

USA Fencing Advances on Their Path to Cultural Transformation

Ease of Reporting Helps the Fencing Community Navigate a Changing Landscape

USA Fencing has enjoyed a long and respected history as the National Governing Body (NGB) for the sport of fencing in the United States. Dating back to 1891, USA Fencing focuses on growing and promoting fencing, honoring its traditions, and achieving excellence in competitions. But as with any sport, it hasn't been without its challenges. When Phil Andrews joined USA Fencing as its CEO in 2022, he was ready to help the organization take them on.

Citing the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, rising costs of participation and operation, and ethics and disciplinary matters, Andrews and USA Fencing recognized the need for a culture shift in the sport of fencing. With the implementation of RealResponse as one of their reporting mechanisms, USA Fencing is focusing on building an atmosphere of trust and belonging.

To address the often cost-prohibitive aspect and perception of "elitism", USA Fencing has committed to expanding participation opportunities to fencers of all backgrounds. USA Fencing launched the Fencing the Gap initiative in 2022, which awards scholarships, mini-grants, and club incentives to both increase access and provide financial assistance to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) youth, youth girls, and youth with disabilities.

Along with their outreach programs, athlete council, and leadership programs that help ensure that a variety of voices are heard, USA Fencing employs a number of reporting methods for ethical and abuse issues, including the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency and the U.S. Center for SafeSport for reports of sexual and other abuse. With the addition of RealResponse, anonymous and confidential reporting has gotten even simpler.

Expanding Reporting Capabilities with RealResponse

RealResponse helps sort through reports in order to connect people to the right resources at the right time, using anonymous two-way communications to ensure safety and confidentiality. "You will get an understanding from your membership that you care about their reporting, whether those reports come



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“That’s one of the most important things we can do—make it easy to report, make it trusted to report, and then make sure that when those reports come in, they land with the right person.”

—PHIL ANDREWS, USA FENCING CEO

from RealResponse or your existing reporting mechanisms. It just adds another tool in the toolbox to report,” Andrews said.

Thanks to the ability to make reports via text message, email, QR codes, and WhatsApp, RealResponse provides the right structure for easy, safe reporting.

Adapting to New Challenges

Andrews noted that accessible reporting and organizational trust will become even more important for NGBs, especially with the rise of sports betting. The inherent competitiveness of sports poses an ongoing risk of results manipulation and other violations, but having a system in place to address abuse and other issues can help mitigate the problem. For Andrews, creating a culture that encourages trust is paramount for NGBs. “Pay attention to culture first. That’s really important, building the culture of your sport, your club, your training environment ... Pay attention to the unhappy people, because they often have something to teach you.”

Just as RealResponse is dedicated to elevating all voices and driving positive change, USA Fencing is committed to building a culture of belonging and respect for all fencers, coaches, and the community at large.



USA Fencing CEO **Phil Andrews** has earned a stellar reputation in sports integrity, leading USA Fencing to unprecedented growth in membership and partnerships. Previously, Andrews served as CEO of USA Weightlifting for nearly 10 years, where he revitalized the culture, participation, and governance reform—in addition to taking on an interim crisis leadership role of the International Weightlifting Federation.



By texting 320-ENGARDE (320-364-2733), fencers, coaches, parents and others in the community can submit a report — either anonymously or on the record — about anything concerning that they experience, witness or learn about.

Graphic courtesy of USA Fencing

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