

COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT (CAS) TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DU SPORT (TAS) Ad hoc Division – XVII Asian Games in Incheon

CAS arbitration N° AG 14/03

FINAL AWARD

in the arbitration between

and

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1. BACKGROUND

A. Factual Background

- 1.1. This claim arises out of a decision rendered by the Olympic Council of Asia (the "OCA" or the "Respondent") dated 30 September 2014 wherein it was determined that Malaysian wushu athlete Tai Cheau Xuen (the "Athlete" or the "Applicant") committed an anti-doping rule violation during the XVII Asian Games (the "Games") in accordance with Article 2.1 of OCA Anti-Doping Rules (the "OCA ADR").
- 1.2. On 20 September 2014 at 17.06hrs, the Applicant was subject to an in-competition doping control urine test after winning the gold medal in the women's nanquan and nandao all-round event. The doping control test took place at the wushu venue.
- 1.3. Approximately two hours later, at 19.15hrs, the Applicant's sample, together with four other samples, were then transported from the wushu venue to the Doping Control Command Centre ("DCCC").
- 1.4. The next day, 21 September 2014, the Applicant's sample was transported by car from the DCCC to the Korea Institute of Science and Technology (the "KIST") at 11.10hrs. The sample arrived at the KIST at 13.29hrs.
- 1.5. In total, the Applicant's sample was in transport from the venue to the KIST for approximately 16 hours.
- 1.6. On 23 September 2014, the KIST completed its testing and detected the presence of Sibutramine, a Specifed Substance, in the Applicant's sample.
- 1.7. The Applicant was immediately notified of the adverse analytical finding and on the following day, 24 September 2014, a hearing was held between the Applicant, the OCA Medical Commission, and the OCA Anti-Doping Commission.
- 1.8. The next day, on 25 September 2014, the Olympic Council of Malaysia (the "OCM"), on behalf of the Applicant, informed the OCA Disciplinary Commission that the Applicant objected to the discrepancies in her Doping Control and Chain of Custody Forms. More specifically, the OCM questioned the integrity of the external chain of custody following the collection of the Applicant's sample.
- 1.9. By letter dated 26 September 2014, the OCA sought to clarify the Applicant's concerns concerning the chain of custody. Certain questions, however, remained unanswered in the mind of the Applicant. So on 27 September 2014, the Applicant formerly requested that the OCA test her B Sample.
- 1.10. On 28 September 2014, the KIST tested the Applicant's B Sample, which confirmed the results of the A sample (i.e. the presence of Sibutramine).
- 1.11. On 30 September 2014, the OCA Disciplinary Committee filed a report and recommendation with the OCA concluding, in essence, that the findings of the KIST with respect to the Applicant's sample constitute a violation of the OCA ADR and therefore, the Applicant should be disqualified from the Games and the results of her gold medal victory annulled.
- 1.12. Later the same day, the OCA adopted the OCA Disciplinary Committee's report and recommendation in full and issued the decision which reads as follows:

"1) The findings of the laboratory in this case constitutes a violation of OCA Anti Doping Rules as per Art. (2.1).

2) The Competitor exercised her right to have her B sample tested; and results of A and B samples concurred.

3) Letters of the Chef de Mission of the contingent dated 25th and 27th September 2014 referring to the issue with the Chain of Custody form was deliberated by the Commission and it was concluded that this departure from the procedure was not material enough to invalidate the testing procedure and the analysis.

4) As such, the Competitor should be disqualified from the 17th Incheon Asian Games 2014; and her accreditation withdrawn.

5) Her results in the competition should be annulled and her medal withdrawn.

6) As such the result of the event should be adjusted to reflect this disqualification.

7) Together with this notification public disclosure of this violation will also be made.

8) The Competitor has been made aware of her rights including the right to appeal to OCA Executive Committee within four days and / or to Courts Arbitration for Sport (CAS) within 21 days after the reception of the final decision of OCA-Disciplinary Commission. She also has the option to appeal to the CAS-Ad-hoc-committee which is sitting here in Incheon before the close of the Games"

(the "Decision").

1.13. It is from this decision that the Applicant now appeals.

B. Procedural Background

- 1.14. An Ad Hoc Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport ("CAS") has been established for the XVII Asian Games in Incheon. The purpose of this ad hoc division, generally, is to hear any dispute on an urgent and timely basis that falls within the ambit of the CAS Arbitration Rules for the XVII Asian Games in Incheon ("CAS Ad Hoc Rules") taking place from 19 September 2014 to 4 October 2014.
- 1.15. On 1 October 2014 at 15.40hrs, the Applicant filed her appeal, including an Application Form and several exhibits, in person in accordance with Article 10 of the CAS *Ad Hoc* Rules (the "Application"), which was duly received by the CAS *ad hoc* Division.
- 1.16. In her Application, the Applicant sought the following reliefs:
 - A. The medal won by the Applicant to be reinstated immediately.
 - B. The Malaysian medal tally should be recognised after the reinstatement.
- 1.17. While not specifically stated in her request for relief, and giving the benefit of interpretation to the Applicant, the Panel understands that the Applicant wishes to annul the Decision in full and reinstate her gold-medal victory.
- 1.18. That same day 1 October 2014 the *ad hoc* Division acknowledged receipt of the Applicant's appeal and informed the Respondent accordingly. The parties were then called to a hearing on 2 October 2014 at 10.30hrs.

- 1.19. Pursuant to Article 15 of the CAS *Ad Hoc* Rules, the President of the *ad hoc* Division, Mr. Michael Hwang SC, appointed Justice Catherine Anne Davani (Papua New Guinea) (President of the Panel), Mr. Dong Su Ahn (South Korea), and Mrs. Thi My Dung Nguyen (Vietnam) as arbitrators to hear the present dispute.
- 1.20. On 2 October 2014 at 11.00hrs, the parties assembled at the CAS Ad Hoc Division hearing room for a hearing on the Applicant's appeal. The Panel was assisted at the hearing by Mr. Brent J. Nowicki, counsel to the CAS, as well as the following representatives for the parties:

For the Appellant:

- Admiral Dato Danyal Balagopal (Ret.)
- Dr. Arshad Bin Puji
- Dr. Ramlan Bin Abdul-Aziz

For the Respondent:

- Ms. Nadia Alshamali
- Mr. Makoto Ueki
- Mr. Tayyab Ikram
- Mr. Jizhong Wei

Independent Observer:

- Mr. Jonathan Taylor
- 1.21. At the hearing, the Respondent produced certain documents, including an additional Chain of Custody form, which will be referred to in this decision as the second Chain of Custody form. The Respondent relies on this document in support of its defense of the appeal. The Applicant did not object to the filing of the documents, and such documents were duly accepted to the file by the Panel.
- 1.22. Generally speaking, the parties' positions with respect to this appeal are as follows:
 - A. Appellant: The inordinate delay between the time the Applicant's sample left the venue and arrived at the KIST (16 hours) is unreasonable and raises questions over the veracity of the transportation of the sample. Despite the Applicant's efforts to determine what transpired during this 16-hour timeframe, the OCA has not provided any clarity to the matter and has therefore, denied the Applicant of certain fundamental rights. The Applicant does not challenge the anti-doping testing collection procedure or actual testing of the sample. Instead, her appeal challenges the timeliness of the transportation of the sample.
 - B. Respondent: All chain of custody procedures were handled appropriately and in accordance with WADA protocol. The chain of custody was transparent, and the timing and collection details are supported by all the documents associated with the chain of custody forms and other applicable documents. There was also no tampering with this sample.
- 1.23. Following the hearing, the parties confirmed that their right to be heard had been fully respected and that they had no issue with respect to the way the CAS procedure or hearing was conducted.
- 1.24. Having considered this Application, the Panel, exercising its powers under Article 15 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules, decides to render the following decision on the Applicant's appeal.

2. JURISDICTION

A. Jurisdiction of the Ad Hoc Panel

2.1. The CAS *Ad Hoc* Rules concerning the jurisdiction of the Panel at the Asian Games provide as follows:

Article 1 Application of the Present Rules and Jurisdiction of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)

The purpose of the present Rules is to provide, in the interests of the athletes and of sport, for the resolution by arbitration of any disputes covered by Article 34 of the Constitution of the Olympic Council of Asia, insofar as they arise in the host country of the Asian Games (the "Asiad") between 15 September 2014 and 4 October 2014".

Article 2 Ad hoc Division

For the period fixed in Article 1, the ICAS shall establish an ad hoc Division of the CAS (hereinafter the "ad hoc Division"), the function of which is to provide for the resolution by arbitration of the disputes covered by Article 1 by means of Panels set up in accordance with the present Rules.

The ad hoc Division consists of arbitrators appearing on a special list, a President and a Court Office".

2.2. Article I refers to Article 34 of the Constitution of the Olympic Council of Asia, which reads:

"Settlement of Disputes / Complaints

- 1- Every NOCs Member shall be deemed to hold its membership of the OCA on the specific condition that it voluntarily surrenders its right of seeking redress against the OCA in any Court of Law;
- 2- There shall be a "Court of Arbitration" appointed by the OCA President for all unresolved disputes, including relating to validity of a NOC and any other sports organisation recognized by or to the OCA including the Host and Bidding Cities of any Asian Games.
- 3- The OCA President at his discretion shall nominate either a sole arbitrator or an Arbitration Panel more for the resolution or decision of any unresolved dispute. The decision of the Arbitration Panel will be reported to the OCA Executive Board and can be appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) in Lausanne.
- 4- The Terms and Conditions as well as the time frame for the proceedings to be completed will be specified by the OCA President;
- 5- The "Court of Arbitration", appointed by the OCA President will be responsible for investigating complaints raised in relation to the disrespect of ethical principles laid down in the OCA Constitution or Olympic Charter including but not limited to the breach of the code of ethics and conduct. If necessary proposed sanctions will be submitted to the EB for approval.

Bye-Law [sic] to Article 34

The Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) in association with the OCA will set up a small working group from CAS that will be present and working alongside the OCA in the Asian Games period only, on the same lines as done during the Olympic Games. The participating athletes can address any issues that they may have directly with CAS, during the Asian Games."

- 2.3. Under Article 12.3 of the OCA ADR, in all cases arising from the Games, a decision concerning an anti-doping rule violation may be appealed exclusively to the CAS in accordance with the CAS Ad Hoc Rules.
- 2.4. As is always the case, the Panel must follow the proper rules governed by the CAS Ad Hoc Rules enacted by the International Council of Arbitration for Sport ("ICAS") on 3 June 2014. The Panel is further governed by Chapter 12 of the Swiss Private International Law Act of 18 December 1987 ("PIL Act"). The PIL Act applies to this arbitration as the result of the location of the seat of the CAS ad hoc Division in Lausanne Switzerland, pursuant to Article 7 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules.
- 2.5. Under Article 17 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules, the Panel must decide a dispute "pursuant to the Constitution of the Olympic Council of Asia, the applicable regulations, the general principles of law and the rules of law whose application the Panel deems appropriate".
- 2.6. Based on the foregoing, the Panel determines that this dispute is governed by the OCA ADR, which incorporates the World Anti-Doping Code (the "WADA Code") and International Standard for Testing (the "IST"). All such rules and regulations apply to the Applicant as a competitor in the Games. Swiss law shall apply subsidiarily.

B. Admissibility of the Appeal

- 2.7. Article 12.1 of the OCR ADR provides that an appeal of the Decision shall be initially submitted to the OCA Executive Board. Following such decision of the OCA Executive Board, a party has the right to appeal to the CAS according to the applicable provisions therein. Article 12.6 of the OCR ADR provides, in operative part, that "[t]he time to file an appeal to CAS shall be twenty-one (21) days from the date of receipt of the decision by the appealing party."
- 2.8. However, as set forth in the Decision, the OCA informed the Applicant that the OCA would agree to waive an internal appeal to the OCA Executive Board and have the matter heard on appeal directly by the CAS Ad Hoc Division before the conclusion of the Games. The Applicant agreed to such proposal and filed her appeal with the CAS Ad Hoc Division on 1 October 2014.
- 2.9. At the inception of the hearing, the parties also confirmed with the Panel that they agreed to waive any right to an internal appeal with the OCA Executive Board and preferred to proceed directly to the CAS *Ad Hoc* Division.
- 2.10. The Panel therefore accepts the parties' positions in this regard and finds this appeal admissible.
- 2.11. Additionally, it was also agreed by all parties that the Applicant had authorised her representatives, those whose names appear in this decision at paragraph 1.20, to appear on her behalf.

3. THE MERITS OF THE APPEAL

- 3.1. The Panel begins this analysis of the merits by noting that there is no dispute between the parties about the following factual matters:
 - a. The Applicant underwent a mandatory in-competition anti-doping control test following her gold-medal victory on 20 September 2014.
 - b. The Applicant's A and B Sample both tested positive for the presence of Sibutramine.
 - c. The OCA's collection of the Applicant's urine sample <u>at the venue</u> was done in compliance with all applicable OCA regulations.
 - d. The KIST is a WADA-accredited laboratory.
 - e. The KIST did not depart from any applicable WADA regulation when it <u>tested</u> the Applicant's A and B Sample.
 - f. The Applicant's sample collection vessel was not tampered with either before, during, or after testing notwithstanding the fact that there were issues initially raised by the Applicant in relation to the details set forth in the chain of custody form. The Applicant's concerns, however, have now been resolved and the Applicant accepts that the original form can be relied on by the Panel.
 - g. The veracity of the Applicant's sample is not in question.
- 3.2. With these undisputed factual elements as a backdrop, the Panel seeks to next discuss the burden of proof required to prove an anti-doping violation.
- 3.3. Such discussion begins with the WADA World Anti-Doping Code (the "WADA Code") which establishes international standards and rules regulating anti-doping testing and enforcement. The contents of the WADA Code are binding on the OCA as signatories to WADA: Part of 1 of the Code.
- 3.4. The introduction to the WADA Code identifies the purposes of the World Anti-Doping Program and Code as follows:

"The purposes of the World Anti-Doping Program and the Code are:

- To protect the Athletes' fundamental right to participate in doping-free sport and thus promote health, fairness and equality for Athletes worldwide; and
- To ensure harmonized, coordinate and effective anti-doping programs at the international and national level with regard to detection deterrence and prevention of doping.*
- 3.5. The introduction also identifies the 'main elements' of the World Anti-Doping Program. These include: 'Level 2: International Standards'. The Code provides for mandatory compliance with International Standards:

"International Standards for different technical and operational areas within the anti-doping program will be developed in consultation with the Signatories and governments and approved by WADA. The purpose of the International

Standards is harmonization among Anti-Doping Organizations responsible for specific technical and operational parts of the anti-doping programs. Adherence to the International Standards is mandatory for compliance with the Code. The International Standards may be revised from time to time by the WADA Executive Committee after reasonable consultation with the Signatories and governments. Unless provided otherwise in the Code, International Standards and all revisions shall become effective on the date specified in the International Standard or revision."

3.6. Article 5.2 of the WADA Code makes further reference to International Standards for Testing:

*5.2. Standards for Testing

Anti-Doping Organisations with Testing jurisdiction shall conduct such Testing in conformity with the International Standard for Testing."

3.7. The International Standard for Testing ("IST") sets out the required practice for the collection, storage, transmission, and analysis of anti-doping tests. The Introduction to the IST states that:

"The International Standard for Testing, including all annexes, is mandatory for all signatories to the Code."

3.8. Article 9.0 Transport of Samples and documentation of the IST provides, in part, as follows:

9.1 Objective

- a. To ensure that Samples and related documentation arrive at the WADAaccredited laboratory or as otherwise approved by WADA in proper condition to do the necessary analysis, and
- b. To ensure the Sample Collection Session documentation is sent by the DCO to the ADO in a secure and timely manner.

9.3 Requirements for transport and storage of Samples and documentation

9.3.1 The ADO shall authorise a transport system that ensures Samples and documentation will be transported in a manner that protects their integrity, identity, and security.

9.3.2 Samples shall always be transported to the WADA-accredited laboratory (or otherwise approved by WADA), using the ADO's authorised transport method as <u>soon as practicable</u> after the completion of the Sample Collection Session. Samples shall be transported in a manner which minimizes the potential for Sample degradation due to factors such as time delays and extreme temperature variations. (emphasis added).

A. The OCA Anti-Doping Rules Applicable to the Games

3.9. The OCR ADR establishes a principle of strict liability for ingestion of prohibited substances:

"it is each Athlete's personal duty to ensure that no Prohibited Substance enters his body. Athletes are responsible for any Prohibited Substance or its Metabolites or Markers found to be present in their Samples. Accordingly, it is not necessary that intent, fault, negligence or knowing Use on the Athlete's part be demonstrated in order to establish an anti-doping rule violation under Article 2.1.

B. The Burden of Proving an Anti-Doping Violation

- 3.10. Under OCR ADR Article 3.1, the OCR has the burden of establishing that an artidoping rule violation has occurred. For these purposes, '[t]he standard of proof shall be whether the OCR has established an anti-doping rule violation to the comfortable satisfaction of the hearing [panel] in accordance with the Article 7 bearing in mind the seriousness of the allegation which is made. This standard of proof in all cases is greater than a mere balance of probability but less than proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Where these Rules place the burden of proof upon the Athlete or other Person alleged to have committed an anti-doping rule violation to rebut a presumption or establish specified facts or circumstances, the standard of proof shall be by a balance of probability."
- 3.11. Article 3.2 Methods of Establishing Facts and Presumptions of OCR ADR then enumerates four specific rules of proof applicable in doping cases. The second of those rules concerns proof of doping violations where there has been a departure from the IST:

*3.2.2 Departures from any other International Standard or other anti-doping rule or policy which did not cause an Adverse Analytical Finding or other anti-doping rule violation shall not invalidate such results. If the Athlete or other Person establishes that a departure from another International Standard occurred during testing then the OCA shall have the burden of establishing that such departure did not cause the Adverse Analytical Finding or the factual basis for the anti-doping rule violation." (emphasis added).

- 3.12. Based upon the foregoing, the Panel sets out the issues below, which arise from the Applicant's Application and the parties' submission at the hearing. The issues raised are several but in essence can be summarised as follows:
 - a. Has there been a departure from the IST by the 'inordinate extended period' (as alleged by the Applicant) when it took 16 hours for the Athlete's sample to travel from the venue to the DCCC, then later to the KIST?
 - b. If so, did such departure in any way compromise the integrity of the sample such that it caused the Applicant's adverse analytical finding?
- 3.13. Although the Panel has raised this aspect of the CoC form as an undisputed fact, referred to earlier in paragraph 2.11., it wishes to place on record what transpired at the hearing for the Applicant's benefit. As an initial matter, the Panel accepts the Applicant's submissions, which were raised at the commencement of the proceedings, that the second chain of custody form which was completed by the

officials at the DCCC and was submitted to the Panel and the Applicant at the hearing by the Respondent was, indeed, unnecessarily confusing. The Panel understands the Applicant's assertions concerning the missing details on the original form which accompanied the sample throughout this sixteen-hour period, contained missing dates.

3.14. In response, the Respondent referred the Panel to a document on the KIST's letterhead dated September 25th, 2014 (the "KIST Letter") which reads, in part, as follows:

Before starting B-sample analysis, one question regarding the chain of custody (CoC) was raised by the athlete's representative, and the cause and needs of correction (rewriting on a new sheet) was explained by the fax sheet received from OCA MC-ADC. As a result, all the people attended for B-analysis understood the reason of correction of CoC made by Doping Control Command Center of IAGOC.

- 3.15. The KIST letter is signed by the Applicant's representatives, as well as representatives of the OCA MD-ADC, the DCCC, and KIST representatives. In reviewing this document, it is clear to the Panel that the Applicant's representatives were very much aware of and understood the reason why the chain of custody form was corrected by the DCCC.
- 3.16. In view of the above, the Applicant conceded that the original form is the only form the Panel needed to rely on. The Respondent agreed. So in other words, the submissions raised by the Applicant in relation to the CoC is no longer an issue.
- 3.17. The Panel will now embark on its analysis of the issues presented above at paragraph 3.12.
- 3.18. In relation to the first issue, the Panel notes that the Applicant does not challenge the veracity of the sample itself. The Applicant made this point very clear. She had no objection to how the sample was taken or tested. However, her principle and only concern was the duration of time it took for the sample to leave the venue and arrive at the DCCC and finally to the KIST lab. This 16-hour timeframe, according to the Applicant, is a departure from the IST protocols as the time it took to transport the sample was unreasonably long under the circumstances.
- 3.19. More specifically, the Applicant alleged that she received no information on the chain of custody concerning her sample, and moreover, where the sample had gone during this timeframe and how the sample was stored. She further alleged that there might have been many things that could have occurred during this timeframe which could have either contaminated her sample or tampered with the integrity of the chain of custody process. Eventually though, she made clear that her sample, upon receipt at the KIST, was in good order.
- 3.20. The foregoing demonstrates the Applicant's tacit agreement with the steps taken by the Respondent. Although the Applicant emphasizes the fact that degradation of the sample *could have* occurred during the 16-hour period, she is raising this submissions based on "fears" that she has in the unknown (i.e. what happened once the sample left the venue and arrived at the DCC). Importantly, she is <u>not</u> questioning the propriety of the methodology applied in collecting and testing sample.
- 3.21. Consequently, the Applicant's only argument is in relation to the external chain of custody and transportation of the sample between the time her sample left the venue and arrived at the KIST.

- 3.22. In response, the Respondent alleges that all transportation protocols were adequately followed, and that the 16-hour timeframe was justified, given the circumstances of the collection described above.
- 3.23. The Panel finds that there is no clear requirement in either the OCA ADR or Article 9.3.2 of the IST with respect to a specific time limit which must be met so as to comply with such regulations. Instead the only requirement is that the sample must be transported "as soon as practicable."
- 3.24. Furthermore, the Panel notes that the 16-hour timeframe at issue in this case was inclusive of the evening of 29th September 2014 and also that the sample was transferred first to the DCCC and then later to the KIST the next day. The logistical arrangements associated with such transport, which would have included transportation and delivery to the respective locations by car, only confirms that a period of 16 hours for the commencement and completion of this process is indeed reasonable and warranted under the circumstances.
- 3.25. In support of its determination, the panel refers to CAS jurisdiction which finds that the period complained of herein (16 hours) is a far lesser period of time than other cases on point. More specifically, the Panel refers to CAS 2010/A/2296 Simon Vroemen v. Koninklijke Nederlandse Athletiek Unie & Anti-Doping Autoriteit Nederland wherein a period of three and one-half days was taken to store, transport, and deliver the sample in question. In that case, the appellant submitted that this was an unacceptable period and should be characterized as "too long" in terms of the IST. The CAS Panel, however, noted that "[t]his time frame is arguably not ideal but it is in line with common testing practice, especially when sample collection occurs far away from a WADA-accredited laboratory."
- 3.26. The Panel is of the view, as was done in CAS 2010/A/2296, that the IST requirement that the sample be transported "as soon as practicable", was not unreasonable and not in violation of the IST.
- 3.27. In the absence of any evidence from the Applicant to prove that the sample was tampered with during this period of time and together with the fact that the Applicant confirmed that the B Sample was in good form when tested, the Panel determines that the time period of 16 hours during which the sample was transported to the KIST cannot constitute a reason on which to make a finding that there has been a violation of the IST.
- 3.28. In view of the above, the Panel determines that the Applicant has failed to meet her burden in accordance with Article 3.2.2 of the OCR ADR as she has not established that there has been a violation of the IST. Therefore, the Panel determines that the integrity of the chain of custody has not been compromised in any way.
- 3.29. Consequently, the Applicant's appeal is dismissed.

4. DECISION

For these reasons, the *ad hoc* Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport renders the following decision:

1. The application filed by Ms Tai Cheau Xuen on 1 October 2014 is dismissed.

Operative part notified on 2 October 2014 Incheon, 3 October 2014

THE AD HOC DIVISION OF THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

Catherine Anne Davani President of the Panel

Dong Su Ahn Arbitrator

Thi My Dung Nguyen Arbitrator