

MATTEO DAL MONTE

I'd first like to thank my fellow ASWIS members who nominated me for a Member at-large bid with the ASWIS Executive Board. As I read and re-read the email, I asked myself 3 questions that, answered here, will best capture who I am and who I intend to be as an ASWIS Member at-large.

1: Why me?

On paper, my career as a Social Worker is still in its infancy. I'm an Associate Social Worker from Los Angeles, CA, working with children, teens, and their families in a non-profit community mental health agency. I've developed and delivered mental health presentations and workshops on collaboration, teamwork, and communication to high school student-athletes, and I've coached youth basketball at all levels for 8 years. Apart from these experiences, my direct Sport Social Work experience is rather limited.

2: Given my limited experience, why would someone in ASWIS nominate me?

The answer to this question lies in the answer of another: what is your essence? I hope this quick story can explain it best:

During one particular mental health presentation, I noticed a male high school football player staring morosely at the ground during the entire talk. Curious, I decided to check in with him afterwards. For 20 minutes, the floodgates opened as this athlete poured his heart out, telling me about the pressure he felt to participate in a sport he didn't want to play, the toxic masculinity in his community that silenced him, and the silent grief he felt after losing several male family members to suicide. As we finished, he thanked me for the chance to share his story and truly feel heard, for having his fears about speaking up challenged, and for sparking hope that things could get better. This interaction is exactly why I decided to pursue social work, join ASWIS, and accept this nomination. Optimism, curiosity, and growth-mindedness capture my essence, and though I currently have limited direct SSW experience, I will bring these three values in spades to my work on the ASWIS Executive Board.

3. Why not me?

My vision for ASWIS' growth over the coming year centers on strengthening collaboration. This means helping ASWIS members to connect beyond the Annual Symposium, taking conversations off the email thread and into person-to-person engagement. I aim to enhance ASWIS' standing as a collaborating organization within the social work field and the athletic environments we serve, bringing awareness of Sport Social Workers' capabilities through education, mentorship, and policy. A practical example: creating a CA-specific subgroup within ASWIS, focused on enhancing professional relationships amongst CA-based ASWIS members. Through regional in-person and virtual meetups, this group would serve as a referral and resource network for CA ASWIS members to navigate geographically, culturally, and politically specific challenges across the state. I'd like to propose an initiative in which CA ASWIS members contribute to the normalization of Sport Social Workers in local athletic environments through volunteering, guest lecturing, and presenting to local sports teams,

schools, and universities. The Summer Olympics in 2028 in Los Angeles, CA bring forth several opportunities for CA ASWIS members to partner with other agencies to develop programming around athlete mental health, coaching support, equitable access to sport, and many other topics.

This nomination is a huge honor and a responsibility I will approach with the utmost respect. While I might not have as much experience as some of the other candidates for this position, I intend to bring optimism, curiosity, and growth-mindedness to my work as we continue to expand the impact ASWIS can have for athletes all over the world. Thank you in advance for your consideration.