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U.S. ATHLETE FIGHTS IAAF GENDER DISCRIMINATION THAT KEEPS HER OUT OF LONDON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS IN AUGUST

U.S. race walker Susan Randall, who in May became the Area Champion in the Women's 50km Race Walk for the North American, Central American and Caribbean Area (NACAC) was refused participation at the upcoming track and field World Championships in London.

When the USA track & field governing body (USATF) tried to enter Randall, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), headed by Lord Sebastian Coe of Britain, refused to let Randall participate in the August 13, 2017 50km Race Walk Event at the London World Championships.

"Susan Randall is yet another victim of the IAAF's gender discrimination practices," said Randall's attorney Paul F. DeMeester. Up until last week, the world's governing body for athletics had never allowed any women to participate in any World Championships or Olympic 50km races, which have been exclusively reserved for men. This sorry history of sexism was only breached last week when under pressure from courageous women athletes, the IAAF relented and allowed women in without having to qualify under the men's standard.

For over a year now, women were told they could take part in London but only if they met the men's qualifying entry standard. Commented DeMeester: "Imagine the same rule for the 100m, or 200m, or 400m, or 800m, or 1500m, or 5000m, or 10000m. No women would need to bother showing up because none have met the men's standard in any of those events. Only two women dipped underneath the men's standard in the marathon. But somehow, in the longest, most arduous event, the 50km race walk, women were supposed to keep up with the men. The women's world record for the distance, established in January, is still two and a half minutes above the men's entry standard."

Under the new standard set last week (4:30:00), five women qualify. But the IAAF's own rules provide that an Area Champion, regardless of the time they post, is deemed to have achieved the entry standard. (IAAF Technical Regulation 103.3.3 and London 2017 Qualification System and Entry Standards.) Randall and Nair da Rosa of Brazil should be in the London race, based on their North and South American Area Championships.

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The IAAF Constitution has long had a provision guaranteeing gender equality. The same goes for the Olympic Charter, which the IAAF is bound to apply. To no avail, as the IAAF has been discriminating against women in the 50km since 1932.

Yet, the IAAF is letting a male 10,000m runner compete in London by virtue of his Area Championship even though Stephan Mokoka of South Africa did not otherwise meet the time entry standard in his event.

This double standard does not come as a surprise to Susan Randall, who has not seen her dreams of going to an Olympic 50km race walk event in 2008, 2012 and 2016 come to pass because of the IAAF's gender bias. Likewise, the 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2015 World Championships only had men race the 50km event. Said DeMeester: "Imagine Usain Bolt having been told he could not compete at any of those meets because of his gender."

Now age 43, Susan may not have too many opportunities to contest a World Championship or Olympic 50km. What's heartbreaking is that she qualified under the IAAF's own rules, only to have the rug pulled out from underneath her by Lord Coe's IAAF.

But Susan is fighting back. With the help of DeMeester, she is bringing her case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Switzerland, which is often called the "World Supreme Court of Sports." She is turning to the Court on Monday because the IAAF does not want women walkers to succeed. Even though time is short before the August 13 race, and a number of procedural hurdles await her, Susan Randall is not giving up.

"The IAAF has never given women 50km race walkers anything without having to be faced with lawyers. The IAAF has this beautiful gender equality provision in their Constitution but they constantly ignore it," explained DeMeester: "Gender equality means the IAAF has to apply a rule in the same way to women as the IAAF applies it to men."

DeMeester applauded the actions of USATF in requesting the IAAF to enter his client for the London race. "USATF has taken a strong advocacy position in favor of gender equality. I hope the Court will reverse the IAAF's blatant disregard for its own Constitution and entry standards," concluded the California lawyer. Once the case is filed, proceedings in the Court of Arbitration are confidential.