

"Inside the US Cycling Federation Office" - Andrew Bohlmann

November, 1984

I learned about the Wheat Thins Series and blood boosting at the '84 Summer Olympics my first day of work when Dave Prouty, USCF Executive Director, took several of us to lunch at China Village two blocks from the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. I had the hot and spicy shrimp and still do to this day 20 years later. This job, at just over \$23,000/year, looked like more paperwork than bike racing. I soon learned that all bike races have mounds of paperwork and that I would have a file for every race in the US in my office.

Dave told me that he needed me to help with insurance and National Championships and I, being hired to do all things technical, shouldn't have too much of a problem. When I found I could not order a new file cabinet (no money in the budget), I knew we were in for a rough ride.

I had an idea about what I was up against when I first tried to log on to the USCF computer, part of the USOC main system. The password was "*****". After several attempts at spelling "*****", I asked the office boss, "So, just how does the USCF spell "criterium"? I got them to change the password to "*****" (sprint). Problem number one had just been solved! I had to educate the "oval office" staff in the very basics of bike racing....proper spelling within our sport!

I learned my Championships from Mike Walden and Jim Harper in the early '80's. They were the best to learn from. I was chief referee at several Veteran's National Road Championships (now called Master's), did the '84 LA Games as a UCI National Commissaire, and even married a former district rep (remember them?). I was prepared to run our National Championships but that "help with insurance" thing bothered me.

So, what did Dave mean by "help with insurance"? My wife, our 17 month old son and I had just arrived in Colorado Springs from Ames, IA and our car insurance almost doubled. The agent said the "risk" was higher and he had the spreadsheets and numbers to justify the higher rate. The USCF health insurance (at no cost to me) would pay for baby number two, due to arrive in late February. What else was there to know? It was time for an education in the world of insurance and bicycle racing.

As I was in charge of the membership department all race permit applications, race announcements (the proper term), and requests for Certificates of Additional Insurance came across my desk for my approval and signature. First approved by the district reps and then sent to the office, the permit applications were opened by my just above minimum wage and very hard working staff. Piled, and I mean piled, on my desk for my review I carefully went over each one. If I approved, staff would issue the actual permit, stamp my name on them and send them to the race organizer (again, the proper name). The requests for Certificates of Additional Insurance were then sent to the insurance broker across town to process and send to the race organizer. Sounds simple, doesn't it?

Several of the very first permit apps along with those additional insurance requests caught my eye. The date(s) on the permit app and the separate insurance request forms didn't always match. Sometimes they included additional dates for the insurance requests. Some of those race organizers were cheats and liars that I had to deal with. That part of it wasn't all that easy since several of them were also USCF Directors! USCF Directors did not cheat and lie, said one of those very same Directors (two of those now deceased Director's are USCF Life Members). "Well, whatever, but no permits unless all dates match up" I said. This turned out to be a not too uncommon problem as they wanted to keep a venue for themselves by showing the venue managers both the actual permit and the Certificate of Additional Insurance with both the race date and other dates on them. Talking to the actual venue people confirmed this.

Of course, I received the usual threats of termination from those Directors once I corrected this problem. Sometimes the district reps were involved, so I fired them! They were just pawns in the bike racing game put in place by the local mafia. All I wanted was a little honesty. Silly me!

The basics of bicycle racing insurance appeared fairly straight forward. The USCF budgeted, and paid for liability insurance at the rate of \$25,000 per year for \$5,000,000 in coverage. Race organizers could request Certificates of Additional Insurance naming municipalities to the USCF policy for a specific race. This was done on a separate form attached to the race permit application. This was, and still is today, free insurance for the race organizer as only a race permit fee is charged.

In addition to the liability insurance, the USCF carried a rider accident policy as a secondary policy to whatever policy, if any, the rider had as an individual. If a rider filed a claim from an occurrence at a permitted race, I did the paperwork and sent it to the insurance company for them to process. There was as much intentional abuse with the rider accident claims as the bogus requests for additional insurance by the race organizers. I really needed that extra file cabinet.

The inability of the race organizers to request their insurance certs (certificates) in a timely manner was a joke. Without fail, almost every week I had to drive across town to beg the insurance broker to issue a certificate so I could fax it to the race venue manager. My small staff was often screamed at because it was "our fault" that the insurance certificate did not arrive in time. I lost at least two staff because of the stress. One key staff quit (doctor's orders) because of her valium and bourbon use. I found one tripping on acid at her computer because of this. I'm not kidding. This was unbelievably sad. That's bike racing like no one has ever known. I felt like the only person who knew this story, but my wife saw this every time I came home from work.

Early Spring, 1985

Did I mention that I also had the lawsuit files? The first lawsuits on my watch appeared in early 1985 and never stopped. In 1985, there were around fifteen lawsuits pending. When a lawsuit against the USCF was sent to us, it came to me. I copied it, started a file, dug up all of the race paperwork, got the original rider license application (remember the release and waiver on them?), and called Bart's office to come and pick up the package. Bart Enoch(?) was the USCF lawyer who handled these matters from the legal end. We worked together very often as I spent nearly 20 % of my time in this area. One day as I returned from my hot and spicy shrimp lunch at China Village, the guards at the OTC (Olympic Training Center) handed me not one, but two big envelopes each containing lawsuits. The guards knew where I was and since they usually stopped all incoming traffic, they just told the delivery person they would give them to me when I returned. The lawsuit file cabinet took up more space than the one I started for officials.

Before too long I was answering interrogatories and giving depositions on behalf of the USCF. I actually liked this but soon learned that we had to get our races under control. But getting "our races under control" was very political.

Sometime in late 1985(?), I received my first of several calls on a Monday morning about what happened over the weekend at some race someplace. One of our riders, one of my riders, had died in a bike race. In a way, that race was my race as I approved the permit application and signed the permit. I never let anyone except myself search the files for the rider's original license application. That was something I couldn't let anyone else do. Then I'd go find Dave and tell him and return to my office and shut the door. The entire office was silent.

December, 1985

The new hardshell helmet rule enacted by the Board in the fall was to become law in January, the blood boosting incident was more or less in the past, so it seemed likely that it was time for a new turn of events. So, of course, when Dave summoned the staff into his office around Christmas we were pretty certain it wasn't bonus time. We were right. There seemed to be a liability insurance problem for 1986. Cycling was not alone in this as most National Governing Bodies (NGB's) relied on the USOC to obtain the insurance necessary to conduct events and without this insurance, there would be no sanctioned events. To say the least, we were in big trouble.

The phones really started to ring in mid December after Dave had sent a memo to all USCF clubs advising

them of the situation. No insurance, no race permits! The calls to my desk easily surpassed those regarding the new helmet rule. I took 90+ calls in one day! No permits were being sent out and some races had to be canceled.

The USOC people worked overtime to find and secure insurance. While insurance was brought to the table, it wasn't going to be anywhere near the same cost as in the past. At \$193,000 for \$1,000,000 in coverage, it meant nearly a \$300,000 deficit for the USCF. The insurance surcharge that riders pay started here. The USCF Board approved a \$1.00/head surcharge. I had the chief referee's collect it from the race organizer after the race and they sent it to the office with their post race paperwork. The program worked and the USCF ended up collecting around \$125,000 towards the premium. I needed more file space, again.

Paying more money for less insurance wasn't all there was to it. All NGB's, including the USCF underwent a risk analysis (I know we didn't do very well) by Marsh and McLennan (M & M), the company that worked with the USOC to restart the insurance program. For the insurance to continue, each sport had to control their losses and develop and implement, with the help of M & M, a risk management plan.

As the fall of 1986 came, several important events happened. First, Ed Burke was charged by Dave with the task of putting together a "USCF Cycling Safety Manual". As Senior Editor and Project Director, Ed asked several people to contribute. Among those writing articles included Michael Aisner from the Coors Classic, Richard DeGarmo from the Tour Of Texas, several top cycling officials from around the country, myself as USCF Director of Technical Services (aka Technical Director), and of course, Ed himself. The 145 page manual never was put into distribution and I probably have the only copy left in existence.

The second thing that happened occurred the day after that rainy day at the US Air Force Academy on which the World Championship Professional Road Race was held. I traveled to Portland, OR and became an expert witness for the first time for the defense in a trial. The USCF was a defendant in a wrongful death lawsuit. Several years earlier, a rider entered the citizen class in a local road race, and in the sprint to the finish, somehow crossed the centerline (remember that rule?), and was hit and killed by an oncoming car which was allowed through the finish area. I was able to discredit one witness after another for the prosecution. I had the files on them and my staff back in Colorado was able to fax me that information throughout the trial. I learned then and there just who really runs bike racing. It was the man in the back of the courtroom, the man who worked for the insurance company. He could have the trial stopped at any time by passing a note to the defense team telling them to settle, pay 'em off. This time we won. The rider lost and so did his family. The bike, a blue Raleigh Pro came from the bike shop I worked at in Ames, IA several years earlier.

Lastly, Dave Prouty got the boot and a new Executive Director was put in place, complete with strings.

1987-1990

Jerry Lace, the new USCF Executive Director was labeled by the head of M & M as, "one who speaks with a forked tongue". She was referring to his apparent refusal and/or lack of interest in implementing any safety and risk management procedures while at the same time leading them to believe just the opposite.

Brian Searchinger was hired to write a promoter's guide and turned out a number of pages. This was all fluff. My office staff could have put this together in just a few days at no cost. For several years now, I had been collecting privately written "how to organize/promote" bike racing manuals from around the country. I had two foreign manuals, also. This was not what the insurance people were looking for.

An April 1989 letter from the loss control manager at the insurance company to me said they "reviewed the checklist you sent us and we agree with your concept. We also believe that the USCF should be a leader in the effort to improve protection for both participants and spectators of events run under your sanction. We believe you should develop a manual which would give specific rules that must be adhered to for sanction to be given". This letter was in response to the safety checklist (a form of that checklist is still used today) which I came up with. Aside from the comments about my checklist, still in draft form, the letter contained wording that while, between the lines, was very clear. They wanted a "training manual", they wanted it in

place “prior to getting into full swing of the upcoming season”, and some indication that the manual was in use. Basically they said, get this “training manual” into circulation and keep your insurance, or...

The “United States Cycling Federation Guideline to Risk Management”, edited by USCF Risk Manager, Jan Scholer was put in place during the summer of 1990. Jan was the lady I had to see several years ago when I had to drive across town to the insurance broker to request that Certificates of Additional Insurance for race organizers be issued on the spot. She was also a good friend of the “office boss” and had been working at the USCF around a year. I know she had been to at least one bicycle race as she attended the 1989 USCF Senior Road Championships in Park City, UT. I arranged for her to ride on the back of a motor during an event. I had absolutely no part in the new manual and had the USOC mail room guys print an extra copy for me. As USCF Director of Technical Services, I was specifically kept off the project.

In August of 1990, Jan Scholer, Bill Woodul, myself and three other top staff were terminated as USCF employees. My job was “eliminated” and duties assigned to Mark Hodges who quit prior to the 1991 Junior World Championships in Colorado Springs.

Originally hired as a “coaching coordinator”, John Tarbert was given the job held by Mark Hodges. As assistant executive director/ “technical director” (sound familiar?) John was in charge of the technical division of the USCF. This is everything I did at the time the position was “eliminated”.

According to John’s deposition in Adam Ganz vs. USCF taken in 1993, he recommended that the “USCF Guideline to Risk Management” be recalled. The decision to not use and recall the manual was made by John, Eileen (USCF financial person), the executive director, and the USCF’s legal counsel. No reason was given.

From the deposition of Jan Scholer in 1993 from Adam Ganz vs. USCF, when asked by the plaintiff’s attorney about if she understood why she too, was let go responded, “My personal belief is that for a variety of reasons, several of us had become unpopular, whether it be for our philosophies or demeaners or for whatever reason. And as has happened since that time on more than one occasion, it seems to be a rather convenient way for the Federation to get rid of—I don’t know what word I would like to attach to that. Those of us that were politically incorrect, shall we say.”

Also, from the Ganz deposition, the question is; “Though the official reason, as I understand it, was budgetary constraints, it’s correct, is it not, or maybe you don’t know, that in fact the staff has grown since the time that you left?” Jan Scholer’s answer was, “I’m sure it has”. The next question was, “And in fact, the particular positions that you had still exist?” Her answer, “That’s correct. He’s titled differently but he is doing my exact job”. Next question was, “And that’s also true with the position that Andy Bohlmann had?” Her answer, “Correct”.