to meet regulations, and the stretch material they are made from offers little or no resistance to a broken blade). Fourth, long socks are required that completely cover the leg, i.e. they rise above the bottom seam of the knickers. Fifth, the grid of the mask must appear to be undamaged and the bib properly affixed and not torn anywhere. As an extra precaution, many Divisions invest in a regulation punch, and test the integrity of each fencer's mask at check-in.

Once the schedule is out, then there should be little worry about giving adequate notice, but if you must make a change to the schedule, or if you have decided to add an event, you should see to it that your fencing community gets the information at least two weeks in advance. If you are making changes to a qualifier, it really should be three weeks. Even better, don't *make* changes to a qualifier. However, we realize that unforeseen things do happen, so if you must change something, it is far wiser to make the date of a qualifier later than to make a significant change without adequate notice. Also, if you find it necessary to change check-in or start times on short notice; change them to a later slot, not an earlier one.

While we're on the subject of Qualifiers, and because I can't think of any other place to put this, there is an additional requirement placed upon them. The USFA Board of Directors, at its July 2002 meeting, decided that a Division must have at least one referee with a "5" rating or higher present at any local qualifying

tournament. Contrary to popular opinion, the purpose behind this policy is not so much to have a nationally-rated referee for your Finals, but to insure that every Division has someone with a proven level of expertise on the Rule Book available to assist the Bout Committee. In fact, the “5” might not direct a bout all day, but if he or she is available for consultation, it fills the bill.

The question arises in every Division every few years about requiring advance registration. Usually, it's more trouble than it's worth, but over time software has been developed (such as AskFred©) that makes it less trouble than it used to be. Nevertheless, most Division treasuries aren't fat enough to turn entries away at the door, and if you try charging a late entry fee at the tournament you run the risk of losing the fencer altogether. However, if you really want to attempt it, we suggest that you first try it for a tournament of some stability, like a qualifier.

In any case, whatever method you decide upon, it is imperative that you confirm each fencer's USFA membership at check-in. Fencers should carry their USFA card at all times, but certainly when they are going to a competition. The Division Secretary must make sure that the bout committee has a current USFA Division membership list, but those lists are not infallible, and the card is always the ultimate proof. If an entrant is not on your list, and cannot show you their USFA card, then you must not allow them to fence unless they fill out a USFA membership form at the table and pay the membership fee. The Division Treasurer can hold the funds, and if the Secretary subsequently determines that the entrant did have a current membership, the fee can be returned and the duplicate membership form destroyed. Please understand that allowing a fencer who is not a USFA member to participate in your tournament will invalidate the results of that tournament, classification changes will not be recognized, it could obliterate the insurance coverage for the event, and the USFA could impose sanctions on your Division.

However the Division chooses to handle registration, a meet manager/bout committee chair must be assigned (or agreed upon) before every competition. This person is responsible for running the entire event, from unlocking the doors in the morning to locking them at the finish. We hope that he/she has others to assist in these endeavors: at least one person in charge of equipment and the setting up of strips, and one to take registration and entry fees. The meet manager should ensure that there are available USFA Membership forms, score sheets (both pool and direct elimination), seeding cards, pencils, Final Results sheets, a USFA Rules Book, and for convenience, USFA Penalty and Tournament Classification Reference Charts. A first aid kit should be available, and the manager needs to know how to summon emergency assistance. That usually means having the necessary phone numbers available and knowing where the nearest telephone is, if he doesn't have his own cell phone. Savvy Divisions prepare a kit that contains all the above items so that the meet manager for that day can simply pick it up from someone. Moreover, they usually include in it the weights, shims and stopwatches that will be needed at the

tournament. One person, commonly the Division Secretary, is designated to keep the “Tournament Kit” replenished.

After the fencers are checked in, the next task is to appoint a bout committee. Usually this group should include one representative from each USFA Registered Club present, but it should definitely include some people who have a working knowledge of the rules. FYI, a person who has received a USFA Referees’ Rating can be safely placed in this category. We’ll talk more about the bout committee later.

What follows can, in theory, be leapfrogged if your Division is bringing a computer and printer to the venue, because there is software available (FencingTime© is particularly good at the Division level) that handles most tournament nuts and bolts. However, we all know that computers have a tendency to crash, and that really well-designed computers can sense exactly the right moment to crash when it will do the most damage. Therefore, no matter how sophisticated your program, at least one person on the bout committee should know how to run a competition “on manual”. So... assuming that your laptop has just choked and rolled, let’s hit the high points of running a tournament by hand.

First, a format for the competition should be decided upon. Most everyone tries to use the basic FIE format now, i.e. one round of pools with fencers seeded into a direct elimination table. Where the typical Division deviates from the official format is that they usually take 100% of the fencers up rather than 80%. This is done for two reasons, both equally good: (1) it ensures that every entered fencer gets at least one DE bout and (2) it allows the use of pools of five and six rather than six and seven; the larger size pools required by the rules if you’re *not* taking up everyone.

However, many Divisions still employ the old pool system for the entire tournament when they are running qualifiers for multiple events on the same day. Since each fencer gets to fence every other in the pool in each round, results are less vulnerable to an unusual seeding placement than in a DE table. Thus, the bout committee could, for example, combine the Div II & Div III men’s foil qualifiers into one event, with the highest finishing “D” s and under qualifying in order of their finish for DIV III, and the highest finishing competitors overall qualifying for DIV II. This is often done with age group events as well, combining Junior & Cadet or Cadet & Youth 14. For those of you who are a little shaky on how this system works, one merely conducts successive rounds of a steadily diminishing number of pools until a final pool is arrived at. At least 50% of the fencers in each pool must advance to the next round, and ties are broken just like they are in the FIE format. However, a tie for first place is always settled by a fence-off. Also, all bouts in a pools-only competition are for five points.

Whatever format you decide on, a seeding card should be prepared for each fencer in the competition. These are normally standard 3”x5” index cards with the

fencer's name, club, Division, and classification (this includes a "U") printed across the top. If the fencer is under 20 years of age, writing in the birth date is not a bad idea. Other than the name and the birth date, make sure that the rest of the information is entered in pencil. Any other information that is useful for seeding should also be added, such as National Points or previous tournament results. Next, you line out four columns headed "V/M, HS, HR, & IND. If you don't know what these abbreviations mean, then you need to pick up a Rule Book and go to Book Two, Chapter 5, and Paragraph 19. In fact, every competitive fencer should be familiar with all of Chapter 5, not only to be prepared to run competitions, but to also be able to defend his interests when competing in other tournaments.

Once the cards are completed, they should be arranged in a deck, with the strongest fencer on top and the cards arranged in decreasing order of strength. The cards are then laid out in a "snake" or "S" pattern. Let's say that you start with 18 fencers, and you decide to have three pools of six fencers each. You have your deck arranged 1 – 18, and you lay the cards out as follows:

<u>Pool #1</u>	<u>Pool #2</u>	<u>Pool #3</u>
1	2	3
6	5	4
7	8	9
12	11	10
13	14	15
18	17	16

Simple, huh? But wait! Now you must look at your layout and check to see if there are two or more members of the same club in any one pool. If so, you must separate them as much as possible (obviously, if you have four club mates in this example, two of them will have to be in one pool). Whatever changes you make, however, must be to move a fencer along the same horizontal line or to a lower line, never to a higher line.

If you are now satisfied that you have separated club mates as much as possible, have someone else check your layout to confirm it. Now check the pools that still have two or more club mates. Pull these fencers' cards, and enter their names on the score sheet so that they fence each other before they fence anyone else (however, if club mates make up more than 50% of the pool, refer to your trusty Rules Book: Book 2, Chapt.5, Part 1, Para.15 (while your at it, let your eyes dribble on down to Para.19 and read how you seed the results of the pools, and particularly how you break ties). After you have entered club mates on to the score sheet, take the remaining seeding cards, randomly shuffle them, and enter the names in whatever order is presented to you. After you have done so,

reassemble the cards in the piles corresponding to the pools; that way you can easily find the card of those fencers advancing and pull the cards of those eliminated. In either case, you enter each competitor's V/M, HS-HR and IND data on his card as soon as the score sheet comes in: it is this information that you are going to use to seed subsequent rounds, or to establish the final order of finish of those eliminated.

If you are using the pool system for all rounds, then simply repeat this procedure for as many rounds as are necessary. If you are using a direct elimination format, then please peruse Chapt.5, Part 2 with gusto (okay, you can skip paragraphs 29-41 covering special procedures for the world championships). Just be alert to one thing that may not be expressed as clearly as it could be. When a lower seeded fencer (lower seeded means higher actual seeding number)) defeats a higher seeded one, she takes over that opponent's seeding entering the next round. However, in establishing the order of finish for the completed round, her eliminated opponent does not fall into the bout winner's lower seed as final placement, but is placed according to her original seed at the beginning of the DE's. OK, for example: In the Table of 16, let's say that the #15 fencer upsets the #2 seeded fencer. Now #15 enters the Finals in #2's slot, but #2 doesn't finish 15<sup>th</sup> in final placement, but rather places 9<sup>th</sup>, because she was still the highest seeded fencer of all those eliminated in that round (assuming #1 didn't tank). Got it? Well... as the song says, "it is clear as mud, but it covers the ground".

Frankly, if you're going to run tournaments and maintain a grip on your sanity, somebody on the bout committee also needs to be familiar with Book One of the Rules. Most of the material in there you have already picked up directly from coaches, books, and experience, but you should have a general idea where to locate certain rules, especially as regards penalties. While the most heated protests at elite tournaments usually concern seeding and placement arguments, i.e. Book Two; most protests at the local level revolve around penalties, target, and strip rules, and those are pure Book One.

Speaking of protests, this is probably a good time to mention a few things about convening a bout committee. First, a referee's decision on judgment calls such as right-of-way ("She said it was his beat/attack when it was my parry/riposte") cannot be protested to the bout committee. Only a possible misapplication of a rule ("My point went off on her bell and he annulled the touch") can be appealed. And in many cases, the bout committee chair need only check the rule to settle the protest on the spot. When the situation is not that clear-cut, then a bout committee meeting must be convened, with each member having one vote and a plurality deciding. Committee members with a potential conflict of interest, such as the protester, protestee, referee, and/or club mate of any of them, should refrain from voting and absent themselves when the voting is taking place. If a fencer is claiming a violation of a rule that nobody's heard of, it is good practice to require that the protester find the rule in the book and then present his case.

Remember that convening a bout committee will usually bring the tournament to a screeching halt, so having the committee fluttering through the book looking for a rule that may not exist will only add to the delay.

Anyway, let's say that you've made it through the competition alive. Now you complete the Final Results Form listing every fencer from (using our example) 1<sup>st</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> place. Next, check the Classification Reference Chart (or the back of the USFA Operations Manual) to see if any fencers have upgraded or updated their classifications. Now, present the awards, collect all the equipment, file the seeding cards for use in future tournaments, arrange to get the tournament paperwork to the Secretary and the entry fees to the Treasurer, turn out the lights and lock the doors.

A word here about classification changes. The USFA needs roughly two weeks to process an individual fencer's change and get into all the records (that's two weeks after they receive the report from the Division). It is the established policy of the Board of Directors that the fencer may not use that new classification until it is so recorded at the National Office. Therefore, a junior fencer could go from, say, a "C" to a "B" classification at a local open, and a week later fence in your junior qualifiers, but he would still have to be entered with his "C" unless the Division Secretary has confirmed that Colorado Springs has officially recorded the "B". Local officials often get a lot of heat about this one, but you simply have no discretion in the matter. It is incumbent on Division officers, though, to make sure that classification changes be sent in immediately.

Another question that causes more confusion than is perhaps warranted is that of club representation, and for that matter, what constitutes a club. An individual may declare any affiliation that he cares to, whether solid or imaginary. If he and two other friends wish to call themselves "the Fencing Lug Nuts" and enter individual events with that affiliation, they may do so. However, what they may not do is enter a USFA team qualifying event as "The Fencing Lug Nuts" unless their club is formally registered with the USFA. The registration fee is minimal (it is separate from the insurance fee), but there are certain minimum standards that a group must meet in order to be registered. A list of Registered Clubs within the Division appears in each Division Membership Report, and if a club isn't on it, that group doesn't exist as far as the USFA and the Division is concerned. It therefore doesn't rate a seat on the Division's Executive Committee or representation on a tournament bout committee. This doesn't prohibit a Division from allowing "scratch" teams to fence in a local tournament – just make sure it doesn't qualify for anything.

As to that individual competitor, he can claim the Division in which he resides, the one in which his club is located, or the one in which his school sits. Even If his Division is a different one from that of his Registered Club, he can still represent his club. The club can qualify a team to the Nationals from its own Division using three other club members, and our fencer may still fence on his club's team at

the Championships. In the Individuals, however, he will still represent the Division wherein he regularly fences (and which gets the portion of his USFA Annual Dues).

Collegiate fencing clubs and their student members are treated just as any other USFA club is, but if you have an NCAA varsity program in your Division, and some of its fencers participate in local competitions, things get a little trickier. You want to be very alert to how they register at your events. The NCAA has a very stringent set of rules that a varsity athlete dare not run afoul of. In a nutshell, during the collegiate season (roughly September through March) NCAA varsity fencers can fence in USFA tournaments, but only if they represent their school, or fence "Unattached". If they sign up under any other affiliation during that time period, they will be declared ineligible for the rest of the collegiate season. All of this can best be explained by the local NCAA coach, but just be aware that Division folks can be the first line of defense against some freshman making an irrevocable error.

Of course, if you really want to be conversant on the entire topic of tournament organization, you can read Chapter 2 of the USFA Operations Manual. It's only 15 pages, and you'll impress everybody else with your erudition.

O.K. Unlock the doors, turn on the lights, and start fencing!

**APPENDIX A**  
**SAMPLE BYLAWS**

***BYLAWS***  
**OF THE**  
**TIPPERARY DIVISION**  
**OF THE**  
**U.S. FENCING ASSOCIATION**

**ARTICLE I**

**NAME AND AFFILIATION**

The name of the Division shall be the Tipperary Division of the U.S. Fencing Association, Inc.

The Division shall hereinafter be referred to as “THE DIVISION”, and the United States Fencing Association, Inc. shall be referred to as the USFA.



THE DIVISION is a duly chartered, subordinate, constituent body of the USFA, exercising powers given by, performing duties directed under, and subject to the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and policies of the USFA, with jurisdiction over the following geographic areas: the counties of Tipperary, Brigadoon, and Garryowen in the State of Cibola.

## ARTICLE II

### OBJECTIVES

The purposes and objectives of THE DIVISION are:

1. To promote, develop and encourage the sport of fencing
2. To provide local competitions and tournaments
3. To assist fencers to reach their full potential
4. To aid and assist the USFA in all its objectives and purposes

## ARTICLE III

### MEMBERSHIP - DUES – COMPETITIONS

SECTION 1. Any person residing within the boundaries of THE DIVISION, or belonging to a fencing club or representing a school within this same area shall be eligible for membership in THE DIVISION. No member of THE DIVISION may be a member of any other Division of the USFA.

SECTION 2. Classes of Membership: Membership shall be the same as that designated from time to time by the USFA.

SECTION 3. Membership may be transferred into THE DIVISION provided that the transferee has a current valid membership in, and receives the approval of, the USFA.

SECTION 4. Any member in good standing who is entitled to vote in elections of the USFA is entitled to vote in elections conducted by THE DIVISION.

SECTION 5. Annual dues shall be determined by the USFA. THE DIVISION may, upon approval of the membership, charge an additional fee for participation in Divisional activities.

SECTION 6. The divisional Executive Committee shall prepare the fencing schedule and shall determine, in accordance with the rules and policies of the USFA, the conditions and restrictions governing the qualifications for, entry into, and conduct of all competitions under its jurisdiction.

SECTION 7. All persons entering a tournament sanctioned by THE DIVISION must be current members of the USFA. The bout committee at each such tournament will have the proper materials to enroll a non-member into the USFA at time of registration.

- A. A check returned for insufficient funds will result in a warning to the fencer. A failure to make the check good, or a second occurrence during the season, will result in that fencer being placed on a “cash only” status.
- B. With the exception of disciplinary penalties associated with competitions, all other matters pertaining to the discipline of a member of THE DIVISION shall be referred to the Board of Directors of the USFA for appropriate action.

SECTION 8. The Executive Committee may allow Registered Clubs within the THE DIVISION to host Division tournaments, but it shall approve the conditions, qualifications and restrictions of all privately and/or club sponsored tournaments before sanctioning such events. At least one official DIVISION representative shall be present at every sanctioned tournament, with full authority to assure that the conditions set by the Executive Committee are being carried out. In case the stipulated conditions are not being adhered to, the Executive Committee may withdraw its sanction from the event, either before or after, and announce that withdrawal to THE DIVISION and the USFA.

## ARTICLE IV

### OFFICERS AND DUTIES

The officers of THE DIVISION shall be a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a Secretary and a Treasurer. The latter two offices may be combined, in accordance with the USFA bylaws. All officers shall take office at 12:01AM on August 1<sup>st</sup> and hold office until 12:00 midnight on the following July 31<sup>st</sup>, or until their successors are elected and justified.

The duties of officers shall be as follows:

SECTION 1. CHAIR – The Chair shall preside at all meetings of THE DIVISION and/or its Executive Committee, and perform such duties as usually pertain to that office and are not inconsistent with these bylaws. The Chair has the responsibility for ensuring that all reports required by the USFA are filed in a timely manner. The preparation of these reports may be delegated to the Secretary and Treasurer of THE DIVISION. The Chair may, from time to time, assign officers and other members of the Executive Committee to chair standing or ad hoc committees. The Chair shall be an ex-officio member of all committees. The Chair is responsible for the custody and maintenance of all equipment owned by THE DIVISION.

SECTION 2. VICE-CHAIR – The Vice-Chair shall, should the Chair be unable to perform his/her duties, perform the duties of the Chair. Otherwise, the Vice-Chair shall perform such duties as the Chair may assign.

SECTION 3. SECRETARY – The Secretary shall conduct all official correspondence, issue timely notice to all members of meetings of THE DIVISION, keep the minutes of all meetings of THE DIVISION and/or its Executive Committee, prepare and submit, when due, all reports concerning membership as required by the USFA, and any other like duties that may be assigned by the Chair or the Executive Committee.

SECTION 4. TREASURER – The Treasurer, in consultation with the Executive Committee, shall present a budget for the following fiscal year (August 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup>) at the Annual Meeting of THE DIVISION. Changes made upon the budget shall be presented at the next general meeting of THE DIVISION. The Treasurer shall keep the accounts of THE DIVISION; receive all monies, fees & dues; pay all bills approved by the Executive Committee, and preserve all vouchers for such disbursements. The Treasurer shall, at the Annual Meeting of THE DIVISION, submit a report of the financial transactions of the preceding period. All disbursements shall be made from the Divisional checking account. Such disbursements must be supported by receipts stating the nature of the transaction and the payee. All funds of THE DIVISION shall be maintained in a federally insured account, checking and savings, under the name of THE

DIVISION. No amounts over \$50.00 will be dispersed without Executive Committee approval, and no amount over \$1000.00, not part of the current fiscal year's budget approved at the Annual Meeting, will be dispersed without the approval of THE DIVISION'S membership, the majority of those voting deciding. Such vote may be taken by either mail or at a Special Membership Meeting. The Treasurer will provide, upon written request of at least ten voting members of THE DIVISION, current financial records within one month of such request. The Treasurer shall perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Chair of the DIVISION or other proper authority.

SECTION 5. The offices of Secretary and Treasurer may be combined for any year by a majority of those voting, in person or by proxy, at the Annual Meeting.

SECTION 6. Officers of THE DIVISION may be removed for cause upon the petition of one or more voting members of THE DIVISION. The Board of Directors of the USFA may prescribe procedures for removal that provide the accused officer with notice of the asserted grounds for removal and due process during removal proceedings. If the Board of Directors or the Bylaws of the USFA fail to adopt such procedures, the USFA Executive Committee may remove an officer of THE DIVISION if it finds there is cause for such removal; after notice to the accused officer and a hearing or other appropriate proceeding in which that officer was accorded due process rights.

SECTION 7. Officers and other elected members of the Executive Committee may be recalled through the following procedure:

- (a) A petition submitted to the Executive Committee, signed by at least 10% of the eligible voters in THE DIVISION, requesting a Special Membership Meeting to be held for the sole purpose of holding a recall vote.
- (b) At that meeting, two-thirds of those voting either in person or by proxy approve such recall.
- (c) Time, place and notification requirements of such meeting shall be determined as set forth in ART.VI, Sec.2 of these bylaws.

## ARTICLE V

### MANAGEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SECTION 1. Composition: The management of THE DIVISION shall be vested in an Executive Committee consisting of the officers of THE DIVISION, the Members of Congress, the Alternate Members of Congress, and such other members who have been elected at the Annual Meeting. There must be elected at least one member from each USFA Registered Club in THE DIVISION. Members of THE DIVISION in good standing, with special expertise, may be appointed by the Chair as advisors to the Executive Committee, but these individuals will not have voting privileges.

SECTION 2. Quorum: A quorum shall consist of one-third of the voting membership of the Committee or 4 members, whichever number is larger. No voting by proxy is permitted.

SECTION 3. Meetings: Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held on a regular basis at a time and place designated by the Chair. Meetings may also be called upon the written request of 4 voting members of the Committee. All members must receive at least 48 hours prior notice of all Executive Committee meetings. If all member of the Committee have access to the Internet, then certain specific questions or proposals may be voted upon electronically. All balloting must be copied to every member of the Committee, and the Secretary must keep a printed copy of the vote for the Division records.

SECTION 4. Any member of the Executive Committee (other than officers, for whom provision is made in ART.IV, Sec.6 above) who fails to perform his duties may be removed from the Committee by the following procedures:

- (a) Written notification of the causes for removal must be provided to each and every member of Executive Committee.
- (b) At any meeting at which the removal of a member (officers excluded) will be contemplated, at least three-fourths of the total voting membership of the Committee must be present.



- (c) A member so charged has the right to appear at the meeting and present arguments against removal, but may not vote on this question.
- (d) At least three-fourths of the members present must vote for removal for it to take effect.

SECTION 5. The Executive Committee may replace a member who has resigned, has been removed by the foregoing procedure, or removed by the USFA using the following method:

- (a) At any Executive Committee meeting where a new member is to be voted upon, at least three-quarters of the voting members remaining must be present.
- (b) The proposed new member must be approved by a three-fourths vote.

## ARTICLE VI

### MEETINGS OF THE MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. The Annual Meeting of THE DIVISION shall be held in June or July. The date, time and place of the meeting shall be designated by the Chair, but notification must be mailed to all members of THE DIVISION so as to be received at least 15 days prior to the meeting. Officers and members of the Executive Committee for the next year will be elected at this meeting. All

members of the Executive Committee take and leave office concurrent with the terms of the officers of THE DIVISION.

SECTION 2. Special Meetings of the membership may be called at any time and place by the Chair, and shall be called by the Chair upon written request of not less than 10% of the eligible voters of THE DIVISION. The same notification requirements as for the Annual Meeting apply.

SECTION 3. A quorum shall consist of 10 voting members in person or by proxy, and a majority of those present shall control, except as herein otherwise provided.

## ARTICLE VII

## ELECTIONS

SECTION 1. Candidates for all voting positions on the Executive Committee (including officers) shall be nominated from the floor at the Annual Meeting.

SECTION 2. If not more than one nomination is made for a position, the Secretary of THE DIVISION shall cast a unanimous ballot for that candidate. If two or more candidates are nominated for a position, then a vote will be taken by written ballot, in person or by proxy, and the candidate receiving a majority of the votes will be elected. If no candidate receives a majority, then a run-off election (again by written ballot) between the two candidates with the highest vote totals will be immediately conducted. If neither candidate can still achieve a majority, or the result of the run-off election should end in a tie, then a lot shall be cast and the winner elected.

SECTION 3. Members eligible to vote and in good standing may give their proxy to any other member of THE DIVISION who is eligible to vote and in good standing. All proxies shall be in writing and must be submitted for verification to the Secretary at least 72 hours in advance of the Meeting. The person designated in the proxy must be in attendance at the Meeting in order to exercise it.

## ARTICLE VIII

### JURISDICTION OF THE USFA

All rules, regulations and policies set forth in the Bylaws of the USFA, the Rules of Competition, the USFA Operations Manual, or actions of the USFA Board of Directors are hereby incorporated into these bylaws without action by the Executive Committee or the membership of THE DIVISION. In the event of conflict between these bylaws and the bylaws, rules and policies of the USFA, the latter shall take precedence and the former shall be considered amended accordingly.

## ARTICLE IX

### AMENDMENTS

These bylaws of the Tipperary Division may be amended at the Annual Meeting of THE DIVISION. Any proposed change to these bylaws must be included in the mailed notification of time and place of the Meeting. An amendment receiving a majority of the

votes cast, either in person or by proxy, shall be deemed adopted, subject to the provisions of ART.VIII.



## **APPENDIX B**

### **CARE OF EQUIPMENT**

A common human mistake is to forget that equipment that is working (with all its solid-state technology) is experiencing wear. When a Division is hard-pressed for funds, it is difficult to remember that equipment will need to be upgraded or replaced from time to time. The Technical Committee, if your Division has one (and it should) is the lobby that insures that money is set aside to cover necessary equipment replacement. With a scoring machine and a set of reels currently costing between \$1500 and \$4000, it behooves you to find some people who are interested in learning how to repair the things. If you've got an experienced armorer, you can utilize the time-honored apprenticeship method, but an alternative is to send somebody to the Technician Training program that is now available at the USFA's Coaches College. You can contact Colorado Springs for more information.

All the equipment belonging to the Division should be handled in a business-like manner. An inventory should be kept, preferably by the Division Technical Committee, and it should be reviewed periodically by the

Division Chair. Assign responsibility for the storage and transport of the equipment to one or more reliable individuals. This helps to insure that the equipment is available when needed, cared for properly, and that everybody knows where it is.

Machines and reels should be stored in a cool, dry place on a flat surface, and, obviously, you should be able to secure the storage area. Overheating is bad for machines, whether it be from overextended operation, from storage near a heater, or from putting it next to another piece of equipment that radiates heat. Machines are not watertight and their internal mechanisms are not waterproof.

It is not a good idea to allow anyone to use Division equipment other than for official Division purposes. Allowing any club or group to do so is an unofficial subsidy to them. Besides, it is human nature for fencers to experience a malfunction, move to another strip, and then forget to tell anybody. The Division doesn't discover that its gear isn't operational until it gets set up at the next tournament, and that's a little late.



Do not allow uqualified people to tinker with machines. Unless someone has the appropriate schematic, can read it, has the proper tools and materials, and can perform the proper tests to find out if the problem is correctly fixed, he or she is not qualified.

One more note. Several manufacturers make “club” machines that are often dramatically less expensive than their “tournament” models. The reason for that is that the club boxes do not have the endurance of the tournament units. Remember that a machine in club use may only be working 4-5 hours a day, but a tournament machine may have to operate for 16, and be expected to function flawlessly at the end of the day. If your division has all-day tournaments, then you should avoid using club model machines. When they overheat they can perform erratically, and it is very hard to determine if they are doing so. There is usually nothing wrong with them that simply turning them off and letting them cool down won’t cure, but that is small consolation to the fencer who just failed to qualify because during his DE bout the box occasionally wouldn’t signal his hits.