

## Oscar Pistorius Can Compete in Beijing Olympics

One of the early stories of the 2008 Beijing Olympics has been the plight of double-amputee sprinter Oscar Pistorius of South Africa. Born with a condition called congenital absence of the fibula in both of his legs, Pistorius has learned to be a world class sprinter with the help of carbon fiber "blades" that allow him to run much in the manner of an able-bodied athlete.

In January of 2008, the IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations) had ruled that since his carbon fiber blades supposedly gave him an advantage over his able-bodied counterparts that he could not race against them in competitions, including the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China.

Much of the IAAF's reasoning was based on a German professor's research, which led to a belief that the carbon fiber blades, dubbed "Cheetah" blades, were unfair because of their energy efficiency. However, Pistorius and his lawyers had their own independent tests conducted that claimed that the contrary was true, and that all the carbon fiber blades accomplish is to put Pistorius on "equal ground" with able-bodied competitors.

Since then, Pistorius has spent much of his time appealing the ruling to the CAS (Court of Arbitration for Sport) to try to get the IAAF's ruling overturned. Once the ruling finally was overturned, Pistorius could finally get back to the business of training, so that he could make a run at participating in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The challenges are far from behind him, however. Pistorius has a lot of work to do to shave about a second off of his best 400 meter time (46.56 seconds), which he will have to do to reach the qualifying time required for the Olympic Games. Of course, the South African team can still include Pistorius in a relay squad, if they choose. If they do so, it's sure to be one of the top stories in the entire Beijing Olympics.

Pistorius is proud of the fact that the decision was overturned, as this decision could represent a precedent that can be used to help decide similar cases in the future. In that sense, Pistorius has won a battle for all athletes that are born with disadvantages.

There is still some controversy, as there are those who maintain that only able-bodied competitors should be able to compete in the Olympic Games, but for the most part, the world celebrates with Pistorius following his successful appeal.

The tenacity and determination that Pistorius showed by appealing the initial ruling, rather than just accepting it and moving on, is a symbol of the

determination that has also made him great on the track- able to compete against those who would appear to have an advantage over him.

To prepare, Pistorius will continue running in competitions against both able-bodied and Paralympic competitors to get himself sharp again. In the worst case scenario, if Pistorius fails to qualify for the Beijing Olympics and isn't selected to be part of a relay team, Pistorius claims he will be undeterred. He will merely focus his energy on preparing for the 2012 Olympic Games instead. This kind of determination and perseverance in the face of adversity is what makes Pistorius the embodiment of a true Olympic athlete, despite the fact that he is a double-amputee.

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