

**UNITED STATES OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE
CERTIFICATION REVIEW GROUP**



**Certification Renewal Recommendation Report for
USA Racquetball**

December 16, 2021



**UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE**

USA Racquetball Certification Renewal Executive Summary

In January 2021, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) Certification Review Group (CRG; formerly the Certification Verification Group), in accordance with the USOPC's NGB Certification Policy, began a certification renewal review of USA Racquetball.¹ The CRG evaluated USA Racquetball, and based on input from CRG members as well as the results of NGB Audit's Consultative Review², recommends a certification status of Renewal with Conditions.

The CRG's review of USA Racquetball found that the organization is meeting most of the USOPC's NGB Compliance Standards³ in the five core areas of evaluation for certification: Governance and Compliance, Financial Standards and Reporting Practices, Athlete Protections and Rights, Sport Performance, and Operational Performance. A Consultative Review conducted by the USOPC's NGB Audit team in late 2020 found that USA Racquetball's bylaws and several of its policies and procedures required revisions to fully meet the NGB Compliance Standards, among other findings. Additionally, USA Racquetball had an open audit finding from the U.S. Center of SafeSport. USA Racquetball worked to address the identified issues and largely completed the remediation of identified issues, though there are some significant deficiencies with the organization's background check policy that USA Racquetball is aware of and actively working to resolve.

In its discussions of USA Racquetball's interactions with the USOPC, the CRG identified some concerns with the leadership's understanding of SafeSport processes and obligations and determined to make training a condition of the organization's certification. Otherwise, CRG members had a positive outlook on their interactions with USA Racquetball. Many of the USOPC's interactions with USA Racquetball stemmed from collaborative work to assist in the resolution of known issues, and CRG members praised USA Racquetball's level of engagement and efforts to improve.

As a result of this review, the CRG recommends that USA Racquetball be granted a certification status of Renewal with Conditions for a certification term ending in 2025. In accordance with the NGB Certification Policy, USA Racquetball has 180 days from the USOPC Board of Directors' ratification of this recommendation to resolve the remaining deficiencies outlined in this report. If the CRG determines that USA Racquetball has successfully addressed the specified issues within that timeframe, the CRG will recommend that its certification status be upgraded to Renewal in Good Standing. If USA Racquetball fails to resolve the specified issues to the CRG's satisfaction within that timeframe, this conditional certification status will be revoked, which may ultimately lead to decertification.

¹ See Appendix for more information about the certification process, including a link to the NGB Certification Policy.

² See Appendix for additional information about NGB Audit's Consultative Review and how it differed from a full audit.

³ The NGB Compliance Standards were originally published as the NGB Audit Standards.

Organizational Overview

The United States Racquetball Association, Inc., commonly known as USA Racquetball, is the USOPC-certified NGB for amateur racquetball in the United States and is the United States' member of the International Racquetball Federation. USA Racquetball strives to “provide opportunities for members and enthusiasts to actively participate in the sport, through sanctioning of events, administration of programs, and development of competitive teams.”⁴ USA Racquetball fields multiple national teams to represent the United States at international competitions, including men’s, women’s, and junior teams, and had a membership base of approximately 12,000 athletes in 2019.

Certification History

USA Racquetball was originally certified in January 2021.⁵ The CRG’s certification review was initiated based on USA Racquetball’s scheduled quadrennial certification review. USA Racquetball’s certification status has not been referred for review outside of the standard NGB certification review schedule.

Certification Exceptions⁶

USA Racquetball did not request any exceptions from the NGB Compliance Standards requirements during its certification review.

Athlete Representation Approval and Exceptions⁷

USA Racquetball requested that the Athlete Representation Review Working Group (ARRWG) approve five of its committees as Designated Committees. These committees were:

- Elections
- Finance/Accounting
- Legislative
- Rules
- US Team

The ARRWG approved USA Racquetball’s Designated Committees as presented.

USA Racquetball, supported by the USOPC AAC, also requested that the ARRWG approve an exception to the athlete representation requirements for its Other Committees. USA Racquetball requested that each of these committees be exempted from the athlete representation requirements for Other Committees due to a lack of qualifying athletes available to fill the roles, even with an expansion of the pool by including additional qualifying events. The Other Committees that USA Racquetball included in this request were:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collegiate• Hall of Fame/Awards• High School• Junior• Marketing• Membership | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Events• Referee Certification• Revenue Generation/Fundraising• Scholarship• Women’s• WOR (World Outdoor Racquetball) |
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The ARRWG approved the request, exempting the listed committees from athlete representation requirements. The exception was granted with the expectation that “[USA Racquetball] and its AAC must

⁴ [About USA Racquetball](#)

⁵ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on the initial certification.

⁶ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on exception requests to the NGB Compliance Standards.

⁷ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on athlete representation exception requests.

work diligently to attract and retain athletes into leadership roles to ensure that the athlete voice is adequately prominent in all [USA Racquetball] committees in the future.”

USA Racquetball also requested approval of five competitions as qualifying events to expand the pool of 10 Year Athletes eligible to serve as athlete representatives. The requested events included the IRF World Racquetball Championships, the World Games, the Pan American Racquetball Championships, the USAR Singles National Championships, and the USAR Doubles National Championship. The ARRWG approved USA Racquetball’s requests to include these as additional qualifying events for 10 Year Athlete eligibility.

Certification Review⁸

Governance and Compliance

The CRG determined that USA Racquetball is fulfilling many of the governance and compliance-related responsibilities of an NGB. USA Racquetball has adopted a code of conduct, conflict of interest, and whistleblower policies. In addition, USA Racquetball has not been the subject of any compliance-related complaints filed with the USOPC’s NGB Compliance team or Dispute Resolution Unit in the last four years.

In the Consultative Review, NGB Audit found that USA Racquetball’s bylaws required updates in a number of areas, including ensuring its athlete representation standards are consistent with the 10 Year Athlete requirements in the USOPC Bylaws. USA Racquetball’s conflict of interest policy, code of conduct, ethics statement, and gifts and entertainment policy also needed revisions to include elements required under the NGB Compliance Standards. USA Racquetball revised its bylaws and these policy documents to address the findings. While some work remains to include every element required by the NGB Compliance Standards, the remaining issues are marginal deficiencies. USA Racquetball has been engaged with NGB Audit and continues to work toward resolving these deficiencies by the end of 2021.

As part of the CRG’s evaluation of USA Racquetball, NGB Services noted that the organization has experienced high turnover in its recent history, which has reduced the level of expertise among its current staff for compliance and governance-related matters.

USA Racquetball completed a diversity and inclusion scorecard to provide a snapshot of the diversity of its board of directors, standing committees, staff, membership, national team coaches and athletes, and developmental team coaches and athletes.⁹ The scorecard is intended to provide a way to identify opportunities for USA Racquetball to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) in amateur racquetball and to assist in creating action plans that best deploy its resources for DE&I success. In 2019, USA Racquetball performed well against its own benchmarks for female representation on its executive committee, national team coaches and athletes, and part-time employees and interns as well as military veterans on its board, executive committee, membership, and national team coaches. In these areas, USA Racquetball met or exceeded 85% of its benchmark targets. USA Racquetball performed moderately well against its own benchmarks for female representation on its board and professional staff, meeting 69% to 84% of its benchmark targets. In all other areas against which USA Racquetball was measured its own benchmarks, including all categories evaluating the representation of persons with disabilities and people of color, USA Racquetball had significant room for improvement, meeting less than 68% of its benchmark targets. USA Racquetball will have the opportunity to address these and other areas of improvement in a DE&I action plan for the 2021-2024 quadrennium.

Financial Standards and Reporting Practices¹⁰

⁸ Refer to the Appendix for additional details on the review standards and process for information related to NGB Audit’s Consultative Review of USA Racquetball.

⁹ [2019 USA Racquetball Diversity and Inclusion Scorecard](#)

¹⁰ As noted in the Appendix, the NGB Audit team did not test USA Racquetball’s financial controls or procedures as part of the Consultative Review process.

The CRG determined that USA Racquetball is fulfilling most of its obligations related to its Financial Standards and Reporting Practices. USA Racquetball demonstrates the financial capability to administer the sport of racquetball and maintains audited accounting records.

NGB Audit found that USA Racquetball had not made its most recent audited financial statements publicly available on its website in a timely manner for transparency purposes and that its internal financial policies and procedures needed updates to include the payroll process, an outline of controls over cash receipts, and the approval process for senior management expenses. USA Racquetball has made its financial documentation publicly available on its website and revised its financial policies and procedures. While USA Racquetball's financial policies and procedures still require additional revisions to be fully compliant, the remaining deficiencies are marginal, and USA Racquetball will complete the additional revisions by the end of 2021.

Athlete Protections and Rights

USA Racquetball has complied with applicable athlete safety requirements. The USOPC is not aware of any cases it has received in the past four years concerning USA Racquetball that should have been reported to the Center but were not reported in accordance with the Center's reporting requirements. For its part, the USOPC has reported all matters to the Center relating to USA Racquetball that the USOPC was required to report.

In 2019, USA Racquetball was audited by the U.S. Center for SafeSport, resulting in findings and directions for corrective actions to be taken. Specifically, the Center requested that USA Racquetball create a system that identifies and tracks its members who must be SafeSport-trained and a policy that prevents those who have not completed the training from participating. Following a deadline extension to implement the tracking system and action from the USOPC to request regular progress updates, USA Racquetball successfully implemented its tracking system and received a closure letter from the Center on May 24, 2021, signifying that this issue is resolved.

USA Racquetball must create procedures for addressing and resolving SafeSport and other athlete safety matters and ensure they are handled in a manner consistent with SafeSport policies and best practices. The CRG identified this as an area where USA Racquetball's leadership could be improved. To this end, as a condition of this certification, the CRG is requiring that USA Racquetball's senior management and board members undergo additional SafeSport training, conducted by the Center, which must be completed by March 31, 2022.

Additionally, while USA Racquetball improved the document, USA Racquetball's Background Check Policy requires additional revisions to resolve some significant deficiencies and fully meet the NGB Compliance Standards. As a condition of this certification, USA Racquetball must revise the document to fully meet the NGB Compliance Standards. NGB Audit and Athlete Safety did note that while USA Racquetball's background check policy was missing required components, the organization is generally executing in accordance with the NGB Compliance Standards and the USOPC's Responsible Sport Organization Background Check Policy.

Sport Performance

USA Racquetball is fulfilling its obligations in Sport Performance. The organization maintains and executes on a strategic plan that is capable of supporting athletes in achieving sustained competitive excellence and growing the sport, established clear selection procedures for international competition, and has successfully conducted trials to fulfill those selection procedures.

A representative of the USOPC's Sport Performance team indicated that USA Racquetball could be considered "under-resourced," but that the organization has met its obligations required by the NGB Compliance Standards and is supported by the USOPC in its selection criteria for international competition.

Operational Performance

The CRG determined that USA Racquetball has demonstrated the managerial capacity to administer the sport, maintained adequate insurance to manage its risk, and maintained financial sustainability. However, NGB Audit found that USA Racquetball's grievance procedures, Whistleblower Policy, and Equal Opportunity Policy were missing multiple elements required by the NGB Compliance Standards. USA Racquetball revised its grievance procedures and the Equal Opportunity Policy to resolve these findings. The USA Racquetball Whistleblower Policy, while much improved over the course of 2021, still has some marginal deficiencies that USA Racquetball is working to resolve.

NGB Audit also found that while USA Racquetball had a strategic plan that included organization-wide initiatives, including supporting athletes and a commitment to competitive excellence, it used success measures that were "not clearly defined or easily understood." Many of the strategic goals that USA Racquetball's leadership set were lacking specific and measurable indicators that would allow the organization to determine the progress or completion status of its goals. For example, one of USA Racquetball's goals was to "return former players to the sport," but there was no target of how many returning players would be activated or a time period in which to accomplish the goal. USA Racquetball's leadership revised the strategic plan, setting specific and measurable goals for the organization, and it was approved by the USA Racquetball Board of Directors in June 2021.

Conclusion

USA Racquetball must address some areas of significant deficiency to fully meet the NGB Compliance Standard. While there are no outstanding severe deficiencies that merit the consideration of immediate decertification, based on input from CRG members and the results of the NGB Audit team's Consultative Review, the CRG has identified significant issues that require corrective action before the CRG recommends certifying USA Racquetball as a member in good standing. As such, the CRG recommends that USA Racquetball's certification as a member organization be renewed with a rating of Renewal with Conditions.

As part of this Renewal with Conditions rating, USA Racquetball will have 180 days from the date of the USOPC Board of Directors' ratification of this report to correct the outstanding significant issues with its background check policy and complete the required SafeSport training prescribed by the CRG. If USA Racquetball successfully meets these conditions, the CRG will recommend that its certification rating be upgraded to Renewal in Good Standing. If USA Racquetball fails to take satisfactory action to meet the conditions of this certification within 180 days, its certification rating will be downgraded to Probationary Renewal and the USOPC may initiate preliminary decertification proceedings.¹¹

¹¹ [NGB Certification Policy](#), Section 5(b).

Appendix

Certification Renewal Process

The USOPC believes in a culture of strong governance, ethics, and compliance among the NGBs that, as member organizations of the USOPC, make up the Olympic and Paralympic movement. Recent amendments to the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, which became law in late 2020, require the USOPC to certify NGBs.¹² The USOPC determined that as of January 1, 2021, all member organizations would be certified and their certifications would be reviewed for renewal on a rolling basis every four years.¹³

Governed by the USOPC's [NGB Certification Policy](#), the NGB certification review process is supported by a cross-functional body of professionals at the USOPC, the Certification Review Group (CRG), who interact with NGBs in their day-to-day work. These professionals evaluate an NGB's operations across multiple functional areas to provide a holistic review of an NGB's performance and culture.¹⁴ In addition to enumerated standards for NGB performance described in the Act, the Bylaws, and the USOPC's [NGB Compliance Standards](#), the CRG considers departmental observations about an NGB's operations that may not be identified in a formal audit scenario but are relevant to consider when evaluating an NGB's overall performance.

Certification Standards, Exceptions, and Review Components

As described in Section 8.4.1 of the [USOPC Bylaws](#), NGBs must satisfy certification requirements in five core areas: Governance and Compliance, Financial Standards and Reporting Practices, Athlete Protections and Rights, Sport Performance, and Operational Performance. The USOPC's Implementation Guide for NGB Compliance Standards provides NGBs with specific guidance for how they will be evaluated in each of these core areas.

Section 8.4.2 of the USOPC Bylaws permits an NGB to submit a request for limited exceptions to any of the NGB Compliance Standards which, as a result of its overall structure or other extenuating circumstances, cannot or need not be reasonably met. The CRG evaluates all requests received and grants or denies such limited exceptions.

In addition to outlining the requirement that all NGBs receive approval for committees that are considered Designated Committees, various provisions of Section 8.5 of the USOPC Bylaws permit NGBs to seek exceptions related to minimum athlete representation requirements on boards and committees. The Athlete Representation Review Working Group evaluates and approves or denies all requests made under Section 8.5.

Consultative Reviews

The [NGB Compliance Standards](#) were published in 2020, however, NGBs are not required to fully comply with the NGB Compliance Standards until January 1, 2022.

To provide time for NGBs that are scheduled for certification renewal in 2021 to fully comply with the NGB Compliance Standards, the NGB Audit team conducted Consultative Reviews for those NGBs rather than a full audit, which typically includes testing, and more detailed reviews of internal controls and use of USOPC grant money. The Consultative Reviews assessed the NGBs' policies and procedures to assist them in focusing on areas reviewed under the NGB Compliance Standards in preparation for the certification renewal process.

¹² See §220521(a) of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act.

¹³ [NGB Certification Policy](#), Section 1.

¹⁴ The CRG uses a four-year lookback period during its review process.



NGB Audit completed a Consultative Review of USA Racquetball in November 2020. All references to NGB Audit's assessment of USA Racquetball's performance are derived from this Consultative Review.