

USBA-USSS Integration Analysis

Introduction

Regarding ongoing integration discussions with the USSS, there is concern that the USBA Board may not currently have access to several pieces of relevant information. This analysis was performed to provide the entire Board with the facts necessary to make as informed a decision as possible in all merger discussions.

This is an extremely blunt summary. Multiple individuals were interviewed inside and outside of Biathlon to supply as much information as possible, in as objective and informative a manner as possible. Every effort was made to keep this study fact-based and data-driven. Some of the information provided is publicly available, some of it is from the recent series of USSS/USBA committee meetings, and some of it is fact-based opinions stemming from direct interactions that leaders in the Biathlon, Cross-Country, and Nordic Combined communities have had, or are having, with the USSS.

It is extremely important to keep in mind that this integration analysis was done to help the USBA Board. It is also very important to note that everyone who contributed to the document wants the same thing as the Board - to do what is best for US Biathlon. Please keep this in mind throughout this entire document, as many of the recommendations given by those interviewed are quite direct. Our intent is to help Biathlon, not to hurt it or the Board, so it is our fervent hope that all of these findings will be interpreted with this in mind.

The first section is a PowerPoint presentation that former USBA President and CEO Max Cobb presented in May, but may not have yet been circulated to the entire board. Sections two through seven represent the work of multiple authors and contributors, covering a multitude of topics applicable to this integration discussion. We reached out to representatives from Biathlon, Cross-Country Skiing, Nordic Combined, and Alpine Skiing, and spoke with individuals at all levels in these sports. We found all of their perspectives to be very useful in the attempt to construct as complete a picture as possible of the historic and current policies and procedures of USSS and the implications of these actions on this current discussion.

There were many people interviewed who were quite critical of USSS, and for good reason, but it is very important to keep in mind that the final section of this document includes recommendations on how to best explore **ALL** of the options available to the USBA, **INCLUDING** working with USSS.

This analysis is critical, but honest. Above all, it was conducted with an objective, evidence-based approach with nothing but the best interest of Biathlon in mind.

I. Max Cobb Presentation

US Biathlon – USSS Integration

Considerations for the
Best Outcome
May 2026

US Biathlon – USSS Integration

BACKGROUND: The permanent coming together of two NGBs has, at least within the last 40 years, never been accomplished. Why:

- Complex business arrangement to fairly balance resources
- Diverse sport cultural elements which are hard to manage
- Dilution of leadership's focus
- Resistant club / grassroots coach and volunteer environment
- Legal constraints: Ted Stevens Sports Act forbids it

Facets of an Agreement

The coming together of multi-million-dollar organizations with diverse sport cultures requires a robust and detailed agreement since it must consider both the business and culture of both organizations. Both US Biathlon and USSS deserve to have a very clear and comprehensive understanding about the partnership

- Clear terms and conditions regarding all business aspects
- Grievance procedures with periods to remedy must be established
- Termination procedures for cause or unsuccessful / ineffectual programing as well as fundamental changes in circumstances must be clearly defined

Facets of an Agreement - continued

- Clear governance structures, decision-making authorities and interdependencies within the organizational framework as well as towards external governing organizations such as the IFs and USOPC
- Internal staffing structure and decision-making authorities need to be clearly defined
- Financial arrangements: membership dues, event-related funds, donations, IF support, marketing and sponsorship as well as cost sharing of insurance and back of house administrative expenses
- Ringfencing of dedicated resources should be permanent

US Biathlon Commercial Considerations

Marketing and Sponsorship

- Due to the extraordinary audience figures for biathlon World Cups / World Championships, the uniform of biathletes has the greatest value of any winter sport in Europe.
- It would be important to carefully consider the value that US Biathlon brings to a sponsors and ensuring fair market value is returned to biathlon sport and fair sales commission as applicable
- FIS is struggling with marketing and broadcast rights sales where IBU has secured excellent broadcast and marketing rights
- With the OWG coming back to Utah in 8 years it's important to have fair practices

US Biathlon Major Events

IBU Events: All IBU events come with both lucrative commercial marketing contracts and direct support from IBU for US Biathlon which should be dedicated to hosting the events and not diluted

- US Biathlon has secured an IBU World Cup for March 2029 at Soldier Hollow
- While the IBU Events Calendar for 2030 – 2034 has not yet been set it is fair to assume that US Biathlon will be awarded World Cups in March 2031 and 2033.
- US Biathlon may want to consider IBU Cups and IBU Junior or Youth events all of which come with support packages as well

Community Integration: willingness assessment

Sport culture develops over years, based underlaying circumstances, leadership, resources and governance. Differences in the way USSS has developed XC skiing vs. US Biathlon's approach has been significant

- Cross country programs tend to be more closely aligned to regional organizations (NENSA, CXC etc.) vs. the NGB
- To successfully execute integration of biathlon into cross country clubs an assessment of club leader willingness must be conducted
- The resulting understanding of issues must then be managed

Community Integration: Infrastructure

Traditionally US Biathlon has had a closer working relationship with their clubs and regional programs. This cooperation has led to major infrastructure development and pioneering program development.

- From Fort Kent to the Ariens Nordic Center to Lake Placid's new venue built for the FISU World U Games and the cooperation with the National Guard, USBA has played a crucial role in venue and program development.
- USSS relies on commercial, municipal and scholastic venues for their club programs. They are not familiar with venue development

Community Integration: Club Clusters

To ensure grassroots athlete development, US Biathlon must foster the development of clusters of clubs close enough for weekend competitions.

- Is USSS experienced in this kind of collaboration? No! But this is the essential next step for grassroots biathlon development.
- Volunteers across the country need support to find the resources to build venues, start programs and hire coaches. That's a core part of US Biathlon's role.
- The details of how this critical development will continue must be determined before anything is agreed.

Community Integration: Education

Safe practices are central to the development of biathlon. As grassroots and club activity grows there is an inescapable need to provide extensive education for the community to conduct safe training and competitions according the biathlon rules. US Biathlon must:

- Scale up training for athletes, club officials and coaches
- Run education programs on how to deliver safe competitions

Athlete Support

Twenty years ago, in 2006, US Biathlon recognized that to succeed, America's biathletes need financial support to dedicate themselves to their sport. US Biathlon built a direct athlete support program that:

- Provides up to \$3,000 a month and up to \$15,000 for performance at the WC and World Championships besides the very significant IBU prize money that is awarded to 30th place
- World Cup and World Championship team members have no expenses and the IBU Cup team has very little self pay
- Junior athletes can apply for support for the Jr Cup and Jr Worlds

These are crucial systems that make biathlon accessible for long enough to master the sport. The contrast to USSS could not be more stark and risks cultural rifts.

Fundraising

US Biathlon has built a best-in-class Foundation and grassroots fundraising program to support the team and the development of the sport. Key differentiators include the following

- Donors are motivated by being very close to both the team they are supporting and seeing firsthand the difference their support makes
- Being close to the leadership and decision makers matters
- The excellent organization of activities at a reasonable cost has built trust and credibility.

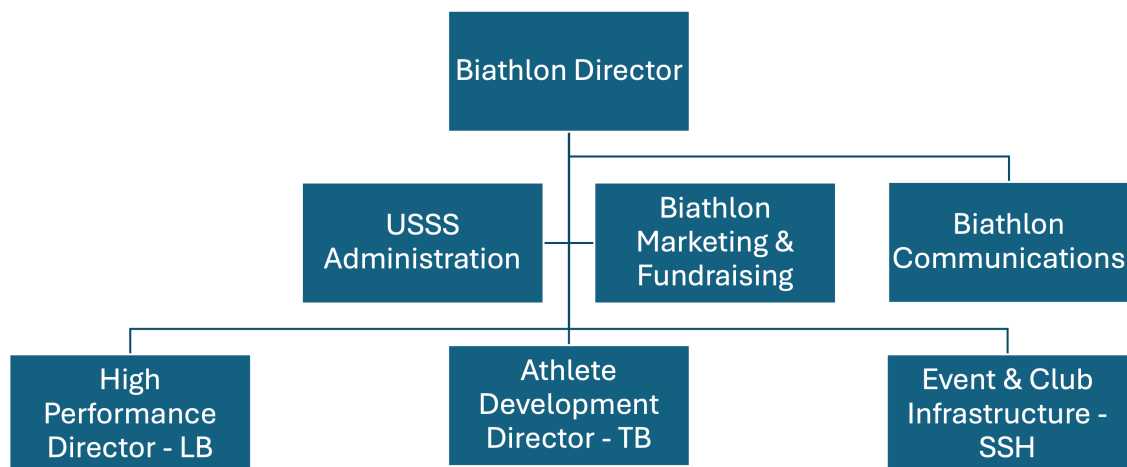
All this requires staff attention to be nurtured and developed without compromise to continue the momentum built in the last four years

US Biathlon Leadership

Strategic leadership and coordination has been a core pillar of the development of biathlon in America.

- The US Biathlon CEO, while managing many operational and governance topics, is fully dedicated to the strategic development of biathlon in America. Providing this leadership, nimble decision-making and exchange with the board and donors is essential to the continued success and development of US Biathlon.
- The title of CEO may not fit into an integrated structure, but the dedicated leadership of the US Biathlon staff and community is fundamental.

US Biathlon Staff Structure: possible solution



II. Summary of concerns regarding the USSS

1. **Long-term USBA budget reductions** – USBA currently has a larger budget than the *combined* budget of all three of the Nordic sports under USSS (Cross Country [XC], Nordic Combined [NoCo], and Ski Jumping [Jumping]). Is it therefore realistic to think that by going into this new business arrangement, the USBA would continue to be funded at its current level, in particular, in the long term?
2. **Consistent pattern of underfunding Nordic sports** – Representatives from all three of these sports report being underfunded, even XC, despite medals in multiple Olympics.
3. **Nordic Combined mismanagement** – Nordic Combined funding was essentially completely eliminated one year after earning the first Olympic gold medal in any Nordic sport in US history. Not only was this devastating for Nordic Combined, but it is also very important to point out that the Nordic sports are not distinct silos. *In fact, many XC athletes, individuals who later went on to World Cup teams, started their careers as Nordic Combined athletes.* By cutting off the Nordic Combined pipeline, the *entire* Nordic pipeline is damaged. This is the antithesis of athlete development.
4. **Absence of accountability** – The USSS explanation behind this cut is that, “This happened under a previous administration.” The current administration has had 5 years to correct this financial death sentence and has chosen to do nothing. Every aspect of this is greatly concerning.
5. **Long-term instability** – The current USSS proposal does not include any funding guarantees after 4 years; this, combined with all of the points listed above, portends substantial long-term leadership concerns for the USBA and creates excessive risk surrounding the potential for the USSS to not honor any of the conditions in the existing proposal should there be a change in USSS leadership or priorities.
6. **Mismatched skill set** – This integration is being driven by the executive leadership team at USSS with a focus primarily on the potential for revenue generation for USSS. This group has little to no experience in athlete development or the successful transition of individual athletes to elite-level success. Almost no input has been solicited from USSS or USBA staff, members, or clubs regarding how this integration might work in practice. This is allegedly a key ‘benefit’ of this integration, yet the groups expected to execute it have had almost no involvement.
7. **Disregarding gender equity** – According to multiple reports from US Nordic Combined athletes, staff, and coaches, USSS offered no assistance in the fight to add women’s Nordic Combined to the Olympic program. Everyone interviewed both inside and outside of Nordic Combined found this to be very disturbing.
8. **Ignoring Olympic elimination** – The USSS also made no effort to keep Nordic Combined from being removed from all future Olympics, despite the extraordinary accomplishments of the US squad over the years and the fact that Nordic Combined was one of the original Winter Olympic sports.
9. **Lack of mission-critical support** – If a sport is not going to receive assistance from its NGB amidst severe adversity, it most certainly raises the question of the potential level of USSS support for Biathlon should it ever be needed, in any capacity, on any minor or major issue.
10. **Poor reputation** – The overwhelming assessment from athletes, coaches, and staff from all of the sports within the bailiwick of the USSS is that the USSS has a very poor relationship with most of their sports, in particular the Nordic sports. It is viewed by most

stakeholders as primarily an Alpine Skiing-driven organization, and even individuals within Alpine Skiing expressed great dissatisfaction with their level of funding and overall support.

11. **Substandard history of athlete development** – The USSS is making substantive claims about their supposed ability to improve and expand athlete development for Biathlon, yet the USSS does very little development for XC skiing, and absolutely none for Nordic Combined and Ski Jumping. All of the individuals from both XC and Biathlon clubs interviewed find this to be quite incongruous. Senior leadership within these clubs, people with literally decades of experience in XC athlete development, agree that while the concept of a more unified XC and Biathlete development pipeline is attractive in theory, the reality is far more complicated than is being acknowledged by USSS officials in this process. The statements made thus far in this process by the USSS show a clear and fundamental lack of understanding of the details of either XC or Biathlete development.
12. **Misleading proposals** – The USSS has no direct control over the XC ski clubs and their priorities and programs. They provide little to no resources to these clubs, so there appears to be an enormous disconnect between the very general plans of USSS to improve Biathlon and XC development and the reality of implementation of these ideas.
13. **Disingenuous intentions** – USSS suffered failed attempts to acquire both US Surfing and US Skateboarding, both clearly a very awkward fit for a winter sports-oriented NGB. These acquisition efforts further reinforce that this current effort to take over US Biathlon is financially motivated, as opposed to an initiative designed to be in the best overall interest of Biathlon. It appears quite likely that this acquisition would benefit the USSS, but quite unlikely that this move would benefit US Biathlon, in particular long-term—a concept that will be addressed in greater detail later in this analysis.
14. **Biased budget comparisons** – Two opposing budgets have been presented, one with integration into USSS and one if the USBA continues to stand alone, and there appear to be numerous highly dubious best-case scenarios in the integration budget, as well as a clearly worst-case scenario applied to the ‘stand alone’ option. A much more in-depth, objective budgeting process needs to be done by independent analysts for a more accurate comparison between both approaches.
15. **Resource allocation** – Senior executive compensation at USSS has increased more than 3-fold in the last 5 years. USSS total revenue has increased by an impressive factor of 2 in the same time period. Little to none of this financial growth has been shared with any of the Nordic sports. *The USSS CEO’s compensation package represents more than two-thirds of the entire XC annual budget.* All of these facts are both very troubling and very telling.

III. Athlete concerns

1. **Athlete support** – As noted above in Mr. Cobb’s presentation, and corroborated in multiple athlete interviews in all of the Nordic disciplines, there are substantial differences in athlete funding between Biathlon, XC, NoCo, and Jumping, with the USBA currently providing exponentially higher levels of funding for its athletes, at essentially every level. Current USBA athlete funding is substantially greater than even XC, despite their multiple Olympic medals, and XC is light-years ahead of NoCo and Jumping, even with NoCo also earning multiple Olympic medals. It is therefore a very logical concern of every Biathlete that should this merger happen, their funding will be reduced.

2. **Underfunding athlete development** – To wit, why does XC skiing have the National Nordic Foundation (NNF)? According to the NNF website, “*While US cross country and Nordic combined skiing budgets remained flat, the ambitions of American skiers did not. Their drive, work, and will powered unprecedented success for US skiing, but they needed help from the community they inspired. That’s when a group of athletes, coaches, and community leaders looked for a way to centralize the energy and generosity of skiers across the country. The result was the National Nordic Foundation.*” This first sentence speaks volumes and further supports the point that USSS does not do a good job supporting athlete development and raises the question as to why the USBA would want to enter such an environment. The claim that the USSS is going to enhance existing USBA athlete development when they have a proven track record of minimal XC, NoCo, and Jumping development seems quite inaccurate.
3. **Lack of a parallel funding structure to XC** – No organization such as the NNF is currently necessary within the USBA thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the USBA Board and its Foundation. By being placed in the same environment as XC, but without a dedicated funding organization like the NNF, the long-term financial prognosis for Biathlon is poor. Expecting the USSS to support Biathletes at their current level when the USSS does not presently even come close to doing this with their existing athletes in XC, NoCo, and Jumping is viewed by the athletes as extremely unrealistic.
4. **Diminished importance** – Becoming “a small fish in a big pond” is a frequent refrain from ALL past and present athletes interviewed. Through all of their actions and funding priorities, USSS has shown itself to be a predominantly Alpine Skiing-focused organization, so there is considerable concern that adding Biathlon to this NGB will not only dilute the exclusive, high-level focus currently provided by the USBA to Biathletes, but this acquisition will ultimately even further adulterate support—whether this be financial, logistical, or intellectual—on all of the USSS Nordic disciplines.
5. **Scattered focus** – The broader, substantially more fragmented focus of the USSS, along with no clear advocate within senior leadership or chain of command focused on Biathlon, is also a source of great concern not just from the National Team athletes, but from all athletes, coaches, and USBA members interviewed.
6. **USSS Indifference** – The severe mismanagement of NoCo/Jumping was also raised frequently: if your own NGB isn’t going to lobby for you in your ultimate time of need, such as the exclusion of an entire gender or removal from the Olympics, what does that say about the priorities and overall effectiveness of the organization?

IV. Summary of Biathlon club concerns

1. **Questionable intentions** – The USBA defines its mission as, “*U.S. Biathlon exists to support and encourage the development of Biathlon in the United States, to work with Biathlon clubs and regional centers around the country to organize training and competition from the grassroots to elite level, and to prepare athletes for international competition.*” How, specifically, will this merger improve this? This question has been asked of the USSS repeatedly, and a clearly defined, satisfactory answer has yet to be given. From the perspective of the clubs, this proposed integration will make things worse, not better, for Biathlon.
2. **Absence of details** – How is the USSS going to do a better job supporting the Biathlon clubs, the lifeblood of our development pipeline, when they have absolutely no familiarity with this process whatsoever? Multiple individuals have asked for specific

examples during town hall and committee meetings and have never received a direct answer with a tangible plan or directly actionable items.

3. **Competency concerns** – What, specifically, can the USSS bring that the current staff isn't already doing? The current USBA staff collectively have over 70 years of experience in all levels of Biathlon and an extensive network of relationships with both XC and Biathlon clubs, so the notion that USSS staff with a grand total of zero years of experience in Biathlon can offer remarkable new insight seems unlikely.
4. **Environment unfamiliarity** – There are considerable concerns that the USSS proposal lacks any real merit, in particular in the areas of athlete development between XC and Biathlon clubs, and is instead a theoretical plan produced by individuals with a lack of direct understanding of either XC or Biathlon.
5. **Ignored requests** – Multiple reports have indicated that many specific questions regarding several different membership issues have not been addressed by the USSS and have in fact been removed from committee agendas.
6. **IBU interaction void** – How will the USSS be dedicating resources to the clubs and athletes to interface with the IBU and all international events and organizations?
7. **Resource hoarding** – As described by the NNF, USSS has a historically dismal track record of sharing in financial growth. Total revenue for the USSS has grown from \$35MM five years ago to a projected \$70–75MM this year, but all of the Nordic sports budgets have either remained flat or had only modest increases. This suggests that Biathlon would likely also not be a part of any future revenue increases, despite the fact that Biathlon would likely be a key driver in additional revenue. Several have questioned if the true motivation of the USSS is not to better support Biathlon, but to increase revenue for use outside of Biathlon and, in fact, outside of all Nordic sports.
8. **Loss of control** – There is substantial concern over the proposed complete and total relinquishment of control to USSS. From a recent USSS-led meeting, a big part of the 'sell' on this has been how USBA will retain control over everything Biathlon. However, directly in the middle of the group's 'Task Summary,' the following statement was made by USSS: "USSS will be responsible for staffing, programs, events, and admin for Biathlon." Everyone aware of this finds this statement quite troubling.

V. Summary of athlete development concerns

1. **No specific action plan** – One key senior official at a club offered a very blunt but insightful comment: "The USSS continues to throw around this rosy, unrealistic picture of development. Note that they have not provided any specific examples of what they are going to do. These are needed before their argument can be taken seriously."
2. **Questionable support** – What XC club leaders has the USSS spoken to who support this plan? We could not find any. What are the USSS's exact plans for implementation on all of their development ideas? Which clubs specifically support it? Which coaches? We could not find any who support this proposal.
3. **Theoretical, not practical ideas** – Another very prescient observation from a Biathlon club was, "The ideas from the USSS, while not bad, seem to be very theoretical, and not very practical. They only have support from the people with no experience with any of these issues and absolutely no support from those ultimately responsible for their implementation."
4. **Disconnection from reality** – A very recurrent comment was, "It's not that people don't want this shared development model to work; I think in theory everyone does, but

historically it just never has, and there are lots of good reasons why. The USSS seems to be spending its time telling people to make it work, instead of asking those with literally decades of experience IF it could work, or how we can modify these concepts to make them practical.”

5. **Conflict of interest** – Perhaps the most troubling issue is that during this entire process, the USSS has inserted their leadership team into the working groups. Not only has this completely removed all objectivity, as USBA staff are now in an environment where their potential managers are evaluating their willingness to support the USSS agenda, but it is also highly unusual and extremely inappropriate for an entity that is proposing the complete takeover of an organization to be taking a leadership role in the evaluation of their own proposal. *This is a blatant conflict of interest and highly inappropriate.*

VI. Legal/logistical concerns

1. **Ted Stevens Act violation** – Numerous parties have noted that this proposal is in direct violation of the Ted Stevens Act. The USSS CEO has dismissed this concern as “unhelpful chatter,” yet the USBA past President and CEO, Max Cobb, who served in that position for 16 years and is the current International Biathlon Union Secretary General, specifically stated in his presentation that this is illegal.
2. **Independent counsel legal assessment** – Former Assistant US Attorney Ed Williams’ assessment is also that this is illegal: <https://independentBiathlon.org/>
3. **Promised Independent Legal Confirmation Lacking** – In response to concerns about the potential legal uncertainty of this integration, USBA and USSS leadership have promised an independent legal opinion. If this has been acquired, it has not been shared.
4. **Objectivity** – Every Biathlon stakeholder interviewed said they were much more inclined to believe Mr. Cobb and Mr. Williams than an organization with a very checkered past and a substantial vested financial interest in the outcome.
5. **Objectionable intent** – Even if this proposal is ultimately found to not be illegal, the fact that it is so close to the line, and that this is even a point of discussion, is quite concerning. Even if this arrangement is not a direct violation of the law, it is a clear violation of its intent.
6. **USOPC advocacy** – Will there be staff interfacing with the USOPC and acting in the specific, best interest of Biathlon, or will the USSS be representing several different, diverse sports, sometimes with competing interests?
7. **Budgeting priorities** – Who controls all aspects of Biathlon budgeting? If anyone from US Biathlon feels the organization is being treated unfairly, is there a process of appeals, or is the Biathlon powerless regarding all future directions of the sport?
8. **Organizational control** – With this proposal, the USBA is giving up control of Biathlon. Once the USBA goes through that door, there is no going back. Given all of the doubts, question marks, and uncertainty regarding this deal, is the Board comfortable signing off on this essentially irreversible decision? Has sufficient time been given to this extremely consequential decision?
9. **Troubled history** – To be clear, this is not just giving up the governance, stability, and proven history of success of the USBA to a private equity or VC group; it is complete abdication of control to an organization with a very poor track record of governance across all of its sports, in particular the Nordic ones.

10. **Irreputable infrastructure damage** - The USBA has done an excellent job of building an organization one hundred percent dedicated to supporting Biathlon in the United States. It is a very effective team that has produced multiple World Championship medals, and this infrastructure has literally taken decades to create. By electing to be incorporated into the USSS, all of this will be destroyed, leaving all US Biathletes without any leadership or governing body specifically committed to supporting them. What took years of dedication, commitment, and focus to build will be gone in an instant. Even if Biathlon is eventually able to leave the USSS, it would take years to rebuild this level of guidance, experience, and support, and Biathlon may never be returned to its current level of success, much less reach the Olympic medal podium.

VII. Next Steps

1. **Funding options** – There is a widespread understanding among everyone interviewed that funding is key to both the short-term and long-term success of US Biathlon, and everybody greatly appreciates the efforts by the USBA Board to increase revenue and improve Biathlon in the US at every operational level. This cannot be overstated. All stakeholders interviewed clearly understand the incredible importance of adequate funding and deeply appreciate the intentions of the Board. The recurrent question, however, is if the USSS is the best option. It is the belief of many that there are several other viable options that need to be explored in much more depth before any final decision is rendered.
2. **Status quo model** – One senior USBA official commented, “Not being under the control of the Ski Team was the best move that we ever made; we never would have achieved what we have if we had not started our own organization in the 80s.” Not having the immediate infusion of USSS funds might be difficult short term, but the historical perspective is that being independent has proven to be the superior long-term strategy. The observation was seconded by individuals both inside and outside of Biathlon. What is the benefit of a hurried and complete takeover by another NGB at this moment? Especially without a thorough investigation of the terms as well as other viable alternatives?
3. **Internal business development model** – There were multiple questions as to whether dedicated, internal business development staff could be added. The point was made multiple times that the driving factor behind the USSS interest in Biathlon is its revenue generation potential, as Biathlon viewership and sponsorship agreements in Europe are quantum levels higher than that of XC. If the USSS can sell Biathlon, USBA should be able to sell Biathlon, if the appropriate resources are put in place.
4. **Strategic partnership model** – A strategic partnership with USSS should be explored in greater detail. This would allow the USBA to maintain independent control of Biathlon, with the USSS serving as the marketing and business development partner. A recent press release from the USSS spoke of a separate, distinct title sponsor for US Snowboard; a similar option should be explored for the USBA. This would allow each entity to operate in their area of expertise, to everyone’s mutual benefit.
5. **Community engagement model** – Crowdsourcing revenue was also suggested as perhaps not a primary revenue strategy, but rather as a source of supplemental income for any potential short-term deficiencies created by rejection of the USSS proposal.

6. **Modified USSS proposal model** – Despite all of the concerns described in this document, there is still interest in working with the USSS, but only with *substantially* more guarantees and an iron-clad termination clause. As one club official put it, “If the deal really is that good, USBA should be open to it with rigid and specific termination clauses. Money is a key part of racing and development, and I’m glad the USBA Board is thinking out of the box on ways to better Biathlon. The working groups have come up with great ways to improve Biathlon, NONE OF WHICH REQUIRE INTEGRATION WITH USSS. Maybe what needs to happen is a thoughtful assessment of what is really needed to improve the sport on all fronts (admin, performance, devo, \$\$, etc.) and then come up with a plan. In its current form, this deal is a complete disaster. This is an historically unpopular and unreliable NGB, so to enter into any sort of open-ended deal with them without specific revenue-sharing percentages and a rigid termination clause is risky at best, but a deal could work if all of these conditions are met.”
7. **Shared revenue provision** – Any operating agreement with the USSS **must** include specific criteria for revenue sharing. There need to be terms and conditions in the contract in which the USBA shares in the financial growth and success of the USSS, as the USBA is bringing substantial and tangible value to the USSS. As noted above, USSS has had a \$35MM increase in revenue, yet little to none of these funds made their way into the Nordic sports. Entering into a deal where the economic viability of US Biathlon is a key revenue driver, yet Biathlon does not have a guaranteed stake in this growth, is a severely flawed approach. A shared-growth model is in everyone’s best interest.
8. **Termination clause** – Probably the most frequent comment on this entire situation was, “Why is the USSS so reluctant to commit to anything longer than 4 years? This should be a DEAL BREAKER.”
9. **Membership support** – It is extremely important to note that the proposal, in its current form, is almost universally opposed. Literally everyone we spoke with, including athletes, club leaders, and general membership, believes it is a catastrophic mistake in its current form. These are people who have been involved in Biathlon for decades, and in some cases, their entire adult lives. Completely independent of this process and document, the Independent Biathlon Project further reinforces this sentiment: <https://independentBiathlon.org/> This broad-based and highly diverse, almost unanimous lack of support should be a clear indicator of just how bad the current USSS proposal truly is for US Biathlon.
10. **Representation** – Another extremely common question we received in this process is, “Why would the USBA want to do this?” This plan has little to no support in either the Biathlon or XC communities at large, and it is vital that the Board understand this. If a thorough and safeguarded plan is presented, with full transparency, these efforts will be supported by the majority of the athletes, coaches, clubs, and membership at large.
11. **Walking the walk** – One committee member said, “We have also heard from USSS leadership that they are sure this will all work out for us. That's great, but if they really feel that way, then there should be no issue with specific financial thresholds, a shared revenue plan, and definitive termination clauses.”

Conclusion

It goes without saying that this is undoubtedly the largest and most significant issue that has faced US Biathlon in quite some time, perhaps ever. So many athletes, coaches, staff, board members, community members, and fans have poured their heart and soul into this organization for decades that this is a decision that can not be taken lightly. This document was prepared in an effort to give a voice to as many of these individuals and perspectives as possible. These contributors all have only one goal: how to best position US Biathlon for both short-term and long-term success.

If the Board elects to cede control of the USBA to USSS, there's no going back, so it is the fervent hope of everyone who contributed to this document that all of the facts presented here will be carefully considered and taken in the spirit intended. The overwhelming consensus is that everyone is terrified of destroying the long-term future of the organization for possible short-term financial gain. Given the extremely troubled past and present of USSS, it is the unanimous view of every single author and contributor that working with the USSS should be an absolute last resort and, if chosen, done so with the most stringent requirements, criteria, and termination clauses possible.

As one experienced thought-leader in the field put it, "You're talking about making a deal with an organization way more oriented toward their revenue goals than to the support of their constituent sports, so only do so with great caution and as an absolute last resort. Do not, under any circumstances, expect them to do the right thing at any given time. The USSS will only do what they are contractually obligated to do, so it is imperative that you protect the organization with clear terms on every conceivable issue, or you'll be sorry. Look at what they've done to everyone else—you're being pretty unrealistic if you think that they won't also do that to you if given any sort of opportunity."

Respectfully submitted by:

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