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ITU 1996 World Championships Cleveland

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Date: August 31st, 1996

To: Les McDonald, President
International Triathlon Union

From: Bill Hallett, President
Triathlon Canada

Re: Cleveland et al

Dear Les:

Congratulations on your re-election as President of the International Triathlon Union. I am sure that your devotion to the sport of triathlon and the Olympic movement will be successfully realized in Sydney in 2000. We all look forward to that very special day for triathlon with great anticipation.

I have been thinking about the organization of the recent ITU Triathlon World Championships in Cleveland. Oil and discussed the race with a number of the Board members, coaches and officials representing Triathlon Canada, who were in attendance at that event. The overall consensus is one of great disappointment to us. I have summarized our concerns on the attached for the review of ITU.

In particular, we are very concerned about the abuses relating to the safety of athletes which were prevalent here. As you are aware, a Canadian triathlete, Dan Murray, was struck by a motorcycle travelling in the wrong direction (ie: directly into oncoming bicycle traffic) during the men’s elite race. Mr. Murray was cycling in a group of four (4) which also included Canadian Mark Bates and Mexican Bernardo Zetina. Mr. Murray has sustained shoulder injuries as a result of that accident which will prevent him from competing in the ITU Long Distance Triathlon World Championships in Muncie, IN on September 7th and will most likely end his competitive career for this season. Mr. Zetina was also injured and his bike was written off. This was, however, not the only serious, but avoidable, accident.

I spoke with Terry Sheldrake, President of Triathlon New Zealand, who showed me the “remains” of a bike belonging to a Kiwi age group triathlete. The front wheel had been destroyed and the bike frame completely bent out of alignment. According to Mr. Sheldrake, the accident occurred as a result of a vehicle entering the bike course. How could this have happened on a closed...
course? Furthermore, I learned from Sarah Springman and Kevin Nell of the near “drowning” of an Italian elite men’s team member. I personally observed a number of spectators who barely missed being hit by cyclists while they attempted to cross the course. Where were the barricades?

Probably the most telling image which will remain with me and the rest of my Canadian team, however, is of the motorcycle “gang...sans helmets”, patrolling the course. What kind of an image does this portray to our young triathletes? And more importantly...is this the best that the United States can do for an event of this stature?

I hope you will review the comments attached and give them every consideration. Canadians want to compete in a World Championship event which is well organized and safe. We will be looking for such in the future.

Yours very truly

TRIATHLON CANADA

Bell Hallett

William J. Hallett
President

ecl.
1996 Triathlon World Championships
Cleveland, OH
August 24th and 25th, 1996

Triathlon Canada
Review of Events

Elite
Swim course
- Too small an area for the number of athletes
- Too many tight turns
- Not enough space between the first turn and the breakwall

Bike course
- Motorcyclists and passengers without helmets
- Motorcycles travelling in the wrong direction
- Motorcyclists exceeding the speed limit and creating unsafe conditions for unwary spectators and competitors
- Too many motorcycles on the course
- Inadequate barricades and crowd control

Run course
- No kilometre markings

Junior and Age group
Swim Course
- Jumping off the wall onto other competitors at the start

Bike Course
- Poor signage and course barriers with many competitors going off the course
- Seemingly uncontrollable drafting by the Junior men despite the presence of four (4) motorcycles on the lead group
- Motorcyclists exceeding the speed limit and creating unsafe conditions for unwary spectators
- Inadequate barricades and crowd control

Run Course
- No barricades in the finishing chute creating a very narrow passageway

Overall
- Good sports expo with many contributors
- Abysmal parade of nations and opening ceremonies with no appreciation of protocol
- Good pasta party on Thursday evening
- Disappointing recognition of elite athletes at the awards ceremony. Why weren't the top 20 men and women on stage? Where were the national anthems? Where were the flags of the winners’ countries? Where was the recognition our future Olympians?

Triathlon Canada
Fax to Les McDonald - August 31st, 1996

- Awards banquet without food!! A contradiction in terms!!
- Inability of race director to distribute race kits. Team managers required to distribute the race packages to team members. This was especially difficult for our two (2) managers with 204 Canadians competing and staying all over Cleveland.
- An overall reduction in service to our team despite a twenty dollar US increase in individual entry fees. Why?
- Few, if any, spectators on the course.
Facsimile Message

To: Bill Hallett, President Triathlon Canada
From: Les McDonald, ITU
Re: Response to your fax
Date: 31 August, 1996

Dear Bill,

1. Thanks for your kind words, and thanks for your critique of the Cleveland World Championships.

2. I agree with you completely. It was the "worst ever". Your criticisms are quite mild compared to others.

3. I wish I could say "the buck stops here" and I should have done something to prevent the obvious and odious near disasters. We tried, believe me. There are a thousand and one other violations of everything imaginable that we worked on, both night and day. Short or canceling the event, which we seriously discussed, I don't know what more we could have done.

4. Moral? We will never ever award a World Championships to a "race organiser - promoter" of the Jack Caress variety.

5. Future Worlds: Ferrara '96, Perth '97, Lausanne '98. They are local organising committees controlled by the national federations, with government involvement, and National Olympic Committee endorsement, or in the case of Lausanne, the IOC.

6. This is the end of a chapter in the history of Triathlon. The superseding of race director promoters by responsible elected federations/associations, in league with civic and Olympic authorities.

7. I have been preaching this gospel for some time and wish to remind you that at the TriCanada meeting in Fort McMurray, I was attacked, by some, not for the first time, who spoke with near religious fervor about the god-given right of race directors/promoters to organise events, and of us, the elected representatives of the athletes, to stay out of the business.

8. Awarding the 1995 Canadian Championships to Fort McMurray, Alberta and the 1997 to Corner Brook, Newfoundland, and into the capable hands of "our" own people, Paul Regensburg and Scott LeDrew, was the best move we ever made.

9. But, I digress, forgive me. I, we, ITU, are incensed with the near tragedy which almost befell Dan Murray and Bernardo Zetina.
10. For Ferrara and all future World Cup events this year, I am proposing no officials on motorcycles - no still photographers on motorcycles. There will be 2 television camera motorcycles only, plus one official to ride behind the last cyclist.

11. Those who weep crocodile tears over the danger of drafting need to be reminded that the major cause of accidents (and one fatality) has been caused by motorcycles and or cars, trucks, jeeps and vans on the cycle part of the race.

12. Please help me put an end to it, Bill

Your sincerely,

Les McDonald, President
International Triathlon Union (ITU)
Hi Bill,

First, let me thank you and the Canadian Delegates for their support in my selection as ITU North American Representative. I hope that I will be able to adequately represent all of our concerns, those of Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the USA. I'm glad that you have e-mail. This makes things so much easier, and less costly.

I was riding with Rip Esselsten on Saturday and he told me of Dan's accident.

Dan used to come to Austin and stay with Rip during the early spring along with a number of other Canadians to take advantage of the excellent training conditions. I was sorry to hear of Dan's misfortunes in Cleveland. I hope you have also received my critique of Cleveland. There were so many problems associated with the event that it is hard to find much good. The accident caused by the motorcycles going out with the lead runners was unacceptable. I do not know if Dan will need to seek insurance relief from the event insurance, or if ITU will handle things. In any case, if I can be of any help, please don't hesitate to ask.

Please extend my best wishes to Dan for a speedy recovery. I hope he can make it back to Austin in 1997 and enjoy our springtime once again.

Rick Margiotta
Call, August 30, 1996

TO: MS. LOREEN BARNETT
    ITU TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

FROM: JORGE MEJIA
    PATCO PRESIDENT

Dear Ms. Barnett,

It was a great pleasure to see you again, and I want to thank you for all your work in behalf of the Triathlon.

With all the respect to your self and the job that you are doing so impeccable for our Sport, I would like to take this opportunity to present to you some observations about the organization of the past event in Cleveland.

- **Transition Areas:** This places were full of people, extraneous to the athletes, and that they were not supossed to be in the Transition Areas.

This place, was not prepared to be receiving at one moment, about 40 to 50 Elite Athletes, and a clear example that an accident could occur, was like when Mr. Manzano arrived, he fell down because all the other bikes fell on him, loosing the opportunity while he was trying to get up to be in a better place.

- **The Television Cycles,** that were leading the Race they stayed too long in front of the first group, cutting in this form the Air, opening the roads. Technically, this is not permitted, and induce to disqualification of the athletes.

- **Athletes received only one Number for the race,** they should received two numbers instead.

- In the Transition Area, right before the Swimming, some bikes that were late, were admitted at this time, delaying the juniors wave to start on time.
- The Awards in Medals were not enough for all the Athletes, at the moment the Organizers said they have misplaced some of the Medals. Besides World Championships are supposed to be awarded with trophies, not medals.

- The Money Prizes for the Athletes was not given right away, and they were trying to delay the payment of these prizes, and there were a fight about this issue among the Brazilians.

- If Organizers are going to charge the Athletes with US$100 subscription, at least they should provided two meals at Carbohydrate and Awards Ceremony Dinner, not offering this, anyone could say the money goes only for the Organizers, not in behalf of the Athletes.

- The Hotel accommodations were not sufficient and close to the event site, some athletes had to spend paying cabs to get to the race.

- In the final results sheets, the Nationality of a Cuban Athlete, was not written. Please make sure that for the results that are going to sent out the name of the Countries are shown as well.

- To take part of any event, there are rules to be followed, and in the case they are not, the Technical Committee Delegate has to point them out, as:

The Athlete has to fulfilled with the proper requirements to belong to a Category. The day before the race I made the observation of some athletes that did not qualify or did not complete the selective races. Some examples:

From Argentina: The woman that took part, I do not have her name at this moment, and Mr. Libio. From Chile: Juan Pablo Gress. From Mexico: Gerardo Zetina. These athletes were included in the Elite Category without been qualified.
The Technical Committee excuses for those athletes, who there were two free places to be taken for other athletes, (Argentinians) that they were not going to be in the race; at the end, one of them took place, and you know this was happening.

There are criteria for qualification and I believe firmly has to be followed, and that is the Technical Committee duty to make this happen. Please coordinate for coming races to make sure the proper categories and the proper qualification for the athletes. In the future other athletes will not believe in their Directives if this continues.

- Regarding Ms. Gisselle Goyenaya, it was very shameful that her paper work was not ready, and nobody did anything to provide her with new papers for her job could be done, instead the Organizers sent her to be in some other place in the race, and her job as Race Judge was not performed. This Lady has committed her self in time, money, effort and with her soul, to be ignored.

I do not want to bother you any longer with my thoughts, but I want to assure you that I am here to cooperate with any thing that help the advance of our Sport.

Thanks for your time.

Cordially yours,

Jorge Mejia
PATCO President
August-30-1996

Mike Gilmore
Marketing Director, ITU

Dear Mike,

First of all, I would like to thank you for your help and comprehension about my problem. It is good to know that ITU takes care of their athletes and responds to them, even though I'm sure that ITU is not responsible for my accident.

But also, I would like to say that I hope this accident and other problems at Cleveland, help to learn and improve the quality and organisation of the next World Championships and ITU Series events.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Bernardo Zetina, Mexico

Note: Bernardo was hit by a motorcycle at the Cleveland World Championships. He suffered numerous injuries and his bicycle was almost destroyed. ITU immediately paid a cash settlement to Bernardo for his bicycle - this is how ITU cares for its athletes - LMcD
International Triathlon Union
President
Les McDonald

via Fax: 001 604 928 7260

Triathlon World Championships 1996
Criticism of Elite Race

SWIM:

1. Danger of accident and unfairness at the first buoy due to
   • a very short distance between start and buoy
   • a too sharp angle of the route at that buoy
   • a too short distance between the wall and the buoy

2. 3 laps are too much in a swim course because the field hardly spreads

3. In a lap course the swimmers should be able to walk out of the water. The steps were too slippery and only available for 3 - 5 athletes at the same time

BIKE:

1. Too many motorbikes on the course

2. Too short distance between leading car and first bikers (drafting behind the police car and the motorbikes around)

3. In case of rain, 90° curves are too dangerous

4. Too light approach to the transition area on the way back

5. Insufficient roadblockings on the course approaching the bike finish
1. Volunteers at water/drinking station hadn't been instructed to run with the athlete while supplying with drinks. So it often didn't work and forced the athlete to slow down.

2. Impossible to distinguish between water and other drinks due to missing signs ahead.

3. No kilometer signs up - it's unacceptable for WC.

FINISH AREA:

1. Inappropriate blockings - easy to go in for everyone and everytime.

2. Setting far beneath WC standards.

3. Inappropriate VIP section.

4. Unprofessional working conditions for press and TV.

GENERALLY:

1. Unacceptable presentation of the ITU to the public by the race-organizer - no introduction of President and IOC Members.

2. Drinks had to be paid.

3. Contract hadn't been followed.

4. Unappreciate victory ceremony and inappropriate final celebration for the athletes.

5. Poor and arrogant performance at Team Manager Meeting.

6. The race-kits had not been handed out 2 days prior to the event only (Rule 8 of ITU-Competition Rules).
To: Les McDonald  
President  
International Triathlon Union

RE: Cleveland World Triathlon Championships  
Interim Report

Dear Les,

On behalf of Triathlon Australia I would like to register our disapproval on some of the race procedures that took place at the recent World Championships. Could these comments be passed onto the organising committee of that event.

SWIM: The pro course was a disaster with not enough room for competitors to negotiate the first turning buoys as the harbour wall was too close. In future all swim courses should be a minimum of two laps of 750m. The pontoon at the finish of the swim was unstable and slippery. Carpet should have been supplied.

BIKE: Both courses were on sub-standard road surfaces, that corners were cambered the wrong way, manholes were close to turns and potholes were present.

The double lap of the age group course increases the problems of drafting and the fact that the course could not be ridden in the preceding days led to a high amount of competitors going the wrong way.

Draftbusters and motor cyclists without helmets, is this allowed?

As a matter of fact the winner of the Junior B category from Hungary did not exit at the correct location but came back to the transition area via the first lap loop, proceeded to ride over the median strip to gain access to the transition area in view of 20 to 30 witnesses and despite our protests was still allowed to win the race.

RUN: Inadequate barricades and crowd control as well as on the bike course.

PRESENTATIONS: No real recognition of pro's, no national anthems and no control of people swapping clothing articles at the end of the hall.

I am very aware that the ITU had little control over the above but the Race Organisers should be held liable.

Sincerely,

Rob Pickard  
High Performance Manager
Cali, August 30, 1996

Mr. LES MCDONALD
INTERNATIONAL TRIATHLON UNION
PRESIDENT
Canada

Dear Les,

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

Congress in Cleveland, was excellent and with the best of wishes. You are our President, and I am very proud to be lead by such a person as you. full of integrity, honesty, friendship and with a knowledge of the sport stick to your soul. we will learn so much from you. Thanks for being here for us, the Triathlon.

At this time I would like to thank you, in the name of all countries that thru yourself received from ITU the Money Contribution to assist to Cleveland. I sincerely hope, that for coming trips, this Aid could be raise, since travel expenses are very high, and these countries need a lot of help. Did you notice that at least a 50% of voting belongs to the Latinamerican Countries? That was an important part of this Congress. For the future meetings, we must have Translation in Spanish for the Latin people, please.

I want to emphasize that you should remind to all NOCs that if its Federation is not recognize by their NOC they are not part of ITU. I noticed at the Congress session, that there were about 25 - Countries that couldn't vote in the elections but were admitted to take part in the event.

To be in the world Championships, selective races are to taken place for the athletes to qualify, and there were athletes that did not qualify whether - they were in the selective, or just did the race - without the proper qualification. This is an issue that the Technical Committee has to be aware of from now on.
To: Mr. McDonald – Page 2 –

I will be writing a letter to Mr. Lureen Barnett, Technical Committee, making some observations regarding the Cleveland event.

The organization of this event was a tragedy, there were so many mistakes, like never before, and in my opinion and some others, this championship has been the worst organized one, that I have ever been.

I know you are very busy after election, but I’ll wait to receive the Congress Report and your important comments, as I compromise myself to continue with my hard working, to start walking along with you and all other Countries, our way to the Olympic Dream. You are the most important person that deserves to be there.

From all the people that works for PATCO, in South-Central America and Miami Area, goes our message of Congratulations, wishing you once again, the best of rewards for all you are doing in behalf of the Sport.

Regards,

PANAMERICAN CONFEDERATION OF TRIATHLON

[Signature]

Jorge Mejia
President
To:            International Triathlon Union

From:          Triathlon Australia.

Re:             Triathlon World Championships - Cleveland 1996

Triathlon Australia would like to lodge an official complaint to the Race Director
and organisers of the recent Triathlon World Championship held in Cleveland 24, 25
August, 1996.

The following areas we found deficient and not up to the standard of a World
Championship.

Managers Meeting:
Poorly conducted with the lack of accurate maps and course description. The race
information booklet did not provide enough course detail. Not enough time for
questions and no allowance for non-English speaking countries.

Transition Area.
Little or no security at all. Competitors equipment being stolen. No check on what
equipment left the transition area with each competitor.

The transition area surface was a rough blue metal which cause injury to feet and
flat tyres to bikes.

Citizens Wave
Does a World Championship really require such a category. It surely must demean
the event plus the chaos that it caused with security and a more congested transition
area.

Swim.
The elite course on the Saturday was a disaster with not enough room for the
competitors to turn the first buoy due the short approach swim and the lack of room
from the buoy to the harbour wall. Triathletes nearly drowned as they fought their
way around the course or had to wait until the congestion eased before they
attempted to negotiate that first buoy.
All swim courses should be a minimum of two laps of 750m and the first turning buoy should be further than 500m from the start line.

The exit pontoon had no carpet and therefore was dangerously slippery. Only 4 exit ladders for waves of over 100 competitors was inadequate.

The age group swim was a minimum of 150m too long.

**Bike.**
The road surface in places was sub standard with potholes, manholes and poorly cambered corners.

The course was poorly marked and the double lap caused excessive drafting packs and confusion as to the the last exit and hence competitors going the wrong way.

Draftbusters and motorcyclists without helmets. Too many motor bikes on the course and in the elite race a motor bike was going the wrong way against traffic and crashed into a number of cyclists.

The elite bike course was between 3-4 km short of the stated 40 km.

The lead motor cycle was too close to the lead cycling group and therefore was an 'outside' assistance to them.

Crowd control with no barricades made crowd control very difficult for the marshalls.

**Run.**
Through “beautiful” downtown Cleveland away from any of the prevailing breezes with no crowd control was yet another mistake.

**Finish Area.**
No security as anyone could step through the barriers and therefore the area was congested.

Commentary was confined to single areas of the race. That is, swim only heard what was happenning down there with no reports of what was happenning on the bike or run.

**Publicity**
Very little if at all. The only people watching the race seemed to be triathletes, friends and relatives. Were the locals told about the event? Even most of the shopkeepers were unaware that a Triathlon was on that weekend.

**Presentations:**
No recognition of Elite field, no national anthems and a portion of the audience were exchanging clothing items while the presentations were being carried out.
The post event party was poorly attended and no food was supplied even though the entry fee was higher this year and this is usually supplied in the cost.

Results:
Some competitors results omitted and still no official results received by Triathlon Australia.

Conclusion
For the supposed ‘pinnacle’ race of the year, this was a big disappointment for all those involved. It appeared as a money making venture for the local organisers and many corners were cut which put the competitors safety at risk.

Rob Pickard
Triathlon Australia.