

Letter to Board, September 8, 2026

Dear USBA Board:

This was a very difficult letter to write. From the very first day, our goal has been to provide additional information to this Board on how to optimally position US Biathlon for both short-term and long-term success. Like all of you, we want nothing but the best for US Biathlon and are troubled that we feel obligated to write a piece as critical as this one, but it is being done out of necessity. The seriousness of the actions of individuals deeply involved in this project demands that we accurately recount what has happened, what steps have been taken, what steps have not been taken, and, most importantly, the egregious misconduct of the USSS executive leadership throughout this entire process and why their proposal must be rejected right now so we can all move on and work together on a better solution.

On July 27, we submitted an analysis of the proposed integration of US Biathlon with USSS. It included a detailed analysis of many topics in this process, in particular, specific concerns about USSS as a reliable partner. We provided information on responses from athletes, clubs, and sport development groups on how an integration would help or harm US Biathlon, as well as whether the entire proposal could satisfy the legal requirements of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act. We also offered suggestions for appropriate 'next steps' to complete due diligence on this proposal and garner broad-based support for a viable partnership. It was our hope that significant positive progress would have been made by USBA in the assessment, development of details, and unbiased review of what exactly this integration would entail for Biathlon. In particular, if it could, or how it would, result in a more efficient, financially secure, and professional organization capable of expanding and developing its athlete pool to the highest level of international competition.

Instead, there has been a continued lack of transparency in the process and a surprising and disappointing disinterest in following basic due diligence for any financial partnership. USSS and USBA executive leadership continue to actively promulgate a false narrative regarding the necessity of acting to approve this proposal immediately, without due diligence, and disingenuously promoting it as the best and only option available.

As a result, the USSS proposal now has majority opposition from all Biathlon stakeholder groups, and objective, unbiased surveys have definitively identified this: a recent survey authored by Zach Hall, Shawn Robison, Matt Sabasteanski, and Tracy Lamb of registered coach/official members found that only 6.2% favored approving the agreement. This is not a group with an agenda; this is a group that is the backbone of Biathlon competitions in the US, 94% of whom do not support this USSS proposal.

Perhaps most troubling, inappropriate, and unacceptable pressure has been exerted on our athletes by both USSS and USBA executive leadership. This proposed integration originally claimed an 'athlete-centered' approach as one of its main guiding principles. During the contract negotiations with USSS, there was highly inappropriate conduct by USBA CEO Jack Gierhart toward USBA Athlete Representatives in an attempt to push them into caving in to extremely unrealistic terms from USSS. Jack repeatedly attempted to pressure USBA athletes into accepting contract terms from USSS that the athletes felt were not in the best interest of the organization. This is about as far from athlete-centered as an organization can get, and this very clearly illustrates how profoundly this process has gone awry.

The situation escalated to the point where there were World Cup athletes who were being advised by attorneys not to have telephone calls with Jack without their own attorney present. This is not who we are as an organization, and we need to do better.

This already bad situation was then made worse by the omnipresence of the USSS, a potential VENDOR attempting to secure this transaction for their own substantial financial benefit, yet was somehow given vast and inappropriate amounts of control in this workflow and analysis. In addition to the blatant conflict of interest of having the party with a vested financial interest controlling the negotiating process, the conduct of the USSS executive leadership throughout this entire process has been abhorrent. The day after one of the athlete reps received a harassing call from Jack, the USSS CEO, Sophie Goldschmidt, lambasted them because, "They should be more appreciative of everything that Jack is doing for them."

The CEO of an \$80mm organization with no authority or jurisdiction whatsoever in the USBA governance structure was attempting to gaslight and manipulate our multiple World Cup athletes into supporting a proposal that offered specific financial benefit to her individually and her organization at-large. None of our athletes and/or staff should ever be subjected to conduct such as this from anyone, in particular from the CEO of a potential partner. We're not sure how it is possible to read this and not immediately realize that the USSS is in no way a suitable partner for the USBA.

Following the USBA's Board vote on July 29, an integration working group was established to negotiate an agreement. That would seem to be one of several logical next steps. However, the group consisted of USBA's CEO, a Board Member, and an Athlete Representative. While this group would certainly be appropriate to provide input as to what might be desirable in any potential financial and working partnership agreement, what expertise could they be expected to bring to the table in negotiating a multi-million-dollar, multi-year sports contract that also includes the integration of two Olympic NGBs? Without an appropriate team to evaluate the USSS proposal, the USBA is at a significant disadvantage in this process. This is not a strategy conducive to securing the best financial deal for the organization, nor is it in the organization's best interest in any way.

Furthermore, why are professional Biathletes, individuals with literally zero corporate experience, even being put in a position in which they are being asked to negotiate complicated business deals on behalf of the organization? Should they have input? Absolutely. Should they be the last line of defense against a very poorly structured, highly unpopular deal that changes the core of the organization? Absolutely not. Even more troubling is the fact that multiple individuals inside the process reported that, "It seems like we are negotiating against not just the USSS, but also Jack and Bob. They each accused us many times of 'not being collaborative,' when all we were trying to do is act in the best interest of US Biathlon—not just for now, but for the next 100 years." This is a statement that should greatly trouble everyone on the Board, and everyone in the Biathlon community, and represents yet another example of why this agreement must not be signed.

Another logical next step would have been to secure an unbiased, professional evaluation of this proposed partnership, its legal ramifications, and the financial and governance guarantees that would be required to ensure a positive outcome for US Biathlon. If this has been done, it has not been published or shared. If it has not been done, why not? Despite multiple promises, no definitive legal opinion has been published that confirms that the proposed integration complies with the Ted Stevens Act. USSS CEO Sophie Goldschmidt's comment on this is that the law is something that "We can work around." Whether it

is a violation of the letter of the law or merely its intent, it is most assuredly shaky legal and moral ground and most definitely not in keeping with the spirit or mission of the USBA. It is also, therefore, another very clear reason why partnering with the USSS would be a huge mistake.

The false narrative being promoted by USSS and, very strangely, also by a select few within the USBA, is that this substantially flawed USSS proposal is our only option. This is incorrect. We have had multiple discussions with Max Cobb and other senior international leaders in Biathlon and have received several confirmed reports that the sales/promotion/marketing/business development components of Biathlon can be outsourced to a variety of different agencies, and, in all likelihood, for a greater return. Why has an option with such important implications for the entire future of US Biathlon not been more thoroughly addressed? The notion that the USSS is our only option is simply not true.

Finally, comments from a USSS staff meeting with the cross-country coaching staff were sent to us, not only confirming and verifying all of the above concerns, but also adding further, substantial levels of proof as to why this potential arrangement is a terrible option for the USBA. None of these quotes sound like those of a potentially good or even legal partner.

First and foremost, there was a very telling exchange between USSS CEO Sophie Goldschmidt and the Cross Country coaching staff senior leadership in which one coach noted how fast you need to be to win Biathlon World Cups and how the XC staff has tremendous concern over losing talent to Biathlon. To which Sophie Goldschmidt replied, "We certainly don't want to be losing any future identified stars or current stars to another sport; I'm totally in agreement there." The "synergy" of combined athlete development has been a central selling point from the first day, but it is clearly a disingenuous one. ALL LEVELS of the USSS team have absolutely no intention of moving any high level of talent from cross-country skiing to Biathlon.

In this staff meeting, Sophie Goldschmidt also offered the following thoughts on this process, her perceived need for (lack of) transparency, and where the USSS's true priorities lie:

"They (Biathlon) may not know everything behind the scenes as far as how it's going to be structured and how we know we're going to be benefiting, because sometimes you have to position things the right way."

"Cross country is going to be our priority. Our core sports are our priority."

"It (the process) is getting a little political. A couple of them are digging in more than they should be, given what (little) they've achieved.....some of them are believing their own BS."

"We have to feel like this (acquisition) is going to help us or else we're not going to do this."

In this same meeting, USSS Chief of Sport Anouk Patty echoed these priorities:

"These guys (Biathlon) are very well funded....it does allow us to bring some funds in to support the cross-country program."

"It (Biathlon) is the most watched winter sport in Europe, for sure, so I think there's a general focus around better commercializing Biathlon, whether it's in the US or Europe, that can bring in more revenue that can have a halo effect for our entire organization."

The perspective of the USSS cross-country coaching staff was also very telling:

"It (merger) doesn't even come across as a neutral; it comes across as a pretty serious threat to me (to the Cross Country Team), because we have never seen an athlete come across from Biathlon to XC; it only goes the other way."

"We feel really good about the programs that we're running and the development system that we have, and we don't want to have a tap into it where at each of our development camps they have an opportunity to shoot and to potentially push athletes out (of XC)."

"They (Biathlon) have far inferior skiers, in general, and they want everything that we have. We're just barely hanging on with the 'A' and 'B' teams that we have."

Furthermore, in this meeting, both Sophie Goldschmidt and Patty can be heard again attempting to bully and intimidate their staff by sternly instructing them to be "collaborative and supportive..." in this process, with the clear implication that they were NOT to speak their minds. All staff in attendance were warned several times not to express any negative concerns, regardless of how substantial they may be. This is not good leadership, this is not honest leadership, and this is not the type of organization with whom the USBA should be doing business.

In summary, this process has been troublingly rushed, preventing proper due diligence by USBA and thus greatly favoring USSS. Athlete representatives and staff have been harassed and pressured into silence for asking legitimate questions. There has been no proper valuation of Biathlon commercial rights. Objective expert legal evaluation seems to have been an afterthought, coming far too late in the process and proposing a structure that fails the red-face test in terms of compliance with the spirit and intention of the Sports Act. The process has failed to bring the community along to see this as a positive opportunity and instead brought the community together in unified opposition to the proposed alliance. And finally, the internal statements of the two leaders at USSS blatantly contradict their rosy statements about the spirit of partnership with the Biathlon community that will help drive growth and success, when actually what was planned from the beginning was a hijacking of US Biathlon's value to USSS's gain.

For all of these reasons and more, and despite the claims of USSS and USBA executive leadership, this proposal does NOT have the support of the athletes, coaches, officials, or the Biathlon community at-large. This is too important a decision to enter into with such widespread disapproval and well-documented concern. We understand that everyone on the USBA side is looking to do what is best for the organization, but there have been so many problems with this process, and so many lines have been crossed by the USSS that we are urging this entire Board to please carefully consider all of the examples provided above, immediately terminate all discussions with the USSS, and for us all to come together as an organization in a united mission of securing the best possible short-term and long-term solution for US Biathlon.

Respectfully submitted,

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