



UNIT 37:

OLYMPIC TEAM SELECTION

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UNIT 37 - OLYMPIC TEAM SELECTION

A. Introduction

Because of the increasing size of the entry for the Olympic Games, the IOC strongly recommends a ceiling on the numbers participating at the Games. This has been set at 10,500 athletes and 5,000 officials - therefore requiring the Organising Committee to provide an Olympic village capable of housing 16,000 persons. In reality the Olympic village must be capable of housing at least 5% above that number due to the wastage through offices and medical rooms and because of the need to separate nations and males and females.

The Olympic Charter

Rule 41 of the Olympic Charter states the eligibility code for participation in the Olympic Games as follows:

“Rule 41

To be eligible for participation in the Olympic Games, a competitor, coach, trainer or other team official must comply with the Olympic Charter as well as with the rules of the IF concerned as approved by the IOC, and the competitor, coach, trainer or other team official must be entered by his NOC. The above-noted persons must notably:

- ◆ *respect the spirit of fair play and non violence, and behave accordingly; and*
- ◆ *respect and comply in all aspects with the World Anti-Doping Code.*

By-law to Rule 41

1. *Each IF establishes its sport’s own eligibility criteria in accordance with the Olympic Charter. Such criteria must be submitted to the IOC Executive Board for approval.*
2. *The application of the eligibility criteria lies with the IFs, their affiliated national federations and the NOCs in the fields of their respective responsibilities.*
3. *Except as permitted by the IOC Executive Board, no competitor, coach, trainer or official who participates in the Olympic Games may allow his person, name, picture or sports performances to be used for advertising purposes during the Olympic Games.*
4. *The entry or participation of a competitor in the Olympic Games shall not be conditional on any financial consideration.”*

Olympic Charter Rules 42, 43 and 45 refer to nationality of competitors, age limit and entries respectively, and should be fully understood by NOCs as they consider team selection.

“Rule 45 - 4

The NOCs shall send to the Olympic Games only those competitors adequately prepared for high level international competition. Through its IF, a national federation may ask that the IOC Executive Board to review a decision by an NOC in a matter of entries. The IOC Executive Board’s decision shall be final.”



B. Qualification for the Olympic Games

In order to limit the number of total competitors competing in the Olympic Games to 10,500, each IF (sport) has been given a quota, and must devise a system throughout the world to select its athletes.

A summary of the quota for Athens 2004 is presented here.

Category 1 Team Sports

There are a finite number of teams in each of the team sports that can participate in the Olympic Games. These are determined by a system of qualification which takes place usually in the two years prior to the Games. Only those teams that have qualified by this process can participate at the Olympic Games.

Sport	Number of Teams/Players
<i>Basketball</i>	
Men	12 teams (12 players/team)
Women	12 teams (12 players/team)
<i>Football</i>	
Men	16 teams (18 players/team)
Women	10 teams (18 players/team)
<i>Handball</i>	
Men	12 teams (15 players/team)
Women	10 teams (15 players per team)
<i>Hockey</i>	
Men	12 teams (16 players/team)
Women	10 teams (16 players/team)
<i>Water Polo</i>	
Men	12 teams (13 players/team)
Women	8 teams (13 players/team)
<i>Softball</i>	
Women	8 teams (15 players/team)
<i>Baseball</i>	
Men	8 teams (24 players/team)
<i>Volleyball</i>	
Men	12 teams (12 players/team)
Women	12 teams (12 players/team)
<i>Beach Volleyball</i>	
Men	24 pairs
Women	24 pairs



Category 2 Minimum Qualification Standards

Athletics (Track & Field)

NOCs can enter by event up to three athletes who have reached the “A” standard.

NOCs may enter one athlete per event with the “B” standard.

NOCs with no athletes qualified according to A and B standards can enter one male and one female athlete in one event, in conformity with the specifications of the qualification system in place.

Swimming

If a NOC enters two swimmers (maximum) per event, both must have reached the FINA “A” standard.

If a NOC enters one swimmer per event, that swimmer must have achieved FINA “B” (lower) standard.

Where a NOC has no swimmers able to reach the “B” standard, they may enter one male and one female swimmer, in conformity with the specifications of the qualification system in place.

Category 3 Fixed Quota and Qualifications

The following sports have a fixed quota of participation and a qualification system which determines the allocation of places to athletes or NOCs.

Rowing

Men	126 boats, 358 athletes
Women	76 boats, 192 athletes
	Total quota: 202 boats, 550 athletes

Badminton

Men	86
Women	86
	Total quota: 172

Boxing

Men	Total quota: 286
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Canoeing, Flat Water

Men	102 boats, 174 athletes
Women	32 boats, 72 athletes
	Total Flat Water quota: 246

Canoe, Slalom

Men	51 boats, 63 athletes
Women	19 boats, 19 athletes
	Total Slalom Quota: 82
	Total Canoeing Quota: 328



Cycling, Road

Men	145
Women	67
Total Road Quota: 212	

Cycling, Track

Men	153
Women	35
Total Track Quota: 188	

Cycling, Mountain

Men	50
Women	30
Total Mountain Biking Quota: 80	
Total Cycling Quota: 480	

Diving

Men	68
Women	68
Total Quota: 136	

Equestrian

Quota: 200 (Eventing 75, Dressage 50, Jumping 75)

Fencing

Men	108
Women	84
+ 8 host country athletes	
Total Quota: 200	

Gymnastics

Artistic	196 (men 98, women 98)
Rhythmic	84
Trampoline	32 (men 16, women 16)
Total Quota: 312	

Weightlifting

Men	170
Women	90
Quota: 260	

Judo

Men	217 including Invitation
Women	147 including Invitation
+ 22 men and/or women	
Total Quota: 386	



Wrestling*Freestyle*

Men 140

Women 48

Greco-Roman

Men 140

+ 16 men or women in addition

Total Quota: 344

Modern Pentathlon

Men 32

Women 32

Total quota: 64

Diving

Men 68

Women 68

Total diving quota 168

Synchronised Swimming

Team (8 teams x 9 swimmers)

Duet 24 duets

Total Quota: 104

Taekwondo

Men 64

Women 60

Total Quota: 124

Tennis

Men 86

Women 86

Total Quota: 172

Table Tennis

Men 86

Women 86

Total Quota: 172

Shooting

Men & Women Total Quota: 390

Archery

Men 64

Women 64

Total Quota: 128



Triathlon

Men	50
Women	50
Total Quota: 100	

Sailing

Men	153
Women	137
+ 110 men or women for mixed events	
Total Quota 400 athletes	

C. Universality of the Games

As of 2005, there were 202 NOCs in the Olympic Movement and it is normal at the Olympic Games, for over 100 of them to participate with less than 15 athletes. Many NOCs are from less developed parts of the world where athletes have fewer opportunities to reach the very high standards required to qualify for the Games.

D. NOC Team Selection Considerations

The determination of selection criteria should be the responsibility of the NOC, in collaboration with their National Federations. The application of the selection process should be the responsibility of a NOC selection committee which applies the criteria with fairness, impartiality, and adherence to the rules.

With regard to athlete's rights, the following should be answered:

1. Were the selection criteria established by the appropriate authorities? It is essential that the membership of a NOC or an association agree on the philosophy for the establishment of selection criteria and agree on the specific details. Often this can be accomplished by a representative Board with input from member sports, from athletes, from the technical staff or committees.
2. Are the selection criteria clear? Are they objective? Are they sport-specific? In some sports, such as weightlifting, running events, swimming, there are easy ways of comparing one performance to others and to standards. In other sports, such as combative sports, it is more difficult to be so objective. For example, a wrestler losing a first round match to the current world champion is out of the tournament with a low ranking. It could be that he could have been the second best wrestler. Most would agree that the more objectively one can define the selection criteria, the less confusion or controversy there will be.
3. Are the criteria defined in terms appropriate for each sport? If the criteria are that the athlete must be ranked in the top 10 in the world to be selected, is the top 10 easily definable for each sport?
4. Can one sport use the International Federation criteria for eligibility, and another sport ignore their IF standards and impose their own (possible more difficult) standards? Can a sport use only the selection trials for selection of their team, and another sport use a series of performances or other criteria?



5. Are the criteria published well in advance of the selection process? It is most useful if clear objective criteria are announced three years in advance of the Olympic Games, to allow all a full understanding of the challenge.
6. Is there a formal written agreement between the NOC selecting the athletes and the national sport federations, which outlines the criteria for that sport? This is considered a necessity to ensure mutual agreement as to how the selection criteria will be applied.
7. Does the selection committee have discretionary powers, and are these clearly defined? It will be unusual for “special cases” not to arise, and the selection committee will need the discretionary powers to consider such cases. Discretionary powers must be used with discretion, and only in special circumstances. It may be appropriate when such powers are used that decisions be confirmed by the organisation’s executive board.
8. Should coaches of athletes being considered be involved in the selection process? In team events, the answer is usually “yes”. Coaches of rowing teams have the responsibility to choose the athletes that make the team. However, there may be circumstances where this subjective process may violate athlete’s rights and be biased. In the individual sports, fair selection can be achieved by basing selection strictly on performance in competition. In team sports, it can be achieved by requiring coaches and other selectors to publish clear statements of their basis for selection.
9. Are athletes protected from bias? What are the guarantees that the sport nominating athletes, or the NOC considering such nominations, are free from bias? There is need for each sport to be very clear to their athletes and coaches exactly how the criteria will be applied.
10. Do the athletes have an appeal process other than through the courts? There should be only two grounds for appeal: (1) selection was not made according to the rules; (2) there was a reasonable apprehension of bias or conflict of interest in one or more of the selectors. Because the existence of appeal is the ultimate safeguard, the Selection Committee of the NOC may be given the final authority for selection, including the responsibility to hear appeals. There is also the possibility that a sport court of arbitration might be involved. One serious problem may be that if the consideration of an appeal is to occur just prior to Organising Committee deadlines, then there is additional pressure on the process.
11. What considerations are given to a top athlete who is injured? Perhaps the athlete can not take part in the Olympic Trials or other selected competitions. Or, the athlete, having met selection criteria previously, now has an injury. Some sports feel that if the trial date is well known, an athlete will make it his business to be in top shape on that day. The trials could also be scheduled close to the major competition for which the team is selected so the athletes will not have occasion to lose their fitness. Whatever the policy, the basis for decision in such an eventuality must be clearly spelled out in advance, so that all athletes and coaches know how the rule will be applied. In a combat sport, an injury clause might state:

“If a defending national champion is legitimately injured at the time of the selection trial, final selection will be deferred until, time permitting, the athlete can fully recover. Then, at a mutually agreeable time, this athlete and the trial winner will compete to determine selection.”
12. What are the considerations in the interest of the sport federation? Some argue that discretion is necessary to protect the best interests of the association. But unless these interests are carefully spelled out, the significant unfairness might result. For example, if the winner of the Olympic Trials did not excel, and the sport selectors decided to nominate a young very promising athlete to give her experience, would that decision be unjust?



13. An association may decide not to enter a national trial winner in an international competition because she has failed to meet a performance standard. But if it does so decide, should it then be allowed to enter someone else who has also not met the performance standard?
14. What are the repercussions when a member sport federation nominates an athlete, but the NOC, for some reason other than lack of performance, does not want to select the athlete?
15. What are the problems with selecting athletes months in advance of the Games? What if the performance of “automatic” team members falls off after selection? What if another athlete subsequently betters the “automatic’s” performance? In circumstances such as these, addressing these types of policies well in advance of final selection deadlines makes these cases easier to resolve.
16. Should placing in events be as good a selection criterion as best time? For example, two runners from a country dominated one event. One had broken the Olympic standard in a race but could never beat her rival. The consistent victor repeatedly failed to meet the standard. Under the International Federation eligibility rule, an association can enter one athlete per event without condition, and up to a maximum of three if each has broken the standard. Whom to send? The problem is complicated by the fact that the standard can be met any time during a twelve-month period. Also, in contrast to swimming, wide variations in conditions exist from meet to meet. The sports federation has tried to overcome these difficulties by establishing multiple criteria and a system of trials. If an athlete breaks the standard and wins the first trial, for example, that athlete is assured of selection. But it still leaves selection in marginal cases to the discretion of a committee. The existence of multiple criteria should not be an obstacle to the elimination of uncertainty. In poker, players know that a royal flush is always worth more than a straight, which is worth more than a full house, and so on. In the absence of a sudden-death trial, there should be criteria in descending priority. Here, too, fairness decrees that selectors’ discretion be eliminated.
17. Should physical, psychological, physiological or other tests be used for selection purposes? Some sports have tried to predict performance using such tests. A particular physical or physiological characteristic may ensure an athlete to outstanding performance. There is no guarantee, however, that its possession will enable any athlete to perform better than someone who does not possess that characteristic.
18. Could selection be a solely subjective matter for the selection committee, receiving and considering the nominations from the sport federations? There may be circumstances in individual sports that make the conferring of discretion on selectors necessary and unavoidable. Some discretion is certainly necessary in team sports. Even the best athlete’s performance is dependent to some extent on the performances of others, so no clear performance test can be devised. In such situations, selectors should limit their own discretion. They should announce (at least to the players who might try out for the representative team) what criteria they will take into consideration in choosing the team. Selectors ought not to be strictly bound by their guidelines, but if they make any selection on different grounds, they should be required to give convincing reasons for changing their minds. An association’s desire for “flexibility” should not override the interests of fairness.

Considerations for Team Selection Policy

The following are possible principles to be considered by NOCs and sport federations as they prepare their selection criteria. These particular suggestions are based on a survey of sports, coaches and athletes on this matter by Professor Bruce Kidd of the University of Toronto.

1. Selection criteria should be stated with such clarity of language that no, or minimum, difficulty arises in their application to particular states of fact.



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2. The criteria should be published sufficiently in advance to permit interested athletes and coaches to respond to the criteria and to permit the selectors, if they deem it desirable, to publish amendments. The final criteria should be published at least 12 months in advance of selection.
 3. In individual sports, selection should be based on a competitive trial, or a performance standard, or both. Where more than one event or standard is used, the rules should state which criterion has priority. Where some discretion is necessary and unavoidable, the rules should state objective criteria, in order of priority, to provide the basis for selectors' decisions. Where vagueness in the rules gives selectors wide latitude in decision-making, the selectors should confine and structure their own discretion by announcing in advance what criteria they will use in selecting teams, and the tests or measures they will use to determine which athletes best meet the criteria. The criteria should be published sufficiently in advance to permit interested athletes and coaches to respond to the criteria and to permit the selectors, if they deem it desirable, to publish amendments. The final criteria should be published at least six months in advance of selection.
 4. In team sports, the rules should state objective criteria, in order of priority, to provide the basis for selectors' decisions. Any physical or physiological criteria should be demonstrably related to performance. Where selectors' discretion is necessary and unavoidable, or where vagueness in the rules gives selectors wide latitude of decision, the selectors should confine and structure their own discretion by announcing in advance what criteria they will use in selecting the team, and the tests or measures they will use to determine which athletes best meet the criteria.
 5. If selection has been made on a discretionary basis, the selectors should keep a brief written record of the grounds for their decisions (i.e. setting out why some athletes were chosen and why others were not).
 6. After the selection has been announced, a representative of the selection committee should be available for a 48-hour period to explain the basis of decision according to the written record. The exact times, locations and telephone numbers where this person could be reached should be publicised before the selection meeting.
 7. If, within 48 hours of the decision, and after speaking with the committee representative, the athlete believes that grounds for appeal exist, the athlete should submit, either orally or in writing, a formal appeal, clearly stating the reasons why he or she should have been selected.
 8. A selection appeals board, composed of two national board members who did not sit on the selection committee, plus an elected athletes' representative who did not sit on the original committee, should consider the athlete's statement, plus a statement from the selection committee representative and make a decision within 24 hours of receipt of the appeal, and notify all parties.
 9. The selection appeals board must make one of three decisions: (1) it can grant the appeal and name the athlete immediately to the team; (2) it can order that the selection be reconsidered; (3) it can reject the appeal. If in its judgment, the appeal arose because of vaguely-worded selection criteria, or an unnecessary delegation of discretion to selectors, the selection appeals board should make recommendations for improvement. It may turn out that, after a successful appeal, there are two athletes on the team for an event in which there is only one entry per team. In this case, the sports governing body might stage a trial. It might also decide to award one of the athletes a different benefit, such as an automatic position on another team.



E. NOC Team Selection Policy and Guidelines

Selecting an Olympic team is no easy task. It may be the most important task for an Olympic Committee to undertake, and thus must be done openly, with as clear and objective criteria as possible. The process will be closely watched by all, including the media. It must be extremely fair from the perspective of the athletes, their coaches, and their sport federations.

Rule 45, points 3 & 4 of the Olympic Charter state that the task of selecting the Olympic Team - the athletes and the support staff - belongs exclusively to the NOC.

“3 An NOC shall only enter competitors upon the recommendations for entries given by national federations. If the NOC approves thereof, it shall transmit such entries to the OCOG. The OCOG must acknowledge their receipt. NOCs must investigate the validity of the entries proposed by the national federations and ensure that no one has been excluded for racial, religious or political reasons or by reason of other forms of discrimination.

4 The NOCs shall send to the Olympic Games only those competitors adequately prepared for high level international competition. Through its IF, a national federation may ask that the IOC Executive Board to review a decision by an NOC in a matter of entries. The IOC Executive Board’s decision shall be final.”

Rule 28, 7.2 states: The NOCs role is: *“to send competitors, team officials and other team personnel to the Olympic Games in compliance with the Olympic Charter;”*

Presented below is an example of the actual selection policy of a major NOC. Their basic premise is that they only want to send athletes that are competitive. Their definition of this is that the athletes should have a good chance to finish in the top 16 places at the Games, or to finish in the top half of the field, whatever is the more difficult.

The NOC also wants the selection process to be as objective as possible, utilising international results to help determine the ranking of the athlete in the world. Athletes can qualify as eligible for the Olympic Games in the 12 month period preceding the Games, thus giving the athlete and coach assurance well before the Games, and allowing training to be focused on the Games rather on selection trials just preceding the Games.

Criteria for selection for a sport are negotiated between the NOC and the National Sport Federation (NSF) two to three years before the Games. For example, they could agree that if a swimmer finishes in the top 16 at the world championships the year before the Games, then the athlete has met the criteria.

It still remains that the national federation must nominate that athlete, and the NOC must consider the nomination. There may be circumstances where an athlete is eligible, but not selected. For example, if a rowing crew qualifies before the Games, then a substitution is made and that substitution is nominated by the national federation, then the original rower in the crew would not go to the Games.

From experience with this system over several Games, more than 90% of the athletes are selected by previously meeting the standards agreed upon. The remainder have an appeals process where their individual cases can be considered - such as an injury at a previous world championship prevented determination of a ranking, but success at World Cup or Continental meets can now be evaluated to determine if there is reasonable probability that a top 16 finish could result.



NOC Team Selection Policy Statement

The goal is to select a team which demonstrates potential for top 16 and top half of field results at the Games.

Guidelines

There shall be:

- ◆ two avenues of qualification in order to be eligible for selection: (1) a single one-time rank at the World Championships in the year before the Games; (2) achieving sport-specific criteria established between the NOC/National Sports Federation
- ◆ recognition of the NSF internal nomination procedures and the potential for “replacement” of qualified athletes
- ◆ flexibility in the establishment of top 16 and top ½ standards
- ◆ maintaining the previously agreed upon written agreements which define selection criteria, but allowing for adjustments and improvements where necessary
- ◆ evaluation of all new International Federation qualification methods established for the Games and accepting those which demonstrate top 16 and top ½ standards

Team Selection/Accreditation/Registration Critical Dates

Please refer to Section V of the IOC “Accreditation and Entries at the Olympic Games Users Guide” to determine the critical dates for the IOC and the Organising Committee regarding NOC responsibilities for registering their delegation, media members and others.

F. Selection of Coaches

As with athletes, coaches are nominated to the NOC for inclusion on the Olympic Team.

The number of accredited coaches that can live in the village will depend on the make-up of each sport (big or small team, male or female events, whether the coach acts as team manager as well etc.). The number is ultimately determined by the quotas for team officials and other team personnel (including coaches) which are presented in the IOC publication “Accreditation and Entries at the Olympic Games Users Guide” (which is currently on average, 50% of the number of athletes; percentage will vary for smaller or larger teams).

A few NOCs require coaches to have minimum certification where such a system is in place.

There is always a request by NOCs to have additional coaches (to live outside the Olympic Village) accredited to be able to assist their own athletes. These could be personal coaches of individual athletes for example. The Organising Committee will consider such requests, and may even provide a site for accommodation and for transportation services in order to be helpful. These extra coaches would be accredited to enter their sports training and competition venues and be accredited for the Olympic Village (but not allowed to sleep there).

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