

International Judo Federation

Disciplinary Commission

Richard Galea Debono (presiding)

Otsuji Hirofumi (member)

David Papaux (member)

Case Number DIS2024-03 SWE

Decision

Preamble – The Charge and the Legal Basis

The Disciplinary Commission recalls the charge issued by the Secretary General of the International Judo Federation with respect to Ms Tara Babulfath (hereinafter “the Defendant”) issued on the 30th July 2024 referring to an incident occurring on the 27th July 2024 during the Olympic Games, Paris 2024.

The Commission recalls that the Defendant has been charged as follows:

Assertion of the Sport and Organisation Rules (SOR) Section 1.1.1 Behaviour at IJF Events

By refusing to leave the mat, you had committed a potential violation of the IJF Sports and Organisational Rules (SOR), version 22 July 2024:

Section 1.1.1 Behaviour at IJF Events

Everyone attending an IJF WJT event should always be mindful of their behaviour, following the judo values. Unacceptable behaviour, violence or aggression will not be tolerated. Any athlete who disrespects their opponent at the end of a contest risks disqualification, removal of prize money and of World Raking List (WRL) points and a disciplinary action may be initiated.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any athlete refusing to leave the tatami. If a coach is present in the coaches' chair he must intervene otherwise he will also face disciplinary action. If a coach is not present in the chair the IJF Education Commission will intervene to remove the athlete from the tatami.

The commission recalls the report of the IJF Ad Hoc Commission stating that:

Report of the IJF Ad Hoc Commission regarding Ms Babulfath (Sweden)

During day one of the Olympic Games Paris 2024, on 27 July 2024, following the semifinal contest of the category women under 48 kg, between the athlete Ms Tara BABULFATH (Sweden) and Ms Natsumi TSUNODA (Japan), at the end of the contest the referee announced a decision, and the athlete did not leave the mat immediately, without showing any signs of aggression.

The Commission recalls that the defendant had acknowledged receipt of the charge, and the Commission allowed her a period up to the 14th August 2024 to either admit the charge or enter a statement of defence.

Within that time limit the Defendant responded as follows:

Dear honored members of the International Judo Federation.

It's been a couple of days since my competition day, and I've had time to reflect on my disrespectful behavior in the semi-finals.

Let me begin to give you my sincere apologies. I carry a great responsibility as a representative of judo but also for all the young athletes who dream and work hard for future success in our beautiful sport, Judo. Therefore, it brings me shame and are very regretful in how I behaved on the tatami.

I have disappointed you as well as myself, for my actions towards the unanimous verdict in the semi-final.

I hope you give me a chance to show you and everyone else who loves our sport that I can do better and that I will live by our values on and outside of the tatami in a way that will make the judo world proud of me again.

Findings

In view of the admission of guilt by the Defendant, the Commission gave proper consideration to the facts of the case in order to apply a sanction proportionate to the gravity of the offence.

The Commission recalls the evidence provided to it, namely video evidence of the defendant's deportment and her evident non-compliance with the mat referee's instruction to return to the starting position in order to bring the contest to a proper ending.

The video evidence shows that the defendant remonstrated visibly upon the award of shido, and once again upon the declaration of the winning judoka by the referee. She would not take the starting position; she approached the referee and also touched his arm during her complaint.

The defendant did leave the tatami after a short while, showing gestures of displeasure.

The Commission believes that among the main characteristics that distinguish Judo from other sports, is its insistence on respect, and on proper and self-controlled behaviour on the tatami. This concept is a fundamental element of what is known as "the spirit of Judo".

The Commission, in its attention to proportionality recalls that the Defendant is relatively young, and upon reflection has offered a written acknowledgement of her undue behaviour and apologised. The Commission further recalls that the Swedish Judo Federation has undertaken to take internal measures on the episode.

Sanction

In deciding upon the applicable sanction, the Commission recalls that under art.8.6 of Sporting and Organization Regulations : *“If an athlete refuses to leave the tatami at the end of the contest, in serious cases, both the athlete and the coach may be subject to a suspension of up to one year.”* .

The Commission finds that the event was not serious in the sense that it was not accompanied by aggression, or other unruly behaviour, but it did occur before a large audience at an Olympic Judo event, thereby tarnishing the image of Judo.

The Commission decides to apply against the Defendant the sanction of a three-month suspension from all Judo activities both at Continental level and at international level. Such suspension applies also to her membership rights, including the exercise of the rights and the holding of office related to sporting or sporting administration activities.

The period of suspension is considered to have commenced on the 30th July 2024 which is the date of the issue of the disciplinary charge, and remains in effect until the 30th October 2024 (both dates included).

The Defendant is informed that this decision is subject to appeal to the IJF Disciplinary Appeal Commission.

The time limit for appeal shall be fifteen days from the receipt of the decision appealed against.

Today the 6th day of August 2024



Richard Galea Debono

On behalf of the Disciplinary Commission