



2026:DHC:8244-DB



\* IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI

*Judgment Reserved on: 22.09.2026*

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*Judgment Delivered on: 24.09.2026*

# CNR No. DLHC010452722026

+ LPA 760/2026, CM APPL. 65145/2026 & CM APPL. 65146/2026

**VAASVI KHAITAN (MINOR) THR HER FATHER**

**MR VEDANT KHAITAN**

.....Appellant

Versus

**AD-HOC COMMITTEE FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF**

**EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION OF INDIA & ORS....Respondents**

**Advocates who appeared in this case**

For the Appellant : Mr. Kirtiman Singh, Senior Advocate with Mr. Kapil Modi, Mr. Ritwik Saha, Mr. Shiv Verma, Mr. Maulik Khurana & Mr. Shorya Goel, Advocates.

For the Respondents : Mr. Tanmaya Mehta, Ms. Niyati Kohli, Mr. Rishabh Parikh, Mr. Pinank Mehra & Ms. Isha Kakkar, Advocates. for R-1&2.

Mr. Ruchir Mishra with Mr. Sanjiv Kumar Saxena, Mr. Mukesh Kumar Tiwari, Ms. Reba Jena Mishra, Ms. Poonam Shukla, Advocates & Ms. Rupali Singh, GP. for R-4.

Mr. Kartik Yadav, Ms. Sumedha Chadha, Mr. Duvva Pawan Kumar, Mr. Sai Krishna Kumar & Ms. Shradha Gupta, Advocates for R-5.

Ms. Manini Brar with Mr. O.P. Harsh Singh Munday & Mr. Siddhant Chhabra, Advocates for R-6.



**CORAM:**  
**HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE**  
**HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE TEJAS KARIA**

**JUDGMENT**

**TEJAS KARIA, J**

1. The present Appeal has been preferred by the Appellant challenging the judgment dated 17.09.2026 (“**Impugned Judgment**”) passed by the learned Single Judge in W.P.(C) 12760/2026 (“**Writ Petition**”) filed by the Appellant.

**FACTUAL MATRIX**

2. Respondent No. 1, the *Ad Hoc* Committee has been entrusted with the governance of the Equestrian Federation of India (“**EFI**”), the National Federation responsible for conducting national-level selections for participation in international equestrian events, including Show Jumping at the Youth Olympic Games, Dakar, Senegal, 2026 (“**YOG 2026**”). Respondent No. 2 is the Show Jumping Selection Committee (“**Selection Committee**”) constituted for selection of a rider to represent India at YOG 2026

3. On 08.05.2026, an information brochure was issued in respect of YOG 2026. The brochure stipulated that the selection process would commence with the notification of eligibility criteria by the Fédération Équestre Internationale (“**FEI**”), and that entries from National Olympic Committees were required to be received by 25.09.2026. Thereafter, the FEI issued eligibility criteria for Show Jumping, requiring a rider to incur not more than eight penalties in any one of the specified competitions to be



issued a Certificate of Capability (“**COC**”), which constituted a precondition for participation in the national-level selection trials.

4. On 08.11.2025 and 10.11.2025, the Youth Olympics qualifying rounds, namely Competition 3, Category A of the FEI Jumping World Challenge, were conducted at Bengaluru, Karnataka, and Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, respectively, on courses laid out in accordance with the FEI Regulations, 2026 (“**Regulations**”).

5. On 28.12.2025, the then Acting President of EFI circulated EFI Selection Criteria for YOG 2026 (“**Selection Criteria**”), as approved by the Executive Committee of EFI.

6. Between 14.12.2025 and 02.05.2026, the Appellant obtained eight qualifying scores in CSI1\* competitions in Europe. On 21.04.2026, FEI published the YOG 2026 timeline, which, *inter alia*, prescribed 15.05.2026 as the deadline for COC, 24.08.2026 as the opening of Sport Entries, and 25.09.2026 as the deadline for definite entries.

7. On 08.05.2026, EFI uploaded on its website the Selection Criteria. Clause 5 thereof provided that, where more than one athlete obtained a valid COC within the FEI deadline, EFI would assess the athletes with reference to the technical difficulty and level of competitions completed, consistency of international performance, recency of results relative to YOG 2026, stability of the horse-rider combination, and championship readiness.

8. On 08.05.2026, the father of the Appellant forwarded to EFI the Appellant’s official FEI record for the period from 27.04.2023 to 02.05.2026, containing the aforesaid eight qualifying scores in CSI1\*



competitions in Europe. On 08.05.2026, an identical selection criteria, as the Selection Criteria was uploaded on the website of EFI.

9. EFI *vide* email dated 12.05.2026, addressed to FEI, sought inclusion of the Appellant to represent India in YOG 2026 and confirmation of the Appellant's eligibility, as prescribed by FEI, for issuance of the COC, on the basis the Appellant's performances at FEI competitions at Lier, Opglabbeek and Gent.

10. At its meeting held on 13.05.2026, the Selection Committee considered the candidatures of the Appellant and Mr. Neil Kendall based on their results for 2025–2026. The Selection Committee selected the Appellant to represent India at YOG 2026 and designated Mr. Neil Kendall as the reserve rider. It also approved the COCs of all seven riders proposed by EFI based on the results achieved at the FEI Jumping World Challenge held at Bengaluru on 08.11.2025 and results obtained up to May 2026.

11. Thereafter, on 19.05.2026, EFI, acting through its Chief Technical Advisor, affirmed the Appellant's selection as India's representative for YOG 2026 on the recommendation of the Selection Committee and directed that the Appellant's entry, together with the COC, be forwarded to FEI.

12. By email dated 19.05.2026, EFI informed FEI that the Appellant had been selected to represent India at YOG 2026. On 20.05.2026, FEI confirmed that seven Indian riders, including the Appellant, had obtained valid COCs for YOG 2026.



13. By email dated 10.06.2026 (“**Email**”), EFI informed the seven riders holding valid COCs that they had been included in the long list of riders under consideration for YOG 2026 and were required to submit their latest competition results and performance records by 25.07.2026. The Email further stated that the final selection would be based on an objective assessment of recent performances, consistency of results, competitiveness at CSI1\*/CSI2\* events, and overall merit.

14. By email dated 10.07.2026 (“**Clarification Email**”), EFI clarified the Selection Criteria by stating that, for the purposes of MER and performance consistency, only results obtained at CSI1\*/CSI2\* events conducted at a minimum height of 130 cm would be considered.

15. Thereafter, by email dated 10.06.2026, EFI informed the seven riders holding valid COCs that the deadline for submission of results had been extended to 25.07.2026. EFI further stated that the Selection Committee would review all eligible performances, that the riders had been included in the list of candidates under consideration to represent India at YOG 2026, and that they were required to submit their latest competition results and performance records by 25.07.2026. The email further provided that the final selection would be based on an objective assessment of recent performances, consistency of results, competitiveness at events, and overall merit.

16. By communication dated 10.06.2026, the Appellant’s father responded to the aforesaid email and informed EFI that the Appellant’s scores from the requisite competitions would be submitted.



17. On 15.06.2026, the Selection Committee selected the Indian show jumping team for the Asian Games 2026 in accordance with the Selection Criteria, and EFI accepted and acted upon that selection.

18. The Appellant thereafter obtained two additional qualifying scores in France on 21.07.2026 and 22.07.2026. The Appellant's father forwarded those results to EFI on 26.07.2026 and 03.08.2026, respectively.

19. On 06.08.2026, the Selection Committee concluded the process for selecting one rider and one reserve rider to represent India at YOG 2026 ("**Selection Decision-I**"). Respondent No. 5 was ranked first and selected to represent India, the Appellant was ranked second and designated as the reserve rider, and Respondent No. 6 was ranked third. Selection Decision-I was published on EFI's website on 10.08.2026.

20. The Appellant submitted a representation dated 13.08.2026 challenging Selection Decision-I on the ground that the Selection Committee had failed to consider her qualifying score of 1.35 cm achieved at the CSI1\* Grand Prix at Opglabbeek on 02.05.2026.

21. Pursuant to the Appellant's representation dated 13.08.2026, EFI issued a notice on 16.08.2026 ("**Review Notice**") proposing that the Selection Committee reconsider Selection Decision-I.

22. On 17.08.2026, the Appellant also instituted proceedings before this Court, bearing Diary No. 343736/2026, challenging Selection Decision-I as published on 10.08.2026. Those proceedings were not pursued after the Appellant became aware of the Review Notice, by which EFI suspended



Selection Decision-I and directed the Selection Committee to reconvene and reconsider the selection.

23. On 18.08.2026, this Court passed an order in W.P.(C) 11935/2026, titled *Shubh Chowdhari through his Father v. Equestrian Federation of India & Ors.*, directing EFI to decide the representation dated 13.08.2026 challenging Selection Decision-I.

24. On 24.08.2026, the Selection Committee reviewed Selection Decision-I. In the minutes of its meeting dated 24.08.2026 (“**Impugned Minutes**”), the Selection Committee assessed the results of the eligible riders for the period from 08.05.2026 to 25.07.2026 and also treated the Appellant’s result dated 01.05.2026 as her COC result. On the basis of that assessment, Respondent No. 5 was ranked first, Respondent No. 6 second, and the Appellant third (“**Selection Decision-II**”).

25. By resolution dated 27.08.2026 (“**Impugned Resolution**”), EFI accepted the recommendations recorded by the Selection Committee in the Impugned Minutes. Consequently, Respondent No. 5 was recommended to represent India at YOG 2026, Respondent No. 6 was designated Reserve Rider 1, and the Appellant was designated Reserve Rider 2.

26. Aggrieved by the Impugned Minutes and the Impugned Resolution, the Appellant instituted the Writ Petition, *inter alia*, challenging the adoption of the period from 08.05.2026 to 25.07.2026 as the qualifying/selection window. The Appellant contended that this amounted to a retrospective alteration of the rules after the selection process had commenced and resulted in the exclusion of seven qualifying scores



obtained before 08.05.2026. The Appellant further sought a recalculation of the order of merit after taking into account all qualifying scores obtained by each eligible rider during the period from 08.11.2025 to 25.07.2026.

27. By the Impugned Judgment, the learned Single Judge disposed of the Writ Petition, holding that the alleged retrospective alteration of the qualifying/selection window from 08.11.2025 to 08.05.2026 was not borne out by the material on record and declining to interfere with Selection Decision-II.

28. Aggrieved by the Impugned Judgment, the Appellant preferred the present Appeal.

### **SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF THE APPELLANT**

29. Mr. Kirtiman Singh, learned Senior Counsel for the Appellant, made the following submissions:

29.1. Neither the Selection Criteria nor the version uploaded on 08.05.2026 prescribed 08.05.2026 as the opening date, or stipulated that results obtained prior thereto would be considered solely for the purpose of obtaining the COC and excluded from the order of merit. The only opening date specified in the Selection Criteria is 01.04.2025, since the COC was required to be obtained during the period from 01.04.2025 to 15.05.2026.

29.2. Clause 5 of the Selection Criteria requires an assessment of five qualitative factors, namely, the technical difficulty and level of competition, consistency of international performance, recency of results, stability of the horse-rider combination, and championship



readiness. While the reference to “*recency of results*” may permit the Selection Committee to assign appropriate weight to a particular result, it cannot justify the retrospective exclusion of all results obtained before the Selection Criteria were uploaded on EFI’s website.

- 29.3. Respondent Nos. 1 and 2 fixed the period from 08.05.2026 to 25.07.2026 for the first time in the Impugned Minutes. The Impugned Minutes themselves record that the window “*should be fixed*” from 08.05.2026 to 25.07.2026 because the Selection Criteria had been published on 08.05.2026.
- 29.4. The learned Single Judge held that no document identified 08.11.2025 as the opening date for consideration of the results. Equally, however, no document identified 08.05.2026 as such opening date. Respondent Nos. 1 and 2 had themselves stated that the Selection Criteria did not prescribe an opening date. Nevertheless, the learned Single Judge upheld 08.05.2026 as the opening date for consideration of the results.
- 29.5. EFI had designated Competition 3, Category A, held at Bengaluru on 08.11.2025 and Meerut on 10.11.2025, as the YOG Qualifying Competition. The Impugned Judgment records that 31.12.2025 was the deadline for National Federations/National Olympic Committees to secure eligibility to participate in YOG 2026, and that India secured its quota through Mr. Neil Kendall’s zero-penalty round at Bengaluru on 08.11.2025. A qualifying/selection



window purportedly commencing on 08.05.2026 could not encompass a mandatory stage whose deadline had expired on 31.12.2025, at which India secured its quota and six of the seven riders obtained the COCs that qualified them for inclusion in the order of merit.

- 29.6. Annexure IV to Selection Decision-I tabulated the results obtained on 08.11.2025 and 10.11.2025 by six of the seven riders considered for final selection, without stating that those results were considered solely for the purpose of obtaining the COC.
- 29.7. The finding in the Impugned Judgment that Annexure IV to Selection Decision-I recorded the recent results obtained by eligible athletes between 08.05.2026 and 25.07.2026, together with one score forming the basis of each athlete's COC, is contrary to Annexure IV itself. Annexure IV does not contain the parenthetical expression "*between period 08.05.2026 to 25.07.2026*" referred to in the Impugned Judgment.
- 29.8. Respondent No. 1 had itself acted upon the Appellant's results obtained prior to 08.05.2026. The Minutes dated 13.05.2026 record that the results of the Appellant and Mr. Neil Kendall "*between 2025-2026*" were reviewed, whereupon the Appellant was selected to represent India at YOG 2026.
- 29.9. The Minutes dated 13.05.2026 further record that all seven riders proposed by EFI had obtained the requisite results on the basis of the FEI Jumping World Challenge held at Bengaluru on



08.11.2025 and results obtained up to May 2026. On 19.05.2026, EFI's Chief Technical Advisor affirmed the Appellant's selection *"based on the Selection Criteria laid out for the same"*, and EFI informed FEI that the Appellant *"has been finally selected"*. These documents demonstrate the manner in which Respondent Nos. 1 and 2 understood and applied the Selection Criteria. They also submitted before the learned Single Judge that the comparison undertaken on 13.05.2026 was confined to results available up to 02.05.2026. It follows that the Selection Committee had compared results obtained prior to 08.05.2026.

29.10. The Minutes dated 13.05.2026 and the communications dated 19.05.2026 were not disclosed to the Appellant when Selection Decision-I was published. They were subsequently placed before the learned Single Judge in the Writ Petition after counsel for the Appellant obtained them from sources other than Respondent Nos. 1 and 2. The communications exchanged in May 2026 were thereafter filed by Respondent Nos. 1 and 2 along with their reply dated 14.09.2026 in the Writ Petition.

29.11. The contention that the selection recorded on 13.05.2026 arose from an erroneous understanding of the final-entry deadline does not alter the contents of the Minutes or the communications dated 19.05.2026. Nor is there any minute, resolution, notification, email, or other communication recording the recall or cancellation of that selection or setting out reasons for reopening the process.



29.12. Respondent Nos. 1 and 2 also adopted inconsistent standards in relation to expressions of interest. Mr. Jaiveer Varma's request was declined on the grounds that he had not communicated his intention within the stipulated period and did not possess a COC. Conversely, the selection dated 13.05.2026 was sought to be displaced on the ground that only the Appellant and Mr. Neil Kendall had expressed their intention by that date. Respondent No. 1 admitted the remaining five riders into the process on 10.06.2026, included their results dated 08.11.2025 and 13.05.2026 in Annexure IV to Selection Decision-I, and thereafter relied upon their earlier absence to displace the Appellant's selection dated 13.05.2026.

29.13. Clause 1 of Article 015 of the EFI Statute requires the proceedings of the Selection Committee to be recorded in minutes, signed, and forwarded to EFI's Executive Committee for ratification. If the selection recorded on 13.05.2026 had been recalled, that decision was likewise required to be formally recorded. The Appellant could not have acquiesced in the reopening of the process when the relevant documents had not been disclosed to her.

29.14. The communication dated 10.06.2026, informing the seven COC holders of their inclusion in the long list, likewise did not prescribe 08.05.2026 as the opening date. It required the riders to submit their latest competition results and performance records by 25.07.2026. Thus, while the communication prescribed a closing



date, it neither excluded results obtained prior to 08.05.2026 nor indicated that such results would be disregarded. All ten qualifying scores obtained by the Appellant were available before the conclusion of the selection process.

29.15. The finding in the Impugned Judgment that the Appellant had not sought clarification regarding consideration of her earlier results overlooks the correspondence exchanged between the Appellant and EFI from 08.05.2026 to 06.08.2026. Respondent No. 1 possessed the complete record of her results for 2025 and 2026 and had informed the Appellant that the Selection Committee would review all eligible performances. At no stage was the Appellant informed that results obtained prior to 08.05.2026 would be excluded. The Appellant therefore had a legitimate expectation that the qualifying scores already obtained by her and placed before Respondent No. 1 would not subsequently be disregarded by the retrospective fixation of an opening date.

29.16. Having found that no document identified any opening date, the learned Single Judge was bound to conclude that none had been prescribed, rather than infer one from the circumstances after the selection process had concluded. Reliance was placed on the decisions of the Supreme Court in **Tej Prakash Pathak v. High Court of Rajasthan**, (2025) 2 SCC 1, and **K. Manjusree v. State of Andhra Pradesh**, (2008) 3 SCC 512, in support of the proposition that a recruitment/selection process commences with the



advertisement and that any subsequent alteration of the eligibility criteria prevailing at its commencement is impermissible.

29.17. Respondent Nos. 1 and 2 relied upon Clause 3.2 of Article 15 of the EFI Statute to contend that the Selection Criteria became operative upon being uploaded on 08.05.2026. However, the same requirements of approval, promulgation, and publication were not applied to the extension of the closing date from 15.05.2026 to 25.07.2026. The material placed on record discloses no approval, amendment, or publication extending that date. Respondent Nos. 1 and 2 cannot invoke the EFI Statute to exclude the Appellant's earlier results while disregarding its requirements for extending the closing date.

29.18. If publication of the Selection Criteria were determinative under the EFI Statute, the selection process would have remained open only from 08.05.2026 to 15.05.2026. None of the results on the basis of which Respondent Nos. 5 and 6 were placed in the order of merit falls within that period.

29.19. The relief sought by the Appellant does not require a fresh selection exercise. The Appellant seeks only the deletion of the retrospectively introduced opening date and a uniform recalculation in accordance with the numerical-count method already adopted in the Impugned Minutes. The results of all seven eligible riders are available and have been verified on the FEI platform. No fresh competition or assessment of additional material is required.



- 29.20. The relief sought by the Appellant is severable, since the opening date specified in Paragraph Nos. 3(ii) and 5(iv) of the Impugned Minutes may be set aside while retaining the methodology prescribed in Paragraph No. 5(vi). The decision in **Anush Agarwalla v. Ad-Hoc Committee for Governance of Equestrian Federation of India & Ors.**, Neutral Citation: 2026:DHC:5375-DB, is distinguishable. In **Anush Agarwalla (supra)**, the matter required further competition and the movement of horses, whereas YOG 2026 involves borrowed horses and entails neither requirement.
- 29.21. The final-entry deadline was therefore not an impediment to the relief sought in the Writ Petition; rather, it warranted an expeditious limited recalculation. Consideration of the earlier qualifying scores would not prejudice the other riders, since Selection Decision-I itself took into account results obtained by six riders on 08.11.2025 and 10.11.2025. The Appellant seeks only the uniform consideration of results.
- 29.22. In the present case, the class of affected athletes is confined to the seven riders included in the long list. Upon uniform application of the numerical-count method, the Appellant has ten qualifying scores, Respondent No. 5 has five, and Respondent No. 6 has four.
- 29.23. The sole reason stated in the Impugned Minutes for fixing 08.05.2026 as the opening date is that the Selection Criteria were uploaded on that date. However, the Impugned Judgment did not examine Paragraph Nos. 3(ii), 5(iv), and 5(vi) of the Impugned Minutes, which respectively address the fixation of the relevant



period, the restriction governing re-tabulation, and the consequential order of merit. Nor did it examine the statement of Col. Jagat Singh (Retd.) that the date had been fixed retrospectively, the Minutes dated 13.05.2026, or the communications exchanged in May 2026 that were relevant to the determination of the selection window.

29.24. The challenge founded on legitimate expectation arose from EFI's treatment of an amendment to the selection criteria for the Asian Games 2026, where the amendment was applied prospectively and earlier results were preserved. The Appellant therefore had a legitimate expectation, reinforced by EFI's past practice, that results already obtained would not be retrospectively excluded. The Impugned Minutes identify no provision or prior communication authorising 08.05.2026 as the opening date. The direction in the Impugned Judgment requiring EFI to prescribe such a date in future itself recognises that the present Selection Criteria did not clearly prescribe one. In the absence of any provision permitting an opening date to be fixed after completion of the relevant performances, 08.05.2026 could not retrospectively be introduced to exclude the Appellant's qualifying scores.

### **SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF EFI AND THE SELECTION COMMITTEE:**

30. Mr. Tanmaya Mehta, learned Counsel for EFI and the Selection Committee, made the following submissions:



- 30.1. The selection window did not commence on 08.11.2025, and no published document inviting participation from eligible athletes prescribed any such window. The performances recorded on 08.11.2025 were relevant solely for obtaining the COC and did not mark the commencement of the final selection process for YOG 2026.
- 30.2. The Appellant's reliance on the communication dated 28.12.2025 to contend that the selection window commenced on 08.11.2025 is misplaced, as the said communication was a private communication addressed solely to the Appellant's father. It did not constitute publication of the Selection Criteria or an invitation to all eligible athletes to participate. The learned Single Judge rightly held that publication on EFI's website was mandated by the EFI Statute. Accordingly, 08.05.2026 constituted the commencement date of the selection window, being the date on which the Selection Criteria were published and made available to the public at large.
- 30.3. The deadline of 15.05.2026 specified in the Selection Criteria, upon which the Appellant relies, pertained solely to the obtaining of a valid COC. Respondent No. 1 initially proceeded on the understanding that 20.05.2026 was the deadline for submission of COCs to FEI. In fact, that date was the deadline for submitting the list of eligible riders who had obtained a COC on or before 15.05.2026. FEI did not accept Respondent No. 1's communication naming the Appellant as the selected candidate as



constituting a final selection. By email dated 20.05.2026, FEI merely confirmed receipt of valid COCs in respect of all seven eligible riders.

- 30.4. The Appellant was never informed that she had been finally selected, nor was any other candidate notified of any such selection. The recommendation dated 13.05.2026 could not constitute a concluded final selection when five other eligible COC holders had not been considered.
- 30.5. The Impugned Judgment records that the selection dated 13.05.2026 was not relied upon as an independent basis for seeking the Appellant's selection. It was relied upon solely in support of the contention that the selection window commenced on 08.11.2025, namely, to demonstrate that results obtained prior to 08.05.2026 had been considered.
- 30.6. The email dated 10.06.2026 was addressed to all seven candidates, and the Appellant thereafter participated in the process without objection. From 10.06.2026 until Selection Decision-I, the Appellant submitted only scores obtained after 08.05.2026. Even when called upon to furnish an Excel sheet, the Appellant provided only post-08.05.2026 scores, although the sheet itself did not specify 08.05.2026 as the commencement date. All candidates thus proceeded on the basis that the relevant window commenced on 08.05.2026 and concluded on 25.07.2026.



- 30.7. The review of Selection Decision-I was itself sought by the candidates. The Appellant participated in that review and submitted her representation dated 13.08.2026. The validity of the decision rendered upon review, namely, the Impugned Minutes and the Impugned Resolution, cannot be assailed merely because the ultimate outcome was adverse to the Appellant.
- 30.8. Every cut-off date may adversely affect a candidate or alter the pool of eligible or selected candidates. The relevant question is whether the adoption of the date of publication of the Selection Criteria as the cut-off date, consistently with the EFI Constitution, was so arbitrary that no reasonable person could have adopted it. That threshold is plainly not met in the present proceedings.
- 30.9. The rules governing the selection process were not altered after the process had commenced. The rule asserted by the Appellant, namely, that the selection window commenced on 08.11.2025, never existed. The window commenced on 08.05.2026 and was thereafter extended until 25.07.2026. The Selection Criteria were not challenged in the Writ Petition and cannot be challenged at this stage.
- 30.10. The Appellant cannot claim an automatic entitlement to selection over other meritorious candidates who, despite being eligible, were not duly considered in the truncated and erroneous process conducted on 13.05.2026. The purpose of the subsequent process was not to facilitate the selection of one candidate on a technical



ground, but to ensure that the candidate chosen to represent the country was determined in accordance with the prescribed criteria and based on comparative merit.

30.11. In view of the foregoing, the present Appeal merits dismissal.

### **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

31. We have considered the submissions made on behalf of the Parties and perused the material placed on record.

32. The principal grievance raised by the Appellant in the present Appeal is that Respondent Nos. 1 and 2 retrospectively altered the qualifying/selection window from 08.11.2025–25.07.2026, which, according to the Appellant, had been adopted and applied in Selection Decision-I, to 08.05.2026–25.07.2026.

33. The Appellant submitted that 08.11.2025 stood established as the opening date of the selection window by Annexure IV to Selection Decision-I. It is further contended by the Appellant that EFI had designated Competition 3, Category A, held at Bengaluru on 08.11.2025 and at Meerut on 10.11.2025, as the YOG Qualifying Competitions. Annexure IV to Selection Decision-I evaluated the results obtained on 08.11.2025 and 10.11.2025 by six of the seven riders considered for final selection, without stating that those results were considered solely for the purpose of obtaining the COC.

34. EFI and the Selection Committee, on the other hand, contend that 08.11.2025 was never prescribed or adopted as the opening date for



consideration of the results, and that the results dated 08.11.2025 and 10.11.2025 appearing in Annexure IV to Selection Decision-I were considered solely for the purpose of the COC. Accordingly, the Selection Criteria were published on EFI's website on 08.05.2026 and, consequently, the results obtained between 08.05.2026 and 25.07.2026, together with the result forming the basis of the COC, were considered for preparation of the order of merit.

35. The material placed on record discloses that on 01.08.2025, EFI designated Competition 3, Category A, of the FEI Jumping World Challenge, proposed to be held at Bengaluru on 08.11.2025 and at Meerut on 10.11.2025, as the YOG Qualifying Competition. FEI thereafter confirmed that those competitions would qualify as a "*Youth Olympic Games Selected Event*".

36. The Minutes dated 13.05.2026 further disclose that the Selection Committee considered the candidature of the Appellant and Mr. Neil Kendall based on their results for 2025–2026 and selected the Appellant to represent India at YOG 2026. The Minutes also addressed the COCs of all seven riders proposed by EFI based on the results obtained at the FEI Jumping World Challenge held at Bengaluru on 08.11.2025 and results obtained up to May 2026. EFI thereafter communicated the Appellant's selection to FEI on 19.05.2026.

37. On 20.05.2026, FEI confirmed that all seven riders had obtained valid COCs. Thereafter, by communication dated 10.06.2026, EFI informed all seven riders that they had been included in the list of riders under consideration for final selection and called upon them to submit their latest competition



results and performance records by 25.07.2026. The final selection was thereafter conducted among all seven eligible riders.

38. The Appellant's submission that 08.05.2026 was not expressly prescribed as the opening date does not advance her case. The absence of an expressly prescribed opening date cannot, by itself, establish that the period from 08.11.2025 to 25.07.2026 constituted the selection window, as contended by the Appellant.

39. The Selection Criteria were uploaded on EFI's website on 08.05.2026. Thereafter, on 20.05.2026 FEI confirmed that seven Indian riders had obtained valid COCs for YOG 2026. By communication dated 10.06.2026, EFI informed those seven riders that they had been included in the long list for YOG 2026. The communication further stated that final selection would be based on an objective assessment of recent performances, consistency of results, competitiveness at events, and overall merit, and required the riders to submit their latest competition results and performance records by 25.07.2026.

40. The communication dated 10.06.2026 brought all seven eligible riders within a common process for final selection. The Appellant participated in that process and obtained two further qualifying scores on 21.07.2026 and 22.07.2026, which were forwarded to EFI. The Selection Committee thereafter conducted the selection on 06.08.2026 and ranked Respondent No. 5 first, the Appellant second, and Respondent No. 6 third.

41. There is no dispute that the Minutes dated 13.05.2026 record that the results of the Appellant and Mr. Neil Kendall "*between 2025-2026*" were



reviewed and that the Appellant was selected to represent India at YOG 2026. Those Minutes must, however, be considered in the context of the process undertaken at that stage. The material placed on record makes it evident that only the Appellant and Mr. Neil Kendall were included in the comparative assessment conducted on 13.05.2026. Following FEI's confirmation on 20.05.2026 that all seven riders had obtained valid COCs, EFI by communication dated 10.06.2026 expressly informed all eligible riders, including the Appellant, that they had been included in the long list and that final selection would be undertaken on the basis of the parameters specified therein.

42. The Appellant thereafter participated in that process and submitted her subsequent results for consideration. Accordingly, irrespective of the position recorded on 13.05.2026, the process in which the Appellant subsequently participated involved a comparative assessment of all seven eligible riders for final selection.

43. The selection of the Appellant recorded in the Minutes dated 13.05.2026 cannot, therefore, be regarded as having concluded the selection process for YOG 2026.

44. The Appellant further contended that results obtained prior to 08.05.2026 were not treated consistently, inasmuch as the Impugned Minutes fixed 08.05.2026 as the opening date while also considering the Appellant's result dated 01.05.2026 for preparation of the order of merit. The inconsistency identified by the Appellant cannot, in the absence of any stipulation in the Selection Criteria or any other material on record, justify



acceptance of 08.11.2025 as the opening date. The material placed on record, however, discloses no stipulation prescribing 08.11.2025 as the opening date. The learned Single Judge rightly held that treating 08.05.2026 as the commencement date for consideration of recent results in Selection Decision-II did not amount to a retrospective alteration of the Selection Criteria.

45. The record shows that the Selection Criteria were uploaded on EFI's website on 08.05.2026, that the riders were thereafter called upon to submit their latest results by 25.07.2026, and that this period was adopted for the comparative assessment. The learned Single Judge also took note of the uncertainty occasioned by the way the selection process unfolded in the present case. The observations in the Impugned Judgment emphasising the need for greater clarity, transparency, and consistency in future selection processes conducted by EFI were absolutely necessary in the facts of the present case. We find ourselves in agreement with the learned Single Judge and reiterate the same.

46. An athlete representing the country at an international sporting event requires not only physical ability, but also mental and emotional fortitude. It is therefore imperative that the selection process does not occasion avoidable uncertainty for participating athletes, as disputes arising from ambiguity may themselves impede their preparation for the event. EFI must accordingly ensure that the selection criteria and timelines are framed, communicated, and implemented with sufficient clarity to obviate disputes of this nature.



47. The lack of clarity in the present selection process does not, however, by itself, establish the Appellant's case. The Appellant seeks redrawing the order of merit by treating 08.11.2025 as the opening date for consideration of the results. In the absence of material establishing that date as the commencement of the relevant period, the relief sought cannot be granted.

48. In these circumstances, we find no good ground to interfere with the conclusion arrived at by the learned Single Judge declining to interfere with the Impugned Minutes, the Impugned Resolution, and, consequently, Selection Decision-II.

49. Accordingly, the present Appeal is dismissed. All pending applications, if any, also stand disposed of. There shall be no order as to costs.

**TEJAS KARIA, J**

**DEVENDRA KUMAR UPADHYAYA, CJ**

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2026/HK**