



September 26, 2011

Yesterday, an article appeared in the *Orange County Register* alleging the head coach for the women's team at the 1984 Olympic Games, Don Peters, had inappropriate relationships with a few of his athletes, dating back into the mid-1980s.

Athlete safety is the #1 priority for USA Gymnastics, and inappropriate conduct with athletes is unacceptable. When a grievance is submitted, it is taken seriously and actively investigated. These are sensitive matters, and we are careful and prudent in our approach to addressing them, including any comments that we make regarding the circumstances and investigation. In this instance, I have confirmed that we are handling this situation in accordance with our policies.

USA Gymnastics is committed to conducting thorough investigations before reaching conclusions. Each and every situation is evaluated on its individual merits, and every step in the process of investigating, verifying, and resolving these matters is considered, including any associated legal proceedings. The Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act requires us to use a fair process in determining whether or not an individual is to be declared ineligible to participate in the sport.

During the past five years, USA Gymnastics has updated its practices, policies and process for handling these types of incidents. While much of this current information was shared with the *Orange County Register* reporter, his story unfortunately does not include how our process and practices have been improved, as noted in other stories that have appeared.

Here is a quick overview of the steps and policies we have in place.

- **Participant Welfare Policy** – provides guidance on how clubs, coaches and parents can work together to provide a safe environment, as well as requirements and expectations of USA Gymnastics' members. The topics covered in the policy, which may be read in its entirety at www.usagym.org/welfare, include: definitions of abuse used by USA Gymnastics for both physical and sexual abuse; reporting procedures and requirements for suspected abuse; misconduct/grievance procedures; member obligations and recommendations, as well as staff; standards of behavior; and education and communication about the policy to members and the general public.
- **Mandatory criminal background screening and safety/risk management certification for professional members** – background screening is renewed every two years; safety/risk management screening renewed every four years.

- **Code of Ethics and proactive bylaws** – bylaws include provisions for processing allegations and the types of discipline, including termination of membership, which may be administered by the organization.
- **Published list of individuals banned from membership in USA Gymnastics** – posted on our website and printed in our magazines. This lifetime ban means the individual does not have any of the rights or privileges associated with membership in USA Gymnastics, including but not limited to participation in any event conducted or sanctioned by USA Gymnastics.

USA Gymnastics is a membership organization, not a regulatory agency. Termination of membership, the public display of that termination and a lifetime ban on participation in sanctioned events is the most serious action available to us. While USA Gymnastics' jurisdiction does not extend to the business affairs of gymnastics coaches or clubs, we continue to address our practices in this area so we can be even more proactive moving forward.

The case mentioned in the article involves incidents that happened nearly 30 years ago. As I have mentioned many times, USA Gymnastics is serious about these issues and committed to taking the time necessary to come to correct conclusions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss this.

As the father of three children involved in the sport, I have confidence in the more than 16,000 professional members, who are committed to providing a safe environment for the millions of young people involved in the sport.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Penny". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Penny
President