

**INTERNATIONAL BOBSLEIGH & SKELETON FEDERATION
APPEALS TRIBUNAL**

KATIE UHLAENDER

COMPLAINANT,

v.

BOBSLEIGH CANADA SKELETON AND JOE CECCHINI

RESPONDENTS.

FINAL ORDER

The IBSF Appeals Tribunal met to consider the Petition of Katie Uhlaender and issued an Operative Award on January 23, 2026. Complainant has requested that the Final Order be issued as soon as possible to facilitate review by the Court of Arbitration for Sport. This expedited decision shall constitute the Final Order in this matter.

Facts

A. Procedural Status

1. This matter was submitted with a request for an expedited hearing. The Appeals Tribunal determined that the relevant facts of the case were established for all relevant purposes by the submissions from Ms. Uhlaender to the Interim Integrity Unit and to the Appeals Tribunal, including both the narrative assertions and the documents appended thereto. In summary, the Appeals Tribunal assumed that the facts alleged by Ms. Uhlaender are true.

2. The IBSF Appeals Tribunal considered this matter *de novo* without attributing weight to the decision of the IBSF Interim Integrity Unit.

B. Adjudicative Facts

3. IBSF maintains ranking lists for Women's Skeleton Athletes.

4. Athletes earn ranking points by competing in IBSF World Cup competitions as well as in Continental competitions such as the North America Cup. Higher finishes are awarded more points.

5. Final ranking points are used to allocate starting slot in the Olympics among National Olympic Committees. The quotas are allocated to NOCs rather than to individual athletes, and NOCs award starting spots in accordance with their own internal procedures.

6. As relevant here, the points that are awarded to sliders in NAC races are *at most* one half of those available to World Cup racers.

7. In addition, the points awarded in NAC races are diminished based on the number of athletes who are "drawn" in advance of the race. *See generally* International Skeleton Rule 11.3. If 21 or more racers are "drawn" for the race, the finishers receive a full allotment of points for the NAC race (albeit fewer points than equivalent finishers in World Cup races). If 16-20 names are drawn, finishers receive 75% of the points available in a full NAC race. If 11-15 names are drawn, the finishers receive 50% of the full allotment of points, and for 6-10 racers drawn, the finishers receive 25% of the full allotment.

8. The number of points awarded following completion of a race is based on the number of names *drawn*, not on the number of athletes who actually compete. Thus, if 16 registered athletes qualify to race through the Official Training period and their names are all drawn, but three athletes do not actually compete in the race, the finishers will still be awarded 75% of the points available in a full race.

9. Mystique Ro of the United States is ranked 17th with 762 points in the final IBSF rankings. Complainant Katie Uhlaender of the United States is ranked 19th in the final IBSF Rankings for Women's Skeleton with 744 points. *See* <https://www.ibsf.org/en/races-and-results/rankings/2025/women-s-skeleton/ibsf/#rankings>.

10. Ms. Uhlaender received 90 points for a first-place finish at the final North American Cup Race held in Lake Placid on January 11, 2026 pursuant to International Skeleton Rule 11.3. Because only 19 names were drawn for the competition, her points constitute 75% of the points for a first-place finish in a race with at least 21 names drawn. If 21 or more athletes successfully completed the Official Training and participated in the draw, Ms. Uhlaender would have received 120 points on the assumption that she would have won the race.

11. If Ms. Uhlaender had received the full allotment of points in the final Lake Placid NAC, she would have surpassed Mystique Ro in the final IBSF Women's Skeleton rankings with a total of 774 points to Ms. Ro's 762, all other things being equal.

12. Ms. Uhlaender asserts, and the Appeals Tribunal assumes, that the ultimate result would have been that the USOPC would name Ms. Uhlaender (and not Mystique Ro) to the United States Olympic Skeleton Team. As noted above, quota spots are awarded to NOCs and not to athletes, and the Appeals Tribunal has not investigated the allocation of starting spots within the United States skeleton program.

13. This dispute arises because of the circumstances that led to the conduct of the final Lake Placid NAC race and the impact on points available.

14. International Skeleton rules, Section 10.1 provides for the conduct of "official training" runs in the days leading up to the race. Official training is an instrumental part of the competition, as "[a]t all official IBSF competitions, each athlete must complete two training heats without accident to be allowed to participate in the race." Rule 10.1.5.

15. International Skeleton Rules, Rule 8.6 states in part:

8.6 Entries

The entry deadline for IBSF events is 4 weeks prior to the 1st Team Captains Meeting and the number of athletes must be specified.

....

- d) Entries may be withdrawn at any time. Already paid entry fees are non-refundable.

16. Canada entered six sliders in the final Lake Placid NAC Women's Skeleton race by the registration deadline. Prior to the Official Training period, Canada's coach Mr. Cecchini became concerned that Canada might lose an overall Olympic quota spot if non-Canadian athletes in Lake Placid performed well.

17. In order to protect against that occurrence – Canada instructed four of its athletes not to participate in the Official Training period. By not participating, the four Canadian athletes became ineligible to be drawn during the final pre-race team captains meeting. (The other two Canadians participated in Official Training, the draw, and the race itself.)

18. Only 19 names were drawn at the final pre-race meeting, thereby fixing the number of points available at 75% of the allotment for NAC races with twenty or more names drawn.

19. Although Canada subsequently attributed its decision to order four athletes not to slide in Official Training to concerns about the athletes involved, substantial evidence supports Ms. Uhlaender's contention that the move was a deliberate effort by Canada to reduce the points available at the final Lake Placid NAC so as to protect its own Olympic quotas.

20. Ultimately, the reduction in points available did not impact the overall allocation of quota spots among NOCs. That is, even if the Lake Placid NAC had earned its racers 100% of the points available, no NOC would have gained or lost a quota spot in the Olympics as a consequence of the reduction of points to 75% of the maximum.

21. As noted above, although the overall distribution of Olympic starting positions would not have changed, the United States had been allocated two spots and Ms. Uhlaender contends that she would have been selected over Ms. Ro on the USA Olympic team by virtue of being higher in the IBSF final Women's Skeleton rankings. [Kelly Curtis of the United States finished with 798 ranking points, and nobody has drawn her position into question.]

22. Ms. Uhlaender sought relief from the IBSF Interim Integrity Unit, who denied the petition but recommended that IBSF remind participants of their sporting obligations. This appeal ensued.

Analysis

23. Various codes of conduct and ethics rules apply to coaches and other participants in IBSF activities.

24. The IBSF Code of Ethics states in relevant part:

7 - Fair play

No person shall violate the principles of fair play by engaging in improper conduct or attempting to alter the course or result of a competition except as expressly permitted by the rules and regulations governing the competition.

25. The specific IBSF Code of Conduct applicable to coaches states:

I am fully aware of the Olympic Movement Code on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions and my responsibilities and duties thereof.

26. The IBSF has adopted by reference the Olympic Movement Code. The IBSF Statutes require, for example:

7 OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS

7.1 Members and their individual members are subject to and must comply with the IBSF Statutes, all IBSF Rules and Regulations, the IBSF Anti- Doping Rules, the Olympic Movement Code on the Prevention of the Manipulation of Competitions, IBSF Safeguarding Policy Against Harassment and Abuse, or Codes of Conduct or any other Code that the IBSF adopts and to the decisions taken by the Congress and/or the IBSF Executive Committee.

27. The Olympic Movement Code includes the following provision among prohibited conduct:

2.2 Manipulation of competitions

a. Intentional arrangement

An intentional arrangement, act or omission aimed at an *improper alteration* of the result or the course of a competition in order to remove all or *part of the unpredictable nature of the sports*

competition with a view to obtaining an ***undue benefit*** for oneself and/or for others.

The boldfaced italicized terms are not defined in the Olympic Movement Code. In order to establish a violation of the Olympic Movement Code, each of the elements must be established. In light of the resolution below, the Appeals Tribunal does not opine formally as to the satisfaction of those elements on the facts above, but assumes a violation might be proved on the facts asserted.

28. The relevant Appeals Tribunal Code states:

VIII. Sanctions

The Tribunal shall have the power to impose the following sanctions for violations of IBSF Statutes:

...

- E. Suspension or disqualification from participation in IBSF-approved sports contests;
- F. The voiding of any action taken in violation of IBSF Statutes or other applicable law
- G. Invalidation or modification of results and return of any award and/or prize from an IBSF sports contest.

29. The Sanctions provisions of the Olympic Movement Code states:

Article 5

Sanctions

5.1 Where it is determined that a violation has been committed, the competent Sports Organisation shall impose an appropriate sanction upon the Participant from the range of permissible sanctions, which may range from a minimum of a warning to a maximum of life ban.

5.2 When determining the appropriate sanctions applicable, the Sports Organisation shall take into consideration all aggravating and mitigating circumstances and shall detail the effect of such circumstances on the final sanction in the written decision.

5.3 Substantial assistance provided by a Participant that results in the discovery or establishment of an offence by another Participant or Participants may reduce any sanction applied under this Code.

Conclusion and Order

30. The Appeals Tribunal is satisfied that the action of the Canadians was intentional and directed to reducing the points available to athletes who slid at the final Lake Placid NAC. Because the resolution below makes any detailed discussion of the substantive merits of the Complaint unnecessary, the Appeals Tribunal notes — but does not decide — the legal questions that are presented:

- A. Whether the express allowance of withdrawal of an athlete at any time in International Skeleton Rule 8.6(d) necessarily shields that withdrawal from being "improper" under the Olympic Movement Code.
- B. Whether a group of athletes' unexplained decision not to participate in official training (as here) is materially the same as "withdrawing" from a race.
- C. The extent to which (and conditions under which) an action that is not a violation of the competition rules is considered "improper" or produces a benefit that is "unjust" under Rule 2.2(a) of the Olympic Code on Manipulation. *Compare* IBSF Code of Ethics, Section 7 (rule requiring fair play exempts conduct expressly permitted by competition rules) *with* Olympic Movement Code Rule 2.6 (for purposes of determination of violation of Olympic Movement Code, it is not relevant "[w]hether or not the manipulation included a violation of a technical rule of the respective Sports Organization).
- D. The extent to which the number of racers in an IBSF skeleton race is part of the "unpredictable part of the sports competition" protected from manipulation under Rule 2.2(a) of the Olympic Movement Code.

31. The Olympic Movement Code does not permit the Appeals Tribunal to ascribe full points to an IBSF NAC race in which only 19 athletes were drawn. The specific sanctions available are directed toward punishment of the "Participant" at issue, and the Olympic Movement Code has no provision for the remediation of alleged manipulation beyond consequences that can be visited on the offender. Although the disqualification of an athlete and cancellation of results may have collateral impacts (other participants moving up in official finishes, for example) the Olympic Movement Code does not set out standards or means by which event records can be changed other than through sanctions

32. Similarly, the Appeals Code does not permit the Appeals Tribunal to order that the IBSF award full (100%) points to a race in which only 19 athletes were drawn. To the extent that the Appeals Code authorizes the "voiding of any action" or "invalidation or modification of results," the relief sought by Ms. Uhlaender is outside the scope of such authority.

33. Specifically, Ms. Uhlaender is not primarily asking that the Participant(s) who caused this issue be sanctioned, but rather that the Appeals Tribunal rewrite the race records as though 21 athletes participated. This is not allowed under the International Skeleton Rules, The Appeals Code, or the Olympic Movement Code.

Based on the foregoing, the Complaint is dismissed.

DATED this 28th day of January, 2026

IBSF APPEALS TRIBUNAL

Ben Heijmeijer
Stephen Hess, Chair
Stephen Rowland-Jones