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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

+ **W.P.(C) 2860/2023**

MANJU RANI & ORS.

.....Petitioners

Through: Mr. Sandeep Lamba, Mr. Sunil
Kumar and Mr. Shital Pawar,
Advocates.

versus

BOXING FEDERATION OF INDIA AND OTHERSRespondents

Through: Mr. Parth Goswami, Mr. Akshay
Kumar and Mr. Lakshmi Walia,
Advocates for R-1.
Mr. Anil Soni, Senior Advocate with
Mr. Devvrat Yadav, G.P. for UOI.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANJEEV NARULA

ORDER

19.12.2024

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1. The instant petition has been filed by 3 Petitioners, who assert that they are the international boxers and have won gold medal in the 6th Elite Women National Boxing Championship held at Bhopal Madhya Pradesh in 2022. They highlight several national and international awards won by them in boxing.

2. The grievance of the Petitioners is that their candidature for participation in the Women's World Boxing Championship, 2023 has been rejected by Respondent No.1. The said Championship was scheduled to start from 15th March, 2023. Aggrieved by the same, the Petitioners have filed the instant petition, seeking the following reliefs:



- “(i) *Issue writ/order or direction in the form of mandamus or any other nature by directing the respondent No.1 to 3 to pass appropriate order for considering the candidature of the petitioners in their respective weight category In Women's World Boxing Championship, 2023 to be held at New Delhi, India, from 15.03.2023.*
- (ii) *Issue Interim order or direction in the form of mandamus or any other nature and thereby restraining the respondent No.1 to 3 for further step till the final disposal of present Writ Petition by this Hon'ble Court and pass any appropriate order for considering the candidature of the petitioners in their respective weight category in Women's World Boxing Championship, 2023 to be held at New Delhi, India, from 15.03.2023.*
- (iii) *To pass an order to constitute an independent committee to conduct fair investigation to the selection procedure and to file the proper report before this Hon'ble after due investigation;*
- (iv) *To pass an appropriate order and direction(s), on facts of reports of committee for fair and transparent selection procedure of the Players in women world championship.”*

3. This Court through detailed order dated 14th March, 2023 considered the Petitioners' case and rejected the grant of any interim relief. The operative portion of the said order reads as follows:

“12. *In the above background, this Court is of the opinion that the present is not a case for grant of interim relief. The boxing team which has been selected is permitted to go ahead and represent India in the forthcoming Women World Boxing Championship, 2023 to be held from 15th March, 2023.*

13. *The Petitioners, as directed earlier vide order dated 7th March, 2023, shall continue to remain in the reserve list qua the said Women World Boxing Championship, 2023. Thus, no interim relief is granted at this stage.*

14. *Accordingly, the interim application being CM APPL. 11098/2023 is dismissed.*

15. *Let counter affidavit be filed within a period of six weeks.*

16. *Rejoinder be filed within a period of four weeks, thereafter.*



17. *List before the Registrar on 9th May, 2023.*

18. *List before the Court on 24th August, 2023.”*

4. The Petitioners were thus placed in the reserve list with respect to the Women World Boxing Championship, 2023. In any case, now the event has already taken place and accordingly the first two reliefs sought by the Petitioners, have been rendered infructuous. As far as the remaining prayers are concerned, the pleadings in the petition do not disclose any grounds for the Court to either direct constitution of an independent committee to conduct investigation into the selection procedure or directions for fair and transparent selection procedure of the Players in Women World Championship. In this regard, it is important to note the findings of this Court on 14th March, 2023, reproduced herein below:

“4. The case of the Petitioners is that all the Respondent players i.e. Respondent Nos. 4-6 who have been selected in those categories have either been defeated by the Petitioners in their respective weight categories or did not participate in the Elite Women National Boxing Championship held in December, 2022 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Thus, the submission is that they could not have been chosen as better performers in comparison to the Petitioners.

5. On 7th March, 2023, when the matter was listed, it was submitted on behalf of the Respondent No.1 - Boxing Federation of India that winning of a gold medal or any other medal in recognised International or National games was the qualifying criteria to enter the National Camp. However, the players were then evaluated on the basis of the selection criteria for the National Coaching Camp, World Championship and Asian Games, 2023. It was submitted that all the players have been evaluated against the said qualifying criteria and only then have the Petitioners' candidature been rejected. Considering these submissions, the following directions were made by the Court on 7th March, 2023:

“5. Reliance is placed upon the evaluation form which has been filled by the elite evaluator. It is further submitted that the Director of High-Performance has filled up the evaluation forms of the Petitioners and thus no interference is called for in this petition.

6. In view of the above submissions, the Court is of the view that the



evaluation form which has been filled by the elite evaluators will have to be perused.

7. Let the said original evaluation forms be produced on the next date of hearing.”

6. The original evaluation forms in terms of the said order were placed on record yesterday i.e. on 13th March, 2023. The Court perused the evaluation forms for three weeks for each of the Petitioner players and compared the same with the selected players. A doubt was also sought to be raised as to the medals, etc. which have been won by the selected players in comparison with the Petitioners. The case of the Petitioners which was made out on the last date i.e. 13th March, 2023 was that the Petitioners had more medals between 2018 to 2022 and the selected candidates hardly had any medals.

7. Today, Mr. Baruah, Id. Counsel for the Respondents has placed on record the medal tally for the year 2022 of the selected candidates. As against the tally of the selected candidates, insofar as the Petitioners are concerned, in 2022, they obtained gold medals only in National Boxing Championships. A comparison of the medal tally of the selected candidates and the Petitioners for the year 2022 is as under:

Category	Selected Candidate	Petitioner Candidate
48 kg Category	Neetu 1. CWG 2022, Birmingham (GOLD MEDAL) 2. 73rd Strandja Memorial Tournament, 18-28 February, 2022 Sofia, Bulgaria (GOLD MEDAL)	Manju Rani 1.6 th Elite Women National Boxing Championship 20- 26 December, 2022 (GOLD MEDAL)
54 kg Category	Preeti 1. ASBC Asian Boxing Championship, Amman, Jordan 1-12 November, 2022 (BRONZE MEDAL) Wt -57 kg.	Shiksha 1. Senior National Boxing Championship, 20- 26 December, 2022 (GOLD MEDAL)
60 kg Category	Jasmine 1. CWG 2022, Birmingham (BRONZE MEDAL)	Poonam 1.6 th Elite Women National Boxing Championship 20- 26 December



		(GOLD MEDAL) 2. 36 th National Games 5 th to 12 th October, 2022 (GOLD MEDAL)
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8. Today, a fresh submission is sought to be made by the Petitioners on the basis of an affidavit filed on record that one of the coaches, i.e. Respondent No. 7 - Mr. Bhaskar Chandra Bhatt (Head Coach) who is stated to have evaluated the players was not present from 20th January, 2023 to 26th January, 2023 and from 18th February, 2023 to 28th February, 2023. Hence the allegation is that the evaluation done by him is not genuine.

9. Heard. The present petition has been heard continuously since 9th March, 2023, bearing in mind the urgency owing to the Women's World Boxing Championship which is commencing from tomorrow i.e., 15th March, 2023. Various submissions have been made and the same have been considering that the careers of talented sports persons are involved. Four hearings have been held since 7th March and on each date, further clarifications have been sought and given by ld. Counsels.

10. There is no doubt that selection of a team to represent a country, from amongst talented players is always an uphill task. Selections is to be done by professional persons who have knowledge of the said sport and it is expected that the same would be done in a fair and non-discriminatory manner, keeping quality representation on behalf of the country as the only priority. Selectors are expected to adopt objective criteria to the maximum extent possible but ultimately, there is no doubt that some discretion and subjective assessment would be involved. 1

1. The Court, in such cases, is to assess whether the overall process has been fair, reasonable and transparent. The process should also not reveal any arbitrariness. The scope of interference in a writ petition in such cases would be to ensure the same. Bearing this in mind, the evaluation forms have been perused by the Court as also the medal tally. The same does not in the opinion of the Court, smack of any arbitrariness or bias. The selected players have earned medals in recent international championships in 2022 and have thereafter been assessed in the Camp on various criteria such as –

- International Performance Potential,
- Weight Management,
- Health Management,
- High Performance Mindset,
- Performance in Training –
 - o Competitiveness/domination,



*o Combination Punching,
o Effectiveness of Defense,
o Effectiveness of Attack,
o Effective Jab,
o Mental toughness/conditioning,
o Effective Feinting,
o Coachability,
o Adaptability,
o Rules Infringement/Ring General.*

12. In the above background, this Court is of the opinion that the present is not a case for grant of interim relief. The boxing team which has been selected is permitted to go ahead and represent India in the forthcoming Women World Boxing Championship, 2023 to be held from 15th March, 2023.”

5. As noted above, the Court has already reviewed the evaluation forms and the medal tally, concluding that they are not arbitrary. Since neither the selection results nor the selection criteria are arbitrary, unfair, or lacking transparency, the need for an independent inquiry does not arise. Moreover, it is well-established in law that a writ court will not interfere with the discretion exercised by the National Sports Federation unless it is demonstrated that the discretion has been exercised in an arbitrary or capricious manner. Therefore, the relief sought in prayers iii and iv cannot be granted in this case.

6. In light of the above, the present petition is disposed of.

SANJEEV NARULA, J

DECEMBER 19, 2024

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