

**INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
IOC EXECUTIVE BOARD**

DECISION

**REGARDING MR ARA ABRAHAMIAN
BORN ON 27 JULY 1975, ATHLETE, SWEDEN
WRESTLING, MEN'S GRECO-ROMAN, 84KG**

UPON CONSIDERING the attached Recommendations of the IOC Disciplinary Commission dated 15 August 2008 and pursuant to the Olympic Charter Fundamental Principles of Olympism and Rules 41 and 51.3:

**THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE
INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
DECIDES**

- I The athlete Mr Ara Abrahamian, Sweden:
- (i) is disqualified from the event of men's Greco-Roman wrestling, 84 kg
 - (ii) is excluded from the Games of the XXIX Olympiad in Beijing in 2008;
 - (iii) shall have his Olympic identity and accreditation card immediately cancelled and withdrawn;
- II The International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA) is requested:
- to modify the results of the above-mentioned event accordingly, it being understood that the athlete who placed behind Mr Abrahamian shall not be promoted to third place,
 - to return the bronze medal held by FILA to the IOC;
 - to consider any further action within its own competence.
- III The NOC of Sweden and BOCOG is requested to ensure full implementation of this decision.
- IV. This Decision shall enter into force immediately.

Beijing, 16 August 2008

On behalf of the IOC Executive Board

Jacques ROGGE
IOC President

Urs LACOTTE
Director General

**INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
IOC DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION**

RECOMMENDATIONS

**REGARDING MR ARA ABRAHAMIAN
BORN ON 27 JULY 1975, ATHLETE, SWEDEN
WRESTLING, MEN'S GRECO-ROMAN, 84KG**

(Olympic Charter Fundamental Principles of Olympism and Rules 41 and 51.3)

1. Mr Ara Abrahamian (hereinafter the "**Athlete**") competed in the Games of the XXIX Olympiad in Beijing in 2008 in the sport of wrestling, men's Greco-Roman 84kg, where he placed third, obtaining one of the two bronze medals awarded.
2. On 14 August 2008, during the awards ceremony, the Athlete, upon receiving his bronze medal, immediately stepped down from the podium prior to the presentation of the other medals. He took off his medal, placed it on the floor a few meters away from the podium and walked away from the ceremony. The medal is currently in the possession of FILA.
3. Upon being informed by the IOC Sports Director of the incident, the IOC President, by letter dated 14 August 2008, immediately set up a Disciplinary Commission, consisting of:
 - Thomas Bach (Chairman)
 - Denis Oswald
 - Sergey Bubka

The IOC President also requested that the Disciplinary Commission look into this matter and make recommendations to the IOC Executive Board, which will take the final decision.

4. Mr Raphael Martinetti, President of the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (hereafter the "FILA"), by e-mail dated 14 August 2008 to the IOC Olympic Games Executive Director, Mr Felli, informed the IOC that the FILA Disciplinary Commission was proposing the following sanctions:
 - *"disqualification of the wrestler, Mr Abrahamian, and non-classification;*
 - *the bronze medal to be withdrawn from him,*
 - *the following wrestler in the ranking to be moved up so as to obtain the bronze medal; ..."* (translation supplied)
5. By letter dated 14 August 2008, the IOC President advised the Athlete, the Swedish NOC and FILA of the above-mentioned incident and invited the Chef de mission of the Swedish NOC and representatives of FILA to attend the hearing on 15 August 2008 at 09:30 hours at the Beijing Hotel. The Disciplinary Commission held its hearing at the Beijing Hotel, IOC Executive Board Room, 18th Floor, 33 East Chang An Avenue in Beijing on the said day and time in the presence of the Athlete, and a delegation (hereinafter the "Delegation") comprised of:
 - Stefan Lindeberg, Chef de Mission
 - Leo Myllari, Head Coach
 - Bjorn Rosengren, NOC/Lawyer

6. FILA was represented at the hearing by Michel Dusson, Secretary General.
7. Also attending the hearing was:
 - Howard Stupp, IOC Director of Legal Affairs
 - Andre Sabbah, Legal Counsel in the IOC Department of Legal Affairs
 - François Carrard, IOC Counsel
8. Upon request, the Delegation confirmed that it had no objection as to the disciplinary procedure.
9. The Disciplinary Commission began by viewing the tape of the incident, in front of all persons in attendance.
10. The Athlete and the Delegation then submitted their explanations as to the incident and the Athlete's behaviour:
 - 10.1 The Athlete stated that he had nothing against the Olympic Games or the other athletes. The Athlete insisted that, following the Athens Games, he put all his energy and efforts to prepare himself for what would be his final Olympic Games in Beijing 2008, hoping to win the gold medal which he felt he deserved. The Athlete further explained his view that during the semi-final match at the competition in Beijing, he was prejudiced by blatant errors in judging which caused him to lose the match which, in the opinion of many other attendants, he had not lost. It should also be noted that, in front of the Disciplinary Commission, the Athlete expressed serious unsubstantiated allegations against FILA and its President.
 - 10.2 Although the Delegation considered the behaviour of the Athlete as not acceptable, it explained that the Athlete's actions should not be characterized as any form of disrespect towards the Olympic Games, or fellow athletes. The Athlete congratulated his fellow competitors. The Athlete's gesture was not directed at the IOC or the Olympic Movement. It should be understood as an expression of his disapproval of judging errors as well as a demonstration against FILA's regulations and the manner in which they are applied. The Athlete had already undergone serious problems with judging errors at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, pointing out that he "lost the gold medal" rather than "won the silver medal" (translation supplied). The Delegation had emphasized the fact that its various attempts to ask for a video review during the semi-final match were denied by the judges and that this was not in conformity with fair play and the Olympic Movement. The Delegation stressed that the above-noted background did not excuse the behaviour of the Athlete but was fundamental to understanding his gesture. The Delegation further stated that it had sent a protest letter to FILA which FILA did not answer. The Delegation ended its presentation by advising that it had already reprimanded the Athlete and that a warning by the IOC would be an appropriate measure.
11. The Secretary General of FILA, Michel Dusson, reiterated and confirmed FILA's position as stated in its 14 August 2008 e-mail to the IOC and emphasized the fact that, in the sport of wrestling, protests after a match were not accepted. This was a decision taken by the FILA Congress in 2000.
12. The Disciplinary Commission took into consideration the emotion and frustration felt by an athlete confronted with judging decisions that he considers as entirely wrong.

Such a situation may occur more frequently in sports in which the results are based on judging. Such feelings can be aggravated when, as in this case, no protests can be lodged. However, such a situation cannot justify in any way the Athlete's behaviour consisting of taking off his medal, placing it on the floor and leaving his fellow athletes and the awards ceremony before its conclusion. The awards ceremony is a highly symbolic ritual, acknowledged as such by all athletes and other participants. Any disruption by any athlete, in particular a medalist, is in itself an insult to the other athletes and to the Olympic Movement. It is also contrary to the spirit of fair play. The fact that, in this case, the Athlete's gesture was carried out in a calm manner does not diminish in any way the severity of the offence. Such gesture was premeditated and took place well after the disputed match. This constitutes an obvious violation of paragraph 4 of the Fundamental Principles of Olympism as stated in the Olympic Charter. It may also be characterized as a violation of Rule 41 of the Olympic Charter concerning respecting the spirit of fair play and Rule 51.3, which prohibits any kind of demonstration in any Olympic site or venue.

13. It should be noted that, in front of the Disciplinary Commission, the Athlete never expressed any regret, nor did he offer any apology for his actions.
14. The Disciplinary Commission unanimously considers that, notwithstanding the emotional circumstances of the case, a warning is not an appropriate measure and that, on the contrary, the seriousness of the offence committed requires that the Athlete be disqualified, that his bronze medal be returned to the IOC and that he be excluded from the Games. On the other hand, the Disciplinary Commission emphasizes the fact that the sanction is not directly linked to facts which took place during the competition itself but during an awards ceremony. Thus, it would not be justified to award a bronze medal to the wrestler who placed behind the Athlete.

CONSIDERING the above, pursuant to the Olympic Charter Fundamental Principles of Olympism and Rules 41 and 51.3

THE DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDS TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

- I The athlete Mr Ara Abrahamian, Sweden:
 - (iv) be disqualified from the event of men's Greco-Roman wrestling, 84 kg
 - (v) be excluded from the Games of the XXIX Olympiad in Beijing in 2008;
 - (vi) shall have his Olympic identity and accreditation card immediately cancelled and withdrawn;
- II The International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA) be requested:

- to modify the results of the above-mentioned event accordingly, it being understood that the athlete who placed behind Mr Abrahamian shall not be promoted to third place,
- to return the bronze medal held by FILA to the IOC;
- to consider any further action within its own competence.

III The NOC of Sweden and BOCOG be requested to ensure full implementation of this decision.

Beijing, 15 August 2008

The IOC Disciplinary Commission

Thomas BACH
Chairman

Denis OSWALD

Sergey BUBKA