

**Committee:** International Olympic Committee (IOC)

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**Topic B:** Addressing Abuse of Athletes



## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has the responsibility to protect and safeguard athletes, but as in recent years more and more accusations of abuse have been surfacing demonstrating the lack of protection IOC and National Olympic committees have in regards to their athletes. Abuse has been causing Athletes to face mental health and physical health problems resulting in athletes underperforming, the loss of self confidence , depression, anxiety, mental disorders, isolation, PTSD, self harm and suicide and plenty more consequences that have impacted athletes and continues to affect them in a daily basis. Abuse in sports has been a recurring issue throughout the decades but not many athletes have come forward not wanting to jeopardize their career, but since the visibility of this issue many athletes have brought their cases forward and they have brought their experiences to light, many cases are still in prosecution but many others have reached justice, such as the case of Larry Nassar former physician, in which hundreds of girls where victims of sexual, Larry Nassar was condemned to 175 years in jail.

In sports there are several types of abuse most commonly committed by coaches, authority figures, teammates and people with positions of power in their sport, that are not only physical but also emotional, during training athletes have been subjected to several types of abuse. Athletes face public humiliations, mistreatment, harassing, bullying, they are threaten and their future in sports and denying them opportunities if athletes don't accept sexual encounters, this is considered a form of sexual assault, also a very recurring form of abuses is grooming, this form of abuse consists in gaining the trust of an athlete and bombarding them with attention, gifts and affection to then use them against the athletes to then tricking them into having sexual encounters committing sexual assault against the athletes, there is also abuse in which athletes that are part of the LGBTQ+ community are often discriminated against receiving insults, hate comments such as slurs, and physical attacks due to their sexual orientation or based on their religion. Therefore, due to the increasing accusations and testimonies that have come forward, new frameworks to protect

athletes are now being implemented in the national olympics committees and in the National Olympic committees.

## **II. HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT**

**1973:** Billie Jean King, one of the best tennis players in history challenged Bobby Riggs, one of the best male players at the time, the intention was to prove why women deserve equal pay in tennis. After winning the match, King achieved equal pay for the first time in the US open.

**2007:** IOC adopted a Consensus statement regarding the topic of protecting athletes from abuse and harassment, arranging specific meetings to talk about a variety of topics such as gender reassignment, nutrition in sport, among others.

**March 30, 2016:** IOC approved the extension of the Consensus Statement previously proposed in 2007, within this extension, the IOC now recognizes more types of harassment such as Homophobia, Transphobia, psychological and physical neglect, among others. As well as recognizing the psychological impact that abuse has in young athletes, action plans and how abusers target athletes.

**2016:** New guidelines and framework were implemented by the IOC and shared with every NOC (National Olympic Committee) and IF's (International Federations) as well as encouraging every NOC to establish their own policies and guidelines to ensure the well-being of every athlete.

## **III. CURRENT HAPPENINGS**

**January, 2018:** During the winter Olympics hosted by South Korea, 4 centers to address sexual assault during the Olympics, they staffed with counselors who spoke both english and korean as well as hotline, all the staff was equipped with medical measures, legal advice and therapy in an anonymous setting. These centers were open to athletes, volunteers and spectators who might need help.

**January, 2018:** Approximately 10 cases classified as "sexual harassment" were reported by the centers only one day before the closing ceremony.

**January 24, 2018:** Lawrence Nassar, former doctor of the USA gymnastics team was accused of sexual assault and was given a sentence between 40-175 years in prison after approximately 150 women testified against him in a court of law, he also pledged guilty of possession of child pornography.

**June, 2020:** FINA, which is the world government body for aquatic sports, approved a new gender inclusion policy that bans the majority of transgender athletes from participating in any competition supported by FINA. The gender inclusion policy states that transgender athletes who don't complete their transition by the age of 12 or onset puberty will not be taken into account in FINA competition.

**2021:** More than 2 dozens of footballers from Venezuela accused their ex-coach Kenneth Zseremeta of psychological and sexual abuse, he was coach of several levels of the national team and was in charge for almost 7 years.

**March 2021:** IOC establishes the Human rights Unit.

**October 2021:** In the Tokyo Olympics, the six-time medallist gymnast, Simone Biles, decided to withdraw herself from the competition after a medical evaluation in order to prioritize her mental health and well-being.

**November 2021:** IOC Releases the IOC framework on fairness, inclusion and non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations.

**September 9, 2022:** The IOC approves the strategic framework on human rights, a document which will shape the form of the working of the committee in order to respect athletes rights. Proposed initially in 2020 by Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, former UN high commissioner of human rights and Rachel Davis, Vice-president and cofounder of Shift.

**August, 2023:** After winning their first-ever female world cup, Luis Rubiales (Spanish Football Federation's President) was caught kissing the Spanish player Jenni Hermoso without her consent.

#### **IV. KEY POINTS**

- **Acknowledging sexual and emotional abuse**

Although many organizations have already constructed policies and guide-lines, emotional and sexual abuse are still recurring topics among various athletes, leading them to develop self-destructive behaviour such as self-harm, eating disorders or even have suicidal thoughts.

- **Sexism and Gender Inequality**

Sexism and gender inequality is still a very common topic in sports, the undermining of female athletes leads to them having a second job besides being a professional athlete, dealing with internet backlash and harassment, being constantly underestimated by their own federations and not receiving much monetary support.

- **Underage Athletes**

The participation of underage athletes is a common thing in the Olympics, nevertheless, these athletes often present serious mental health problems and are currently presenting symptoms of anxiety and depression because of physical and mental fatigue, spatial separation of family, and time management problems.

- **Frameworks in place to address abuse of athletes**

The athlete and athletes entourage commission have approved the use of frameworks with the goal of safeguarding athletes and other participants from harassment and abuse during the games time period.

## **V. IOC ACTIONS**

The international olympic committee prevention of harassment in sport (PHAS) initiatives were established and divided between 4 IOC commissions:

- **Athletes commission:** The athletes commission is the connection between IOC and athletes and it has responsibilities such as empowering athletes, encouraging women to practice sports, promoting athletes decision making and ensuring communication between athletes and the IOC.
- **Athletes Entourage Commission:** The aim of this commission is to improve the quality and level of services, giving input on relevant activities followed

by the 2020 Olympic agenda, and educating athletes, coaches and athletes entourage with the provision of frameworks and guidelines.

- **Medical and Scientific Commission:** Their mission is to provide medical intel and a guiding reference to all the other sports organizations, developing and promoting ethical standards in sports, science and medicine and provide athletes and their entourage excellent healthcare and doping control at games.
- **Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission:** Their responsibilities of this commission rely on the equal participation of women both on and off the field, promote gender equality as part of good governance in order to accelerate the process of women representing meaningful leadership roles, and contribute to the IOC safe sport agreement to ensure gender equality and diversity.

The IOC's initiatives regarding this topic since approximately 2007, when the IOC launched the consensus statement on sexual harassment and abuse in sport, this document provided all the needed information about what is considered abuse and harassment (non-accidental violence) identifies risk factors and provides guidelines for prevention and viable solutions. The medical commission had a series of consensual meetings discussing topics such as gender reassignment, nutrition in sport, cardiovascular sudden death, female athlete triad, training the elite child athlete and sexual harassment and abuse in sport.

The IOC commission of athletes, athletes entourage and the medical and scientific commission came together to formulate the IOC framework for safeguarding athletes and other participants from abuse and harassment. This document, issued by the 2020 Olympic agenda, intends to help and safeguard the integrity of each participant of every member of the Olympic games, the scope of application applied during every game time period of every edition, including every participant of each edition of the games. This framework applies for topics such as Harassment, Physical abuse, Psychological abuse, Sexual Harassment, Neglect and Abuse of power.

IOC's framework on fairness, inclusion and gender identity, this document seeks to propose a safe environment for everyone and acknowledges the crucial role that eligibility plays especially in the development of high-level organized sports in the women's category. Although the IOC states that it is not in position to issue regulations that define eligibility

criteria for every sport. Therefore, the aim of this framework is to offer sporting bodies a principled approach to develop new criteria that are applicable to their sport.

The goal of Olympism 365 is to enable the connection between sports and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by creating new ways of access and benefit from sport. In 2022 35 Olympafrica Centers will benefit from the new programme O!YES, which aims to empower and develop social and physical skills through sports and education. Also around 1973 trainers, teachers and community leaders and 169 community organizations and education institutions were implemented across Brazil and Argentina in collaboration with UN Woman, these institutions seek to support the provision of safe spaces to engage adolescent girls and women through sport.

21 Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives for 2021-2024 were developed using a strategic framework, covering the spheres of IOC's responsibility (IOC as an organization, IOC as Owner of the Olympic Games and IOC as the leader of the Olympic Movement), these objectives aim to improve participation, leadership, safe sport, portrayal and resource allocation.

## **VI. BLOCK ANALYSIS**

### **Don Peters**

Former coach of the 84's USA Gymnastics team Don Peters was banned for life in 2011 after two former gymnasts accused Don of sexually abusing them around 1985-1896.

### **Larry Nassar**

Former doctor of the USA gymnastics national team, he was accused of sexual assault by more than 100 gymnasts. Although those weren't the first reports against Nassar, the Michigan State University received sexual abuse reports by him back in the 90's. In July 2015, the FBI opened an investigation against them but was slow paced and as a result of this neglect, Nassar had the opportunity to abuse other 40 women.

### **Simone Biles**

Olympic gold medalist Simone Biles, considered one of the greatest gymnasts of the decade, testified before the senate about her being sexually abused by the former doctor of United

States Olympic team Larry Nassar, back in 2021, for his doctor Larry Nassar is serving a life sentence in jail. Due to these events, Biles decided to withdraw from the 2021 Olympics in order to focus on her mental health and well-being.

### **Lia Thomas**

The first transgender woman swimmer to win the NCAA, after receiving a lot of criticism online, the US competitive swimming body the new policies on the eligibility of transgender athletes. These new policies include testosterone tests 36 months prior to any elite swimming competitions as well as only permitting transgender athletes that have completed their transition before turning 12 years old or onset puberty.

### **Parker Egbert**

19 year old Parker Egbert is a world class paralympics swimmer who has autism spectrum disorder, filed a report against his teammate Robert Griswold claiming he maliciously targeted and groomed him, taking advantage of his vulnerability. The lawsuit also targets the U.S olympic and paralympic committee and SafeSport, accusing them of negligence for failing to protect their Egbert by giving Griswold close access to the swimmer even though Griswold had faced allegations of misconduct, lending to a temporary suspension in september 2020, lifted before the Tokyo Paralympics.

### **Women's Norwegian Handball Team**

Back in 2021, the women's norwegian handball team was fined by the European Handball Association Disciplinary Commission with the quantity of \$1,500 for improper clothing. The team arrived at the match against Spain with thigh-length elastic shorts instead of the regular bikini-bottom, later, the Norwegian Handball Federation President Kåre Geir Lio told NBC News the reglementary uniform women are forced to use is inappropriate for when they are playing in the sand.

### **Megan Rappinoe**

Megan Rapinoe is one of the USWNT most important and know players among the hole squad, besides from her incredible participation on most of the World Cup tournaments, she has been a very vocal about the struggles and the stigmatization of the LGBTQ+ community in sports, social movements like Black Lives Matter and among other player achieve equal pay within the masculine and feminine soccer team.

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