

London's Calling – Team Selection Issues

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With London 2012 on the horizon, it is important athletes know as much about the selection process as possible. A number of Selection Issues that could affect your journey to 2012 are discussed below.

In order to compete at the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games, athletes will be subject to a selection process. The process by which athletes are selected can lead to disagreements and disputes. The purpose of this article is to highlight some aspects of the selection process that you as an athlete should know. Specifically, we will discuss some preventative measures you can take to hopefully avoid selection disputes; how to review and understand published selection criteria; and how selection disputes progress and are resolved.

Preventative Measures

The starting point for selection issues is the athlete agreement. Most agreements will contain clauses that outline the lead-time for the publication of selection criteria for major games. If there is no hard deadline within the agreement, there will likely be a clause stating the criteria will be published in a *reasonable time*. *Reasonable time* should be interpreted to mean that you would have the time available to adjust your training and competition schedule to meet the criteria and peak for the major event; a soft deadline.

What if the deadline is approaching and my NSO hasn't published the selection criteria?

If you notice that a deadline is fast approaching and that your NSO has not published the selection criteria, you need to contact them and ask that it be published immediately / by the deadline. If the NSO does not publish by the deadline, write the NSO a letter informing them that they are in breach of the athlete agreement. Remember, a draft is not published criteria - you should expect the official criteria to be published in a reasonable timeframe. For example, it is unreasonable for the criteria to come out after the deadline for registration to a mandatory competition under the criteria, and sometimes these elements are not included in a draft.

How can I affect the selection criteria process?

In addition to monitoring the NSO, an athlete can get involved in the establishment of selection criteria. Athlete reps are well positioned to ask NSOs for selection criteria drafts and to provide feedback. If your NSO distributes a draft of the criteria, take advantage of this opportunity to express your opinion, feedback, comments and/or concerns, before the criteria becomes official.

Published Selection Criteria

Once the selection criteria are published it is crucial that athletes read and understand it. One of the biggest issues in selection disputes is that athletes did not fully understand the criteria.

For the Olympics, athletes will need to meet the selection criteria of:

- the International Federation
- the Olympic Charter
- be in conformity with the COC team selection policy
- the NSO's selection criteria.

When reviewing your athlete agreement and the NSO selection criteria look to see if the NSO has incorporated selection criteria of the above mentioned organizations. If not, ask your NSO for this information, they have to provide it to you!

Additionally, when reading the criteria you should look for:

- Subjective elements – i.e. “the expert opinion of the HPD” – subjectivity should be kept to a minimum and only where it is necessary (team chemistry, as a final determining factor)
- Minimum requirements (i.e.: compete at nationals)
- Conditions unrelated to sport performance

If the selection criteria are incomplete, flawed, unclear or overly subjective, these problems need to be raised with your NSO immediately. It is very difficult to appeal selection criteria when they are applied; concerns need to be raised immediately after they are published. You can use provisions within your athlete agreement to argue your concerns to the NSO.

Selection Disputes – Once you think you’ve made the team

Once you think you’ve made the team, there are a number of selection disputes that could arise that you need to be aware of. Most disputes arise from deficiencies in the communication and implementation of the selection criteria. It is common to appeal the basis for subjective decisions and the manner in which selection criteria were applied.

It is extremely important to know that appeal timelines concerning selection disputes are often shorter than other types of appeals, sometimes only 24 hours. At this point it is most important that appeals be handled quickly.

Summary

The selection process need not be complicated. If you communicate with your NSO and become involved in the process you can ensure a greater degree of fairness. If you have any questions or issues regarding team selection please contact the Sport Solution Program Managers. We are always happy to help.