

USA Wrestling Greco-Roman Sport Committee
In the Matter of Matt Lindland's
Appeal of the Decision of the Protest Committee
at the USA Wrestling Olympic Trials

On June 24, 2000, Matt Lindland wrestled Keith Sieracki in the finals of the Greco-Roman Olympic Trials. The officiating team, consisting of Mat Chairman Leroy Evans, Judge Tom Siar and Referee Joe Russo, awarded to the bout to Keith Sieracki.

At the conclusion of the bout, Matt Lindland protested the officials' decision in favor of Sieracki asserting that Sieracki had defended with his legs, that Lindland had thrown Sieracki to a position of danger, that passivity was not properly called and that Sieracki was not penalized for fleeing the hold. After reviewing the protest and inquiring of the officials with regard to the protest, the Protest Committee determined that the matters protested were judgment calls and, therefore, not protestable under USA Wrestling and FILA rules (FILA Article 63 and USA Wrestling Modifications to Article 63).

In accordance with USA Wrestling's rules, Lindland appealed the Protest Committee's decision to the Greco-Roman Sport Committee. The Greco-Roman Sport Committee held a telephone conference hearing on the appeal on Thursday, July 12, 2000 with disinterested members of the Greco-Roman Sport Committee participating in the appeal.¹ The Committee had at least 20% athlete representation as required by the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act and the United States Olympic Committee Constitution and Bylaws.

Mr. Lindland was represented by counsel, Steven J. Thompson, during the hearing and was given an opportunity to present evidence, question witnesses and present argument. Mr. Sieracki was represented at the hearing by Shon Lewis, Van Stokes and Anatoly Nazarenko who were given an opportunity to present evidence, question witnesses and present argument on Mr. Sieracki's behalf. Mr. Lindland requested that the matter be recorded for potential future transcription. Mr. Lindland's counsel and USA Wrestling recorded the telephone conference hearing.

¹Bruce Baumgartner, Joe Demeo, Randy Couture and Dennis Hall did not participate in the appeal as Mr. Baumgartner and Mr. Demeo were members of the Protest Committee the decision of which was being appealed, Mr. Couture was Lindland's corner coach for the bout and Mr. Hall was a party initiating an appeal from the same competition which was to be heard by the Greco-Roman Sport Committee immediately following the Lindland appeal. Mr. Lindland, through his attorney, objected to the exclusion of Mr. Baumgartner, Mr. Demeo and Mr. Couture from participating as a member of the Greco-Roman Sport Committee in the appeal hearing and decision.

Mr. Lindland argued that the officials misapplied the FILA and USA Wrestling rules during the officiating of the bout. He asserted that the issues which were raised at the Protest Committee level and before the Greco-Roman Sport Committee were not issues of judgment but rather misapplication of the rules.

Mr. Lindland raised essentially three issues during his appeal to the Greco-Roman Sport Committee appeal: (1) that the officials did not call a fleeing the mat against Mr. Sieracki, (2) that the officials did not call a fleeing the hold against Mr. Sieracki and (3) that Mr. Sieracki illegally used his legs. Mr. Lindland argued that had these points been awarded him, the bout would not have proceeded to overtime and Mr. Lindland would have been awarded the decision. As the relief sought, Mr. Lindland requested that the match be re-wrestled.

The Greco-Roman Sport Committee reviewed the evidence presented and the applicable FILA and USA Wrestling Rules, particularly rules 58, 59 and 61 regarding fleeing the mat, fleeing the hold and use of the legs. Based upon the evidence presented, the arguments made and the applicable FILA and USA Wrestling rules, the Greco-Roman Sport Committee concludes that the appeal essentially challenges the credibility of the officials' judgment. Based upon testimony of the Mat Chairman, Leroy Evans, it is clear that the officials had an understanding of the rules regarding fleeing the mat, fleeing the hold and use of the legs. There was no evidence of misapplication of these rules; rather, there was only evidence challenging the officials' judgment in applying the rules.

A challenge to an official's judgment call in applying the rules is not protestable. FILA Rules, Article 63 with USA Wrestling Modifications. These rules were contained in the procedures adopted by USA Wrestling as a part of the Olympic Trials and submitted to and approved by the United States Olympic Committee as a part of the USA Wrestling Olympic Trials selection procedures. The Greco-Roman Sport Committee concludes that Mr. Lindland's appeal challenges the judgment of the officials and that the officials' judgment is not protestable under the appropriate FILA Rule, Article 63 with USA Wrestling Modifications.

Mr. Lindland also challenged the FILA Rules with USA Wrestling Modifications which prohibits the Greco-Roman Sport Committee from reviewing video tape of the bout at issue. Article 63 regarding protests clearly states that "[u]nder no circumstances shall the use of video tapes or films of a bout be considered or shown in the evaluation of any protest except as noted above [for disqualification for brutality or flagrant misconduct]." USA Wrestling Article 4.3.5 of the Olympic Trials Procedures also addresses the use of video tape and clearly precludes its use in a situation such as this: "Except in the review of a disqualification for brutality or flagrant misconduct, video tapes and films shall not be considered in determining the outcome of a bout after the bout is completed." With these clear rules stated, the Greco-Roman Sport Committee did not and will not review video tape in reaching its determination, as video tape cannot be used to affect the outcome of the bout in this situation.

Finally, Mr. Lindland challenged the role of Bob Siar who served as recorder for the Protest Committee since Tom Siar was a member of the officiating team. Bob Siar served only

as the recorder for the Protest Committee and had no input into the decision nor did he in anyway influence the decision. There is no evidence that Bob Siar's role as recorder for the Protest Committee affected the outcome of the protest and will not be considered as a basis for overturning the decision of the Protest Committee.

Therefore, the Greco-Roman Sport Committee (by a vote of 4-1) upholds the decision of the Protest Committee and denies the Appeal of Matt Lindland challenging the result of his bout with Keith Sieracki at the USA Wrestling Olympic Trials.

Dated this ___ day of July, 2000.

For the Greco-Roman Sport Committee:

Al Kastle, Chairman