



## Avoiding Carding Appeals: Preventive Measures for Administrators

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As we enter the post-Olympic carding cycle, NSOs are assessing the last 12 months and looking towards Rio 2016 as they apply their carding criteria. With many athletes vying for a finite number of cards, there are often appeals of carding decisions. Through the appeal process, the strength and clarity of the selection criteria is tested.

Appeals often take place where athletes are surprised by the decision. Many of these appeals can be avoided when all parties are aware, in advance, of the criteria and exactly how the decisions will be made. While appeals are a natural part of any decision-making process, it is ideal to minimize their frequency. Appeals can be time consuming and can put strain on the athlete-NSO relationship as well as relationships among affected athletes. This article will highlight some of the preventative measures that you, as sports administrators, can take to help ensure a smooth carding process.

### **Publish your criteria early and make it accessible.**

The earlier the criteria are published and the more readily accessible they are, the greater the likelihood of avoiding conflicts. Some actions that one can take include:

- Posting them on your website;
- Emailing athletes as soon as they are available;
- Posting a link of the criteria on Twitter or other social media outlets;
- Providing contact information of an NSO representative who is available for questions and issues related to the criteria.

By having athletes read the criteria, any potential problems with the criteria will come to light early. A change in the criteria at this stage is much easier than handling multiple appeals at the end of the season.

### **Encourage upward communication**

The Athlete Representative is an important source of communication but should not be the only method of upward communication. Open meetings at national team events are a great way to hear and directly address contentious issues or criteria that may be unclear. Furthermore, online forums may allow less vocal athletes to have their opinions heard. By sparking a discourse instead of simply publishing the criteria you allow athletes and coaches to be a part of the process. When individuals feel as though their opinions have truly been heard they will be more likely to support the policy. As a result, the risk of appeals may be reduced.

Sometimes policy decisions are simply unpopular. This does not mean that they are bad decisions but it means there must be an extra focus on explaining the rationale behind these decisions.

### **Draft clear, effective policies.**

Effective policies are those that avoid uncertainty and are easy for athletes to understand. Uncertainty often arises when the language used is ambiguous, general, inconsistent, redundant or vague. [Click here](#) for further information on effective policy writing. NSOs cannot

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open the lines of communication without athletes, coaches and other stakeholders doing their part. The most important thing that athletes can do is to **read all policies** to ensure that they are familiar with the process. It may seem simple but every year there are athletes who are left off teams or denied funding simply because they were unaware of an essential element of the criteria. Furthermore, if athletes have an issue with the criteria they must discuss the issue with coaches, athlete reps and contacts within the sport.

By increasing the communication between sport administrators and athletes throughout the process, we believe there will be significantly less animosity and confusion. This will let everyone focus their energy on the sport they love! ■

*Sport Solution is a legal clinic designed to provide high performance athletes with support for their sport-related legal issues. It was created in 1996 and is managed by three University of Western Ontario law students. One of the main mandates of the clinic is to help foster communication between NSO and athletes. Sport Solution works to ensure that athletes are aware of their right to appeal and to help them through the process.*