

APBA National Meeting Safety/Rescue Meeting, January 22, 2020, Hilton, SeaTac

Minutes

The meeting opened at 11:45 am on January 22, 2020. The PowerPoint charts used for the agenda and other matters are attached.

Members present were Sam LaBanco, Tom Stanley, Rich Fuchslin, Eli Whitney, Matt Yarno, Jeff Williams, Bob Koschka, Jeff Brewster, Pat Gleason, Bob Wartinger. Regrets were received for Robin Shane (arriving later in the day), Ken Smith, Rich Evans, RJ West. There were approximately 40 plus attendees including committee members in attendance. A sign-up sheet for attendees who wanted to receive a pdf of the PowerPoint and the minutes was circulated.

1) Introduction

BW thanked Jan Shaw for the addition of time for the subject of safety at the annual meeting. It was mentioned that there were actually four separately scheduled safety topic meetings programed into the Annual Meeting schedule. He also thanked Eli Whitney for his years of effort leading the Safety Committee portion of the Safety/Rescue Committee.

BW also noted that he had been receiving requests from people who desired to join the committee and had been welcoming them. A complete list of additional members will be sent to the BOD for approval about 2 weeks after the Annual meeting closes, however, BW considers them on the committee.

The purpose of this meeting was to review and update attendees on the recent activities, hear reports by various commission heads or their safety representative on successes or any particular issues, discuss the responsibilities of the committee, discuss proposed General Safety Rule proposals and to schedule, as best possible, times for interaction on safety topics with the various commissions.

2) Reports

Safety committee Chair- BW- The major effort the past two months has been in getting organized, working on identification of the "charter" of the committee, and rules review, specifically focusing on the General Safety Rules. BW had talked to most of the members of the committee, the heads of the commissions to obtain an understanding of their concerns. One theme that was recurrent was that the safety reps and the commission heads did not have all the information necessary to provide them with an overview of their risk status and issues because they were not able to receive the incident reports. A general racing rule proposal has been prepared to address this situation whereby incident reports received by the office will be copied to the commission head.

Another item brought up to the BOD by BW was the desire to find a succinct definition of the safety committee's responsibility, its product, its charter, in that the by-laws say very little on the subject. At the last BOD meeting, Mark Wheeler took the action to attempt the challenging task of definition. His correspondence, which has been shared with all but the latest members of the committee says that APBA committees are essentially "advisory". The Safety/Rescue Committee advises the commissions regarding safety issues, may propose rule changes to the commissions, reviews commission rule changes

that may affect safety, and has some jurisdiction over the General Safety Rules where after drafting and approval within the committee, can submit them for BOD approvals.

BW also stated that he had drafted essentially 12 rule changes, mostly for the GSR and had circulated them to the members of the committee for feedback and discussion in their commission meetings. These rule changes would be described later in the meeting. Another thrust or goal for the GSR is to contain centralized rules for the common elements of cockpits, air systems, restraints, Forward Head Restraints (FHR), cockpit registration, etc. There are a number of common rules that can be addressed in the GSR to eliminate the individual "stove pipe" variations that are now present. Of course, more restrictive rules can be added by the individual commissions, but there are a number of commonalities.

Rescue-No formal report although rescue crew members were present and participating.

Stock Outboard-Tom Johnston- The turning fin proposal will be discussed. Jeff Brewster-could use info on safety clothing.

Modified Outboard-Bob Koschka- Reported actually pretty safe year. There are questions are coming up regarding ANSI ratings. There is interest in knowing more about how to tell what the ratings for the clothing are. It should be a topic for discussion.

PRO- Rich Fuchslin-Need further discussion on the rounding of the fin. Would like information and discussion about the helmet bucketing occurrences and possible ways to improve the situation, lower the risk. Kyle Bahl suggested that if any turn fin be made it would be a lot easier for inspectors if it was a blanket rule across the categories.

Inboard-Eli- Stated that they had a pretty good year. He also stated that he thought some of the Inboard drivers needed to learn to respect the rescue people more. It is an education thing, he stated. He noted that the placement of equipment within cockpits could be improved in some of the HRL boats. He believes that the APBA legacy inspectors have the knowledge to help improve some aspects of these cockpits through education of the drivers. He also expressed concern related to a knowledge deficiency with respect to structural capability of the cockpits. The Inboard commission is looking at a change to the restraint rules to emphasize SFI standards or FIA standards. It possibly could be put into the GSR so that we all could be using the same restraint rules. Another area that will be under discussion will be communications from shore to driver. They would like to find some way to have an inexpensive way to eliminate the radio corral and go directly from the judges stand to the boats.

Outboard Drag-Fred Hauenstein-No activity

Thundercat- Will discuss with Robin later

Unlimited- Still working on a representative, have informal link at the moment

J/ASX- Jeff Williams- One concern is that the classes are composed of a higher percentage of young rookie drivers, the drivers move on and are replaced by another group of young rookie drivers. This creates a perpetual mix of people. BW suggested that it would be possible to chat or brainstorm a bit more about that unique situation, the challenging driving abilities of this demographic.

Jet River Racers- Howard Shaw- They had lowered the age requirement to 14. After last years accident the age has been changed back to 16. Rules have been essentially the same for this year. The category

also runs in some pretty rough water conditions. BW commented that when taken on a world wide basis, jet river racing has had a difficult time with three fatalities occurring in about a 10 month period. Part of this is due to racing on less controlled, or uncontrolled courses, similar to rally racing in cars. To their credit, the International Jet River racers have come up with two improvements as a result of the accidents, one improvement in the steering system and one change in the roll cage design.

OPC-Sam LaBanco- Stated that if the truth be known, it is very difficult for him to talk about what happened with respect to accidents unless he or Tom Stanley were actually at a race where the incident happened, they do not hear a thing. Unless he gets the information over social media or someone who was at an incident tells him about it, he doesn't have an idea about what might have happened. There was one serious accident this past summer, but other than that he does not have additional information. He further mentioned that there are a couple of new builders building hulls, RJ West, and Rick Hoffman and if there are changes coming down the road, the changes should be made known to those builders as soon as possible because it could affect the tooling for the molded parts.

BW went further to mention that the accidents and fatalities seem to run in cycles and after some time, the frequency of occurrence can be almost predicted as to the time frame the next serious accident will occur unless intervention via rule change, education, some intervention means, is accomplished. This is why the receipt of the incident reports by the commissions, the ability to analyze all the incidents is critical to safety management and improvement. It seems that APBA is the only motor sports organization that he knows across the international spectrum that does not convey the incident data to its relevant commissions. The role of the commission is to promote racing, keep it "fair", and relatively safe. The boat racing injury, or at least fatality statistics, such as they are can be compared to other sports. There are approximately 1100 people that participated in APBA racing last year. When you look at other sports, and he stated, he could provide the links, you can compare the number of deaths per number of participants. As mentioned before, the safety committee has an advisory function so we, as members have the responsibility to support/advise the commissions, therefore we need the data from the incident reports and other investigative information. BW also mentioned that the insurance companies have no restrictions on the commissions obtaining and working with the incident data.

Eli W commented that he has been in favor of receiving the incident reports and has been pushing the idea for years. He stated that he was wondering if the BOD would be supportive of the safety Committee and let the safety committee do the necessary work. This had been one of his major concerns last year. He was asked to elaborate further and described a situation that occurred regarding helmets. He mentioned the safety committee had done a lot of work to decide when helmets should be replaced taking into account the SNELL standard update cycle and the manufacturing release dates. The Safety Committee had created a list for inspectors to provide guidance regarding helmet legality. He believes that the SNELL 2005 helmets were taken out of use by the BOD earlier than when the Safety Committee and the prepared plan would say that they should be. He said that this took the "tool" away from the committee and negated the work of the committee and essentially took over the "authority" of the committee. The second thing that he mentioned was the BOD decided to pursue the cut resistant foot ware, the socks, instead of giving the task to the Safety Committee and put the Safety Committee to work. Eli further described the purchase of an order of socks by the office which turned out to not be able to do the job, very unsatisfactory. He felt that the members were promised a product without sufficient due diligence that should have been done, could have been done by the safety committee and avoided the costs involved and the less than satisfactory pulling back on the promise to the members of

a satisfactory sock. These two examples were cited by Eli as examples relating to having “responsibility’ without having “authority”.

BW commented that after exploring the by-laws and working to determine the charter of the Safety Committee he had similar concerns about the possible ambiguities of the “advisory” charter. BW has written about this, and has communicated to Chris Fairchild (also a member of the Safety Committee) this question with comments via e-mail.

BW also commented on another big challenge for APBA in safety management. APBA has been recruiting outlier organizations for more than ten years to return or to join APBA. In doing so, agreements have been made with the joining organizations to let them use their safety and racing rules (many developed uniquely outside of APBA). Some of these rules do not satisfy APBA rules and in some cases may not even be adhered to by the members of the joining organization. For example, at the beginning of the 2019 season, for the Offshore category, they existed the APBA Offshore rules, the OPA rule set, and later in the year, the OPA rule set in use at Key West. OPA chose to run under their OPA rules for the season. Some of the most significant rule differences are related to cockpit construction and cockpit registration between the three rule sets. Cockpits and hulls sustained damage through the season and in the first race of the 2020 APBA season at Key West. During this annual meeting, discussions will be held on ways to help the Offshore category with information to lower the risk of potential cockpit failures.

3) GSR Review

BW explained that the wording of proposed GSR rule changes had been transmitted to safety committee members prior to the meeting in order for them to register opinions and comments along with coordinating with affected commissions. The short form descriptions of the rule topics are listed in the attached PowerPoint. In addition to the GSR proposals, there is also a rule proposal for the GRR regarding the incident report transmission as previously discussed and another proposal to refine the cockpit registration process in the OPC rules.

The GSR rule proposals are the results of a review of a review of the current rules, represent rules that are in use in similar racing categories in the world, and have been used for between 3 and 21 seasons. In other words, these proposals refer to proven rules. For example, mandatory air has been required in cockpits internationally for more than 20 years and only required in some restrained driver cockpits in APBA categories. That proposal would mandate an air system in all reinforced cockpits. Another example is the use of FHR’s. FHR use is required by all drivers in international racing, however, even though used by a number of APBA drivers and required in Unlimited racing, still just recommended in APBA. One intent of these GSR rules is to eliminate the word “recommended”. Another intent is to implement these changes during this winter, as soon as possible to be in force this season. The coordination with commission during the balance of the meetings may clarify their ability to implement and determine implementation dates. Also, most of the rule changes are of relatively low cost for value for drivers that have not already implemented the changes. Each of the proposed rule changes was reviewed.

BW also presented the results of his discussion with the OPC, PRO and Inboard representatives about their respective processes for registration of builders and cockpit registration. The charts show the parts of the process which are in place and the parts where there are undefined parts of the process and/or

spaces for the names of people who would accomplish the process who aren't presently named. One of the most critical parts of the process which is missing for the Inboard and PRO categories (and if we added in Offshore) is the "analysis of the cockpit" part of the process of registration. In the case of the OPC category this is handled by Sam LaBanco and Tom Stanley. They provide the second set of eyes to review the submitted design for registration, the panel test data, and may use analytical tools to verify structural capability.

Results of a survey of a group of race boat officials and representative of boat racing authorities internationally that collectively had many hundreds of hours of experience was discussed. The question to the surveyed group was "What are your top safety concerns and possible solutions?" The top concern was Education of drivers and officials, the next major concern, almost as great was that of Enforcement and the need for Education to strengthen the Enforcement, to give more confidence and knowledge to officials to make the difficult decisions. When an official has a knowledge deficit, some may not be able to make the judgement, they may need more information to be able to explain "why" regarding an issue.

The "cost" of not taking action was also discussed and is described on the attached PowerPoint charts.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 pm.

As the meeting attendees slowly dispersed, informal discussions on course design factors to be taken into account to improve safety, educational tools/examples that could be used at drivers meetings for training related to estimating the amount of clear water between boats regarding the cut-off rules, and insurance considerations were among some of the discussions. Heidi Dunk- Vincent expressed a desire to join the Safety Committee (and was welcomed) and Dutch Squires asked if we might consider having a single "Cockpit Committee" for APBA for review and registration of all category cockpit designs. He suggested that Tom Stanley should be asked to see if they would consider such a possibility, if acceptable, the idea would be recommended to the PSD for ratification.