

Roller Skating Federation Of India vs Sanchit Bhandari & Anr. on 27 March, 2025

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Bench: Tushar Rao Gedela

* IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI
% Judgment reserved on: 26.03.2025
Judgment delivered on: 27.03.2025

+ LPA 219/2025 & CM APPL. 17559/2025, CM APPL. 17560/2025

ROLLER SKATING FEDERATION OF INDIA ...Appel
versus
SANCHIT BHANDARI & ANR.Respo

Advocates who appeared in this case:

For the Appellant : Mr. Dhruv Gautam and Mr. Abhishek Tongar.

For the Respondents : Mr. Utsav Jain, Ms. Amrita Kameshwar
Srivastava and Mr. Kameshwar Srivastava -
Mr. Ruchir Mishra, Mr. Devvrat yadav, Mr.
Sanjiv Kr. Saxena, Mr. Mukesh kr. Tiwari,
Poonam Shukla, Ms. Reba Jena Mishra, Ms.
Harshita Sharma - R2

CORAM:

HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE TUSHAR RAO GEDELA

JUDGMENT

TUSHAR RAO GEDELA, J.

1. Present letters patent appeal has been filed assailing the judgment dated 19.03.2025 (hereinafter referred as "impugned judgment") passed by the learned Single Judge whereby the underlying writ petition bearing W.P.(C) No.1413/2025 titled Sanchit Bhandari vs. Roller Skating Federation of India & Anr., filed by the respondent no.1/Sanchit Bhandari herein has been allowed and appellant herein has been restrained from conducting any further selection trials for the purpose of participation in the World Games 2025, Chengdu, China in the "Speed Slalom- Senior Ranked Men" category.

2. It is the case of the appellant that it is a recognized National Sports Federation (hereinafter referred as "NSF") for Roller Skating in India and is responsible for conducting and selection trials for all the international events/national championships for Roller Skating Sports. It is stated that the present case pertains to the selection trials for the athletes to participate in the event "Speed

Slalom-Senior Ranked Men" under the category of Inline Freestyle skating in the World Games, 2025, scheduled from 07.08.2025 to 17.08.2025 in Chengdu, China (hereinafter referred to as the "Chengdu Games, 2025"), called for by the appellant vide notification dated 24.01.2025.

3. Being aggrieved by the said notification, respondent no.1 filed the underlying writ petition seeking quashing of the said notification before the learned Single Judge on the ground that extreme prejudice would be suffered by the respondent no.1 if he is subjected to undergo selection trials for the purpose of participation in the Chengdu Games, 2025. The respondent no.1 claimed that he had already earned his participation by virtue of his performance in the Italy Games, 2024, therefore, the respondent no.1 need not undergo the selection process once again. The said writ petition was allowed in favour of the respondent no.1 vide the impugned order dated 19.03.2025. Aggrieved by the said direction of the learned Single Judge the appellant, which is the NSF, has preferred the present appeal.

4. Mr. Dhruv Gautam, learned Counsel for the appellant submitted that significant time has already lapsed since the Italy Games, 2024 were held and given the time gap between the aforesaid events, a fresh selection trial would help to evaluate the latest performance and select the best possible athlete to represent the country. He also submitted that on comparison of relative performance of the skaters in the event, the respondent no.1 was not the best available skater as he was holding 63rd rank while another skater (viz. Sh.. Nanal Jinesh Satyam) was holding 10th ranking in the latest rankings released by the World Skate Body for the year 2024.

5. Learned counsel for the appellant further submitted that no prejudice would be caused to the respondent no.1 if he participates in the selection trials proposed to be held by the appellant. In case the respondent no.1 emerges as the best athlete in proposed selection trials, he will necessarily have the right to participate in the ensuing Chengdu Games, 2025.

6. He further laid emphasis on the communication dated 01.10.2024, issued by the World Skate Body to contend that the performance of the respondent no.1 in Italy Games, 2024 resulted in the country gaining a quota in respect of the NSF rather than the respondent no.1 being selected for participation in the Chengdu Games, 2025. In that context, he brings attention of this court to the document titled "World Skate Games 2024 - Inline Freestyle, Italy" dated 20.07.2024 to impress upon us that the Italy Games, 2024 was treated as a qualifying game for entry to Chengdu Games, 2025. Dilating further on the said criteria he stated that under the para A regarding Italy games, 2024, it has been categorically specified that the obtained quotas are related to the NSF which shall select and register athletes by 30.03.2025. He also referred to the letter issued by the International Body i.e. World Skate Body dated 01.10.2024 indicating the qualified quotas per NSF for the Chengdu Games, 2025, discipline wise. He stated that for the "Speed Slalom" and "Slalom Classic" events, India has been allocated with one quota each for men and women in the aforesaid two sports events. According to the learned counsel, the allocation of quota of the sports events is with the NSF, which is the Body recognized by the International Federation and it is the mandate and duty of the NSF to conduct selections before the finalizing the sportsperson who may participate in Chengdu games, 2025.

7. Learned counsel further submitted that for other events too, the NSF i.e. the appellant has conducted trials for selection and post such trials, have selected the sportspersons for those events. He stated that the appellant shall conduct fair selection procedure which are usually videographed to ensure transparency and rule out any favouritism or bias in the procedure. After all, learned counsel emphasises that NSF represents the country as a whole in the International sports arena and not the individual. By referring to the "Speed Slalom - Senior Ranked Men" results held at Italy Games, 2024, he stated that only the respondent no.1 and one Mr. Nanal Jinesh Satyam were placed at ranking 10 and 13. He stated that the selection procedure will be effected by putting these two to trial. Learned counsel stoutly argued that subsequent to the Italy games 2024, appellant is presently placed at 63rd rank and Mr. Nanal Jinesh Satyam is ranked at 10th by the World Skate Body. Based on the latest performance, he urged that it may be in the interest of the country as also the sport that the best sportsperson be sent to represent India in the Chengdu Games, 2025. He also submitted that there is no reason why the respondent no.1 has any apprehension in participating in the selection procedure. Learned counsel stated that the learned Single Judge having overlooked the aforesaid provisions as also the facts, committed an error in restraining the appellant from conducting trials for selection in the said sport event. He prayed that the impugned judgment may be quashed and set aside.

8. Mr. Utsav Jain, learned counsel for the respondent no.1 stoutly defended the reasoning rendered by the learned Single Judge in the impugned judgment. He forcefully submitted that the participation of India in Chengdu Games, 2025 is made possible not only because of the participation of the respondent no.1 in Italy Games, 2024, but also having achieved the placing at 10th rank in the "Speed Slalom - Senior Ranked Men". According to him, having worked hard and achieved desired result and ensuring that India could participate in the Chengdu Games, 2025, it would be unfair, unjust and de-motivating to ask respondent no.1 to participate in the trials for selection in the very same category. Further, he vociferously argued that his participation and ranking in Italy Games, 2024 would enure to him in his personal capacity and not as a quota to the NSF in general. He thus, contended that the respondent no.1 cannot be put to a re-trial for the selection to participate in "Speed Slalom - Senior Ranked Men" event.

9. Having heard the learned counsel for the parties, minutely examining the impugned judgment and perusing the documents on record, we are not persuaded by the submissions addressed on behalf of the appellant.

10. We find that the learned single judge has examined the documents as also appreciated the arguments rendered by the parties threadbare and has come to an unequivocal conclusion that the facts propel the decision that asking respondent no.1 to undergo the trials for selection in his particular sports events would be irrational, arbitrary and unfair. This conclusion was reached having regard to the fact that the participation of India as a country in the Chengdu Games, 2025 was only possible due to the participation and the ranking of respondent no.1. We do not find any reason much less cogent reason to take a divergent view. Additionally, we render the following reasons.

11. Since the appellant has premised the submissions on the bulletin document, we find it apposite to examine the same. The aforesaid bulletin issued by the "World Skate Body" reads as under:

"THE WORLD GAMES
QUALIFICATION SYSTEM

CHENGDU

2025

(TW

At the World Games Chengdu 2025 Inline Freestyle will make its first appearance at this prestigious Games' program. Qualifying categories are Speed Slalom and Classic Slalom.

The thirty-six (36) Senior athletes selected to participate in TWG Chengdu 2025 will earn their quotas through any of the following:

A. The World Skate Games - Italy 2024 will grant twenty-four (24) quotas in September 2024.

B. The World Games Series - Hong Kong will grant four (4) quotas in October 2024.

C. Host Country (China) has eight (8) pre-allocated quotas.

Each National Federation will be able to obtain a maximum of eight (8) quotas:

• Speed Slalom - Two (2) female quotas • Speed Slalom - Two (2) male quotas •
Classic Slalom - Two (2) female quotas • Classic Slalom - Two (2) male quotas
Athletes' selection will be as described below:

A. The World Skate Games - Italy 2024 This World Championship is the qualifying competition to select the first twenty four (24) quotas from the participant National Federations (except China). They will be selected from the final ranking of each of the four following events:

• Speed Slalom - six (6) best Senior ranked women* • Speed Slalom - six (6) best Senior ranked men* • Classic Slalom - six (6) best Senior ranked women* • Classic Slalom - six (6) best Senior ranked men* * In case a National Federation has already completed its country quota, the next skater in the ranking from a different country will earn the slot.

The obtained quotas are allocated to National Federations, which shall select and register athletes by March 30th 2025. Further information regarding the registration process will be shared at a later stage.

B. *The World Games Series - Hong Kong, October 2024 The World Games Series is a new event from TWG and the first ever will take place in Hong Kong in October 2024. Further information will be shared in the next bulletin.

This Event is the second qualifying competition to select the remaining four (4) quotas for the World Games Chengdu 2025. The first place of each discipline will earn the quota for one's National Federation:

- Speed Slalom Women Winner (I).
- Speed Slalom Men Winner (I).
- Classic Slalom Women Winner (I).
- Classic Slalom Men Winner (I).

C. Host Country China, as the host country, will have eight (8) allocated quotas: two (2) men/two (2) women in Speed Slalom and two (2) men/two (2) women in Classic Slalom."

(emphasis supplied) A plain reading of the aforesaid brings to fore that the selection procedure for the purpose of quota has been clearly delineated. It is also clear that for the Chengdu Games, 2025 two International events i.e., Italy Games, 2024 and World Game Series - Hong Kong (hereinafter referred to as "Hong Kong Games, 2024") will grant twenty-four (24) quotas in September, 2024 and four (4) quotas in October, 2024 respectively. It is also specified that each NSF will be able to obtain the maximum of eight (8) quotas in each event for male and female sportsperson. That apart, the document also clearly indicates that the athletes selection will be decided based on both the Italy Games, 2024 as also the Hong Kong Games, 2024.

Both events have been described in para A and B of the said document respectively. When we closely examine para A, it is clear that the Italy Games, 2024 has been held to be qualifying competition to select the "first twenty-four (24) quotas" from the participant NSF. It has been further clarified that the participants be selected from the "final ranking" of each of the four following events:

- Speed Slalom - six (6) best Senior ranked women*
 - Speed Slalom - six (6) best Senior ranked men*
 - Classic Slalom - six (6) best Senior ranked women*
 - Classic Slalom - six (6) best Senior ranked men* (emphasis supplied)
- The aforesaid specifications leave no manner of doubt that the six (6) best senior ranked men participants are to be preferred in the manner of ranking. It appears to be that the quota specified would enure to the benefit of such participants. The submissions of the learned counsel for the appellant that the quotas are allocated to NSF who shall select and register athlete's may be applicable to sportsperson/participants other than those falling within the aforesaid six (6) best senior ranked men. This can be discerned from the specification stating "In case a National federation has already completed its country quota, the next skater in the ranking from a different country will earn the slot." In case the submissions were to be taken on face value, the expression "next skater in the ranking" would be otiose. It is trite that while

interpreting the recitals or covenants of a document, ordinarily, no word or recital can be rendered otiose unless established or demonstrated and such word or recital has to be held to have a purpose. In the present case, the language is plain and clear as analysed above.

12. The aforesaid analysis can also be arrived at from examining para B regarding Hong Kong Games, 2024. It is important to note the following content in para B:

This Event is the second qualifying competition to select the remaining four (4) quotas for the World Games Chengdu 2025. The first place of each discipline will earn the quota for one's National Federation:

- Speed Slalom Women Winner (I).
- Speed Slalom Men Winner (I).
- Classic Slalom Women Winner (I).
- Classic Slalom Men Winner (I).

(emphasis supplied) It is manifest that the quota in para B attaches to the participant who is a winner and is not merged with the NSF of a particular country. Therefore, the submission of the appellant is not only fallacious but contrary to para A and B of the bulletin document. We find the same unpersuasive and unmerited.

13. We are not extracting herein, in extenso, the opinion rendered by the Single Judge for the sake of brevity, however, we concur with the findings and observations rendered in the impugned judgment. So far as the selections of events other than the one in which respondent no.1 intends to participate, neither the learned single Judge has, nor are we, rendering any opinion.

14. Before we conclude, we make it clear that we are only interpreting the contents of the aforesaid bulletin and not rendering any opinion on the argument of the learned counsel for the appellant that the NSF are the repository of authority to hold trials for selection of the sports person to participate in the next scheduled national or international sports events. The said issue is left open to be decided in an appropriate case. Moreover, the issue may be considered by the courts on a case to case basis and may vary from a sport to sport coupled with the issue as to whether it is an individual event or a team event.

15. The observations made hereinabove are limited to this case.

16. Accordingly, in view of the above the appeal is dismissed, alongwith the pending application, however, without any order as to costs.

TUSHAR RAO GEDELA, J DEVENDRA KUMAR UPADHYAYA, CJ MARCH 27, 2025/rl