

MARYLAND STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

MINUTES - WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2021

On Wednesday, January 20, 2021, the Maryland State Athletic Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman David Norman at 3:05 p.m.. Present were the following: Chairman Norman; Commissioner Brian Boles; Commissioner Chuck Gast; Commissioner David Shull; Greg Morgan, Commissioner, Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing, Maryland Department of Labor; Patrick Pannella, Executive Director; Eric London, Assistant Attorney General and Counsel; and Olga Escobar, Board Specialist. Absent: Commissioner Lenny Moore. This was a virtual meeting due to COVID-19 pandemic public restrictions, with all Commission members and staff calling in telephonically.

UPDATING COMMISSION MEDICAL PROTOCOLS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROTOCOLS FOR COVID-19 TESTING WITH REGARD TO DEFINING MASK REQUIREMENTS

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following report concerning certain updated changes made to the Commission's "COVID-19 Medical Protocols and Administrative Protocols for Professional Wrestling Events Without Spectators in Attendance".

Mr. Pannella stated that the referenced changes to the Commission document were made to ensure that a wrestler and other individuals working are always properly wearing a mask at Commission-sanctioned wrestling events held during the pandemic.

Wrestlers as well as others who are working at a wrestling event may choose to use either a standard-style mask or a gaiter/gator mask. A bandana is not permitted to be worn due, in part, to the tendency for a bandana to continuously slip down off of the nose with any extended movement of the head or body.

In accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") recommendations, the Commission is requiring the following:

- (1) the mask being worn be constructed of two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric;
- (2) the mask being worn completely cover the mouth and nose at all times;
- (3) the mask being worn fit snugly against the sides of the face with no gaps in the fabric; and
- (4) if a gaiter/gator mask is being worn, it must either be made of two layers of fabric or folded to make two layers of fabric while wearing.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Gast, and seconded by Commissioner Shull, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to approve changes to the Commission's "COVID-19 Medical Protocols and Administrative Protocols for Professional Wrestling Events Without Spectators in Attendance" with regard to defining mask requirements.

**COMMISSION REVIEW OF TWO-DAY SERIES OF TAPED
ROH PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING MATCHES HELD
WITHOUT SPECTATORS FROM DECEMBER 11 - 12, 2020
AT THE UMBC EVENTS CENTER**

Executive Director Pannella provided the Commission with the following review of the two-day series of taped professional wrestling matches without spectators which was promoted by licensed promoter Ring of Honor Wrestling Entertainment, LLC ("ROH"), sanctioned by the Commission, and held on December 11 - 12, 2020 at The University of Maryland Baltimore County ("UMBC") Events Center in Catonsville, Maryland.

Mr. Pannella observed that, similar to the ROH wrestling events held in the State of Maryland in August, 2020 and October, 2020, respectively, ROH exhibited a high level of cooperation and communication in working with the Commission to fully maintain all of the Commission's required medical and administrative protocols for COVID-19 testing for wrestling events without spectators.

The two days of taped wrestling matches were preceded on December 10, 2020 by

ROH wrestlers and referees utilizing a designated wrestling “dojo” gym to practice in a ring and to engage in taped interviews for television purposes.

As was selected by ROH for its past two wrestling events held in Maryland during the pandemic, participating wrestlers and referees were sequestered in an isolation “bubble” at The Doubletree by Hilton Baltimore-BWI Airport Hotel for the three nights immediately preceding the first day of this wrestling event.

Commission Inspector Stan Cheung and Mr. Pannella shared regulatory duties with regard to enforcing all Commission social distancing requirements for wrestling participants at the ROH gym and at the venue, with Mr. Pannella also maintaining a regulatory presence at the hotel while the physical examinations of wrestlers and referees were conducted by the attending physician and when licensing certain wrestlers requiring licensure.

Mr. Pannella once again recognized Matthew Jones, Director of Sales for the Doubletree by Hilton Baltimore-BWI Airport Hotel, for his support and the hotel staff’s support of these social distancing requirements.

Mr. Pannella opined that the change in location for the wrestler’s dressing rooms instituted at ROH’s October 16 - 17, 2020 wrestling event, placing all such dressing rooms in the outer second floor hallway of the venue with allocated pipe and draping, continued to contribute to keeping wrestlers safe and properly social distanced.

The 55 wrestlers who participated marked the highest number of wrestlers participating in a ROH wrestling event during the pandemic. ROH spaced wrestlers’ time at the venue apart and at different intervals so that there was never a significantly large number of wrestlers at one time either in the dressing rooms or at the venue.

Mr. Pannella reported that he was approached separately by two ROH wrestlers who expressed their deep appreciation to the Commission for “looking out” for the well-being of wrestling participants by continuously enforcing its “strict” social distancing standards while allowing them to work as safely as possible.

Mr. Pannella noted that he engaged in a conversation at the venue with Michael Pound, Director of Environmental Safety and Health at UMBC. As he has done in the past, Mr. Pound offered to be of assistance in expanding the lines of communication between UMBC and the Commission for the purpose of potentially increasing the number of Commission-sanctioned events being held at the venue.

Commissioner Morgan opined that UMBC has “great potential” in serving as an attractive venue for Commission-sanctioned events. He noted UMBC’s ample parking and close proximity to the I-95 corridor, BWI/Thurgood Marshall Airport and several hotels.

In keeping with the Commission’s position that contact tracing is essential to reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the required Commission written post-activity health questionnaires were completed by all participating wrestlers and referees and were returned to the Commission in the required time frame.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Shull, and seconded by Commissioner Gast, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to adjourn the meeting at 3:22 p.m..

Patrick Pannella
Executive Director