

## **Donald Alperstein**

During my 40+ years in fencing I have served the sport and USA Fencing in many different roles. Of these, the most rewarding has been my work as a referee and for referees.

I now serve on USA Fencing's Board of Directors, FIE's Council on Discipline, and as an active referee. Except for my years as USA Fencing president (1996-2000), I have refereed since the mid-1980s. I represented the US as an FIE referee and tournament supervisor until retiring under FIE's age-limit rule. Still, I continue working the European Cadet Circuit, mentoring aspiring international officials. On the Board, I played an instrumental role in forming the RC and fighting for the right of referees to elect their own leadership, and as Board liaison to the Referees' Commission ("RC"), I participate in all RC affairs.

Within the RC, the Chair's principal duties include advocating for the referee corps, coordinating and facilitating the work of the Vice-Chairs, and overseeing the adjudication of complaints under the "USA Fencing Referees' Code of Ethics." My goal is to assure that refereeing is enjoyable, rewarding, fulfilling and safe. This means fostering an environment where all referees can improve and practice their craft in a supportive environment of community and appreciation. Prospective referees need to see officiating as a rewarding and satisfying way to engage with the sport. We accomplish this by providing opportunity, encouragement, positive reinforcement, and both emotional and financial reward.

The Chair must also oversee the RC's relationship with USA Fencing Board and staff. This means institutionalizing and professionalizing certain functions. The outgoing Chair laid the groundwork by persuading the Board of Directors to fund a staff position to aid the RC in discharging its responsibilities. That position remains unfilled and its duties remain largely unsettled. Helping to select an appropriate person for the role, delineating the job description and coordinating their work with RC will fall to the Chair. I have the temperament and ability to do so effectively.

We also must solidify gains in referee governance already begun but not yet entrenched. The RC now exists only by Board of Directors resolution, and the ability of referees to participate in selecting their leadership came about by negotiated agreement with USA Fencing's administration. Along with others, I am working on Bylaw changes that include incorporating the RC, and the right of referees to select its leaders, permanently into USA Fencing's structure. Whether elected or not, I will continue to pursue these goals, but I can be more effective doing so as Chair of the Commission.

From the outset, the incoming Chair will have to address recovery from the effects of COVID-19. Referee retention and tournament staffing will be major challenges and we must protect the cadre from the virus. Because we do not know when, where or how USA Fencing will recover, RC leadership will participate in decision making at all levels. I know the organization and how it works, and I will bring that knowledge to bear on behalf of the referee cadre as we reboot competition at all levels. The epidemic's impact on USA Fencing's finances may delay the promised professional assistance. Restarting robust tournament operations will require deep involvement of the RC Chair. I am ready to take on these tasks.

The future of refereeing rests on recruitment, development, advancement and retention. These will be the watchwords of my tenure if I am selected RC Chair. To achieve those ends, I will strive to ensure that officials are respected and rewarded fairly. I have a long and successful track record working with USA Fencing's staff, elected leaders and Board of Directors; I can use my relationships and institutional knowledge to advance the cause of referees and the quality of their work. If elected RC Chair, I will strive to solidify and push beyond the gains recently achieved in how we govern and address referee matters. We have come far from the days of the defunct Fencing Officials Commission, but much remains to be done. The conditions under which referees work – assignments, hours, compensation, opportunity for advancement and interactions with each other, spectators and the public – remain the principal concerns of the RC and, hence its Chair. I have made a life-long commitment to USA Fencing, and I hope to continue my contributions through service as Chair of the Referees' Commission.