

2013 FINA Masters Congress Report:

First and foremost, I was truly honored to be able to attend the FINA World Masters Congress on behalf of United States of America-U.S. Masters Swimming and our partnering aquatic NGBs.

Prior to the Masters congress, we held two conference calls regarding the FINA masters proposals. Each discipline brought forth their respective concerns. Each discipline was to solicit support.

I had the opportunity to meet with the FINA Masters Technical Chair, Ed Evely, at the Masters Pan Ams and prior to the Masters Congress and informed him of all the USA federations concerns. Ed did his due diligence and went to the FINA Bureau and then they forwarded our concerns on the issues to the FINA Legal committee. He updated me on the rationale of FINA for the recommendations prior to the Masters Congress in Barcelona especially for MSW 6.2.

I was supportive of the recommendation from FINA after I was told the rationale for the change, however I did need to inform other Federations why we have unattached swimmers. I was also told that we were the only federation that had unattached swimmers and found out that we were not the only federation. This was more of a statement that we have a solution and can help the other federations.

Here was my statement:

“On behalf of United States Masters Swimming, I would like to thank FINA for recognizing Masters and the Masters Technical committee for their dedication in promoting Masters in aquatics sports throughout the World.

We understand MSW 6.2 and commend the job that the Masters technical committee has done. Thank you.

We have abided by the rule and our athletes are affiliated with a club at the FINA World Masters Championships. This ruling MSW 6.2 also affects all competitions at the regional and the federation level for all records and top ten.

We are working on a solution for MSW 6.2. I just wanted to clarify why we have unattached swimmers. We have a rule that when a swimmer transfers from one club to another club, there is a 60-day grace period. During that time a swimmer is recognized as unattached and they can compete unattached.

Thank you for the opportunity to explain why we have unattached swimmers and will be working on a solution to abide by and support MSW 6.2.”

After the congress, I had at least 5 federations come up to me and tell me that they have unattached swimmers and have a grace period when swimmers transfer clubs. They inquired on what we were going to do. I was glad that I was able to help them with a solution. If I did not explain it; I wonder if the ruling would have been understood.

Masters Open Water and Masters Diving passed without any discussion.

Masters Water polo: The discussion was regarding limiting water polo players to participate on one team and not on multiple age group teams. USA Water polo delegate Andy Burke attempted to solicit support, however there was not enough to defeat the legislation.

Masters Synchronized Swimming: USA pulled legislation on keeping the age group (20-24 years old) and keeping the Trio. We initially had support from Canada, Japan, and Venezuela. The Russian federation recommended the legislation to keep the age and Trio. Prior to the Masters Congress, I spoke with the respective Federations and found out that we had no support. I still pulled the legislation due to my due diligence to USA Synchro and the rationale that they submitted to me. The motions failed due to no second, however it should be documented in the minutes that USA pulled the items. I had a discussion with the Japanese Federation and they said that they have SS for Masters at 18 years of age and will continue.

Interesting notes: There were only 44 Federations of the 208. That morning the Swimming Congress was held and I met with Federations then, many of them stated that they were not attending Masters. Comments ranged from we don't need too, we do not have masters, or their Masters person was not here. Also, on the day of the Congress, we were told that Canada would not pull any legislation or support any pulled items due to the chair of the Masters Technical committee was from Canada.

Many Federations do not have many masters' swimmers. Some thought of masters as a threat to their age group programs due to challenges with pool space. I am hoping I was able to change that and show them that having masters is a partnership. I used examples of initially allowing them to practice only 2-3 times per week, during the "slow" times of the pool. Also, masters can help be timers and officials at meets for them. I told them about how we recently hosted the Masters Pan American and the blocks that we had at the meet were Myrtha blocks and Master swimmers help pay for the blocks and the age group team benefit from them too. At Masters meets, the age group club helps time and uses it as a fundraiser for the team. I spoke about Masters coaches certification and it teaches coaches how to coach adults.

208 FINA Federations, 180 participating Federations in the World Championships, Swimming Congress had 133 Federations, Masters Congress had 44 Federations. To me having less than 25% of the Federations participate in the Masters Congress is disheartening, however there is also opportunity here to grow Masters.

I brought 50 business cards and by the end of the General Congress, I had given all my business cards out. I met with many federations and discussed Masters Aquatics. I was a representative of all Masters Aquatics sports not just swimming, however most of my discussion revolved around swimming.

My top five take away from the World Championships:

USAS Luncheon is a benefit for the USA; it gave the USA Delegates an opportunity to meet with FINA Bureau in a private setting. This luncheon help facilitated discussion and helped the USA's recommendations for the appointments.

I was disappointed in that utilization of the time blocks for the Congresses. The extra time could be used for networking and hosting leadership seminars and educational events. It was great to see after the General Congress to see Chief Thomas and Ben Ekumbo gather the African Federations together. (See photo below.)

2015 Kazan Worlds Championships: For Masters, I do have concerns due to the fact that the host stated that they will not do anything for Masters until after next years Masters championships is completed and then the host will plan for Masters. That would only give them one year of planning for the Masters.

I do think combining the World Championships might encourage other Federations to see what Masters is all about and promote Masters within their Federations. I would like to outreach to Federations and help them promote masters within their Federations. I have put together a task force for USMS to strategize how we can improve our international relationship and also increase awareness about Masters.

I would like to have a partnership with the other USA NGBs Masters program. We could help each other by promoting our events and discuss other initiatives together. The USA Federation is well respected by other Federations and the USA needs to extend goodwill and mentorship opportunities.

