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

Date of Decision: 02nd December, 2024

+ W.P.(C) 15971/2024

DR DEEPAK SINGH

.....Petitioner

Through: Mr. Saurabh Mishra, Advocate.

versus

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

.....Respondents

Through: Mr. Sriharsha Peechara, Mr. Akshat
Kulshreshtha and Mr. D. S. Bhanu,
Advocates for R-2, 3, 4.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANJEEV NARULA

JUDGMENT

SANJEEV NARULA, J. (Oral):

1. The Petitioner has invoked the jurisdiction of this Court under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, seeking directions to Respondents No. 2 to 4 – National Rifle Association of India¹, for issuance of a ‘Renowned Shot’ certificate to the Petitioner for his participation in the ‘Master Men Category’ in the ‘66th National Shooting Championship Competition 2023’ organised by the said Respondents.

2. The Petitioner asserts that he is a national level shooter having ID No. SHM0210197402. In 2023, NRAI organised the 66th National Shooting Championship Competitions² (Shotgun Events), 2023, in accordance with

¹ “NRAI”

² “NSCC”



rules of International Shooting Sports Federation³ as well as the NRAI Match Book. The said competition was held from 21st October, 2023 to 30th November, 2023.

3. The Petitioner registered for participation in the abovementioned competition in the 'Master Men Individual Category Trap Event', where he was kept in Group 2 event scheduled to be held from 25th to 28th October, 2024. However, due to a medical exigency on account of a shoulder injury, the Petitioner wrote an e-mail dated 16th October, 2023 to NRAI requesting them to accommodate him in Group-3 squads 'Trap Competition' scheduled from 15th November, 2023 to 19th November, 2023. Since the events of Group 3 were scheduled from 15th to 19th November, 2023, the Petitioner anticipated that by that time he would be able to take the adequate rest so that his injury would heal, and he would be able to participate in the Group 3 event. The Petitioner contends that through the aforementioned email, he had only requested NRAI for a change in the dates of the events and not for a change in the category within which the Petitioner would compete. The Petitioner's request dated 16th October, 2023 and the response of NRAI to the same, is as follows:

"On Monday, 16 Oct 2023 at 16:00, Dr. Deepak Singh

Dear Sir,

Greetings!!

wish to make a request on Medical exigency grounds for me to be accommodated in Group 3 squads 'TRAP Competition' in the upcoming 66th National Games 2023.

Sir, i am shooting enthusiast and will be participating in the upcoming 66th National games, however in the recently held shotgun competition by

³ "ISSF"



South Delhi shooting association i have injured my shoulder and Doctors have advised treatment for next three weeks, thus the above request. Being a sportsman i do not wish to let go the Nationals due to the prevailing situation.

My association with NRAI is now a Decade old as life member 'L-6341'. I am also a Life member with Delhi Shooting Rifle Association 'L-1519'.

My Humble request for consideration on Medical Grounds.

Sincere Regards

Dr. Deepak Singh (Shooter 10 - SHM0210197402)

From: NRAI

Date: 16 October 2023 at 7:43:34 PM IST

To: "Dr. Deepak Singh"

Cc: amarjang sidhu

Subject: Re: Request on Medical Exigency

Dear Shooter

We regret that your request cant b acceded to shoot in Group 3.

Regards"

4. Thereafter, the Petitioner approached the President and Secretary of NRAI, requesting them to reconsider his request, which was subsequently allowed by the Secretary, as communicated to the Petitioner through WhatsApp.
5. The Petitioner's name was then included in the 'Master Men Group 3' competition list and the same also reflected on the NRAI website. Subsequently, as per the schedule of competition and the allowance granted to the Petitioner, he participated in the Group 3 event and secured the qualifying score of 90/125.
6. On the basis of the aforementioned score, on 28th December, 2023, the



Petitioner wrote an email to the NRAI, requesting them to issue his certificate of participation, stating that he was unable to download the same from the NRAI website, since the participation category mentioned against his name was wrong. He urged that he had applied under the 'Master Men' Trap, whereas his name was shown under the 'Individual Men' category on the NRAI website.

7. The NRAI responded to the Petitioner's request on 04th January, 2024, to the following effect:

"Dear Shooter,

This has reference to your emails regarding your participation in the Master Men category during 66th National Shooting Championship Competition (NSCC).

We hope that you are aware that the competition for Master Men category was scheduled in Group 2 from 25th to 28th October 2023 (as per our circular for 66th NSCC (Shotgun) placed on our website dated 18th September 2023), but you did not report to shoot your match during this period. The competition for Master Men competition concluded on 28th October 2023 and medals were awarded accordingly.

Mr. Amarjang Singh, Competition Director, as a special case, allowed you to participate in Men category (Group 3) and changed your category from Master Men to Men category as the matches for Master category were over.

With Regards,

RAJIV BHATIA

Secretary"

8. The Petitioner escalated the matter to the Athlete Commission of NRAI, however, his request for issuance of the 'renowned shot' certificate under the 'Master Men Category' was not acceded to. The Respondents submit that since the Petitioner did not report for participation under the



‘Master Men Category in Group 2’ scheduled from 25th to 28th October, 2023 and the matches under the said category were over, as a special case, NRAI allowed him to participate in the ‘Men Category Group 3’.

9. In the above background, the Petitioner contends that NRAI’s decision to deny the certification of ‘renowned shot’ is arbitrary and unreasonable. The Petitioner emphasises that he had, in fact, participated in the ‘Master Men Category’ and has qualified on the basis of his performance by achieving the score of 90/125, which is above the qualifying mark of 85/125. Therefore, the Petitioner submits that he is entitled to the certificate in question. In this regard, reliance is also placed on Annexure P-8 of the writ petition, which is a list of participants of the 66th NSCC (Shotgun Events), as available on the NRAI website today and the same continues to reflect the Petitioner’s name at serial no. 329.

10. The Petitioner further asserts that at no point of time did he request the NRAI to change his category of participation from ‘Master Men Category’ to ‘Men Category’ and therefore, the Respondent’s decision is wholly erroneous and arbitrary.

11. On the other hand, the NRAI contends that the list of participants relied upon by the Petitioner does not reflect the updated position. They submit that the list indicates the position which existed as on 19th October, 2023 and is now available in the archives section of the NRAI website.

12. The Court has carefully considered the submissions of both parties and examined the documents on record. The Petitioner contends that he participated in the ‘Master Men Category’ and achieved a qualifying score of 90/125, surpassing the minimum requirement of 85/125 for that category. However, the pertinent issue is whether the Petitioner participated in the



‘Master Men Category’ or the ‘Men Category’ during the 66th National Shooting Championship Competitions, 2023. This distinction is crucial because eligibility for the ‘Renowned Shot’ certificate is contingent upon the category of participation and the achievement of the qualifying score within that category. To demonstrate that the Petitioner actually competed in the ‘Men Category’. Specifically, the Respondents have provided:

(a) Tabulation of Grouping: In the official grouping document for Trap Group 3 Match, the Petitioner’s name appears under Squad 22 with the category code ‘M’. The Respondents have clarified that ‘M’ denotes the ‘Men Category’, whereas ‘MAS’ represents the ‘Master Men Category’. This document indicates that he was registered under the ‘Men Category’.

(b) Official Score Sheet: The score sheet for Trap Group 3 Match, Squad 22, dated 16th November 2023, bears the Petitioner’s signature alongside other participants. This document, signed by the Petitioner, explicitly records his participation in the ‘Men Category’. The authenticity of this score sheet is undisputed and serves as definitive proof of the category in which the Petitioner competed.

13. It is pertinent to note that the Petitioner, due to a shoulder injury, requested a change in his competition dates from Group 2 (25th to 28th October 2023) to Group 3 (15th to 19th November 2023). While the Petitioner asserts that he sought only a change in dates and not in category, the fact remains that the ‘Master Men Category’ events had concluded by the time Group 3 events commenced. Consequently, it was not feasible for the Petitioner to compete in the ‘Master Men Category’ during Group 3. The Respondents, in an effort to accommodate the Petitioner, permitted him to participate in the ‘Men Category’ during Group 3 events.



14. The Petitioner's argument that the Respondents unilaterally changed his category without his consent is not substantiated by the evidence. The accommodation provided by the Respondents was necessitated by the scheduling constraints and was aimed at enabling the Petitioner to compete despite his medical exigency. Altering the competition schedule or reopening concluded categories is not permissible, as it would disrupt the event's structure and potentially disadvantage other participants.

15. The categorization of participants is integral to any competition. Each category has specific eligibility criteria, age brackets, and qualifying standards. The 'Master Men Category' is distinct from the 'Men Category'. The 'Renowned Shot' certificate is awarded based on performance within the designated category. Therefore, the Petitioner's expectation to receive the certificate based on a score achieved in a different category is unfounded.

16. Furthermore, the Petitioner actively participated in the 'Men Category' events, as evidenced by his signature on official documents and his presence in the squad lists and score sheets for that category. At no point during the competition did the Petitioner raise any objection or protest regarding his categorization. The principle of acquiescence applies here; by participating without objection, the Petitioner accepted the terms of his participation.

17. The doctrine of estoppel prevents a party from asserting a claim or right that contradicts what they have previously stated or agreed to by their actions. The Petitioner, having accepted the opportunity to compete in the 'Men Category' and attempted to qualify therein, cannot now seek benefits associated with a different category.



18. The Respondents' decision to allow the Petitioner to compete in the 'Men Category' despite the conclusion of the 'Master Men Category' events was a reasonable accommodation, not an arbitrary alteration of his category. It provided the Petitioner with an opportunity to participate when, he might have been excluded altogether due to the timing of his request.

19. The Court also notes that the issuance of the 'Renowned Shot' certificate is a matter of privilege contingent upon strict compliance with the governing rules. The certificate serves as a recognition of excellence within a specific competitive context. Allowing exceptions or deviations from established criteria would undermine the integrity of the certification process and could lead to unfair advantages or disputes among athletes.

20. In view of the above, the Court finds that the Respondents' refusal to issue the 'Renowned Shot' certificate to the Petitioner under the 'Master Men Category' is justified. There is no merit in the present writ petition.

21. Dismissed.

SANJEEV NARULA, J

DECEMBER 2, 2024

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