



## Frequently Asked Questions for Olympic Movement Disputes Administered by the American Arbitration Association (AAA®)

**Q: What is the American Arbitration Association?**

A: The American Arbitration Association (AAA) is a not-for-profit public service organization founded in 1926, committed to the resolution of disputes through the use of arbitration, mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution. Named as the administrator of arbitrations and mediations arising out of countless contracts, agreements, legislative acts and other related documents, our primary mission is one of service and education. The AAA website is [www.adr.org](http://www.adr.org).

**Q: Why is AAA involved in Olympic disputes?**

A: The AAA currently is named as the administrative agency in the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act. Additionally, the AAA is named as administrator of athlete disputes under the USOC's Constitution and Bylaws. Separately, the AAA is the named administrator for disputes arising out of the US Anti-Doping Agency's procedures.

**Q: Are there rules that govern AAA's administration of Olympic disputes?**

A: The USOC's Constitution and Bylaws name the AAA Commercial Arbitration Rules. A copy of these Rules can be downloaded from the AAA website, as can separate rules for anti-doping grievances.

**Q: Does an athlete need an attorney to go through arbitration?**

A: You are not required to have an attorney. However, depending on the nature of your claim, it might be wise to consult with one.

**Q: How much does it cost to go through arbitration?**

A: The administrative filing fee for athlete eligibility cases is \$1,000 (for cases with a single arbitrator or three arbitrators), which is paid by the filing party at the time a case is submitted to the AAA. Payment of the administrative filing fee is an obligation of the filing party and the fee must be paid for the case to move forward. Both the athlete and the national governing body (NGB) are equally responsible for paying the arbitrator's compensation. Arbitrator compensation varies by arbitrator. Arbitrators may charge daily rates typically ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,500/day, or an arbitrator may have established hourly rates of compensation.



**Q: Who is eligible to go through the Olympic Movement Disputes arbitration process?**

A: The Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act states that any “amateur athlete, coach, trainer, manager, administrator or official” can avail themselves of the arbitration process concerning the right to compete in athletic competition.

**Q: Where do I file a request for arbitration?**

A: You can file a Demand for Arbitration with any one of the AAA offices. To expedite the process, you can file the case directly with the AAA Western Case Management Center in Fresno, California. The Center has been designated as the AAA National Olympic caseload office. Demand for Arbitration forms can be downloaded from AAA website.

**Q: What happens after I file a Demand for Arbitration?**

A: The case is assigned to a dedicated AAA case manager who will serve as the point of contact throughout the process scheduling hearings, coordinating the exchange of documents, etc., until the case is closed. *The AAA Commercial Arbitration Rules* explain the process in detail. (Note: Article IX of the USOC Constitution allows the AAA wide latitude to expedite a case in a manner it sees fit when the dispute must be resolved quickly.)

**Q: Is the AAA affiliated in any way with the USOC?**

A: The AAA is not affiliated with the USOC nor receives funding of any kind from it. The AAA is a completely neutral organization and provides administrative services for the USOC, as it does for thousands of companies and organizations every year.

**Q: Your Rules reference arbitrators. Who are the AAA’s arbitrators?**

A: The AAA maintains a panel of independent and impartial arbitrators and mediators. The AAA’s arbitrators are not employees of the AAA, but rather serve as impartial decision makers (collectively referred to as “neutrals”) on disputes when they are asked to do so. All neutrals are required, before accepting appointment, to assess whether they have any conflicts of interests with either party, their attorneys, or others similarly involved in the dispute. Any dealing, no matter how minor, will be disclosed to the parties prior to the arbitrator accepting appointment.

**Q: Can I go to court if I am dissatisfied with the ruling from the arbitrator?**

A: Because arbitration is a final and binding process, once the arbitrator’s award is issued, any right to appeal that



decision in court is extremely limited. Whether a particular court would choose to review an arbitration award would depend on the court itself.

**Q: What if my particular National Governing Body (NGB) has an informal dispute resolution process. Should I go through that process before going to arbitration?**

A: You must check with your NGB. Some NGBs require you to go through their designated process prior to submitting your dispute to arbitration.

**Q: Can I request the arbitration hearing be held in my city?**

A: If the parties cannot agree upon a mutually acceptable locale for the hearing, the Rules empower the AAA to determine the site of the hearing.

**Q: Are hearings ever held by telephone?**

A: Hearings can be held by telephone as a way to expedite the process.

**Q: How quickly can an arbitration hearing be scheduled?**

A: In several instances, the AAA had extremely time-sensitive cases filed and scheduled a hearing within a few hours. If an immediate hearing is necessary because of an upcoming qualifying event, the AAA will work to bring the case to hearing as quickly as possible. Other non-expedited matters can be resolved within a matter of weeks or months, if not sooner.

**Q: Who can I contact at AAA if I need further information about filing a case?**

A: You can contact Jennifer Nilmeier at (559) 490-1862.