

## **Daniella Mei Lee Means's case for the reference of the Secretary of ad hoc Investigational and Dicipinary Committee**

### **Background information**

Ms. Means joined HKWPA as ordinary member and has participated in the Championships organized by our Association in 2016 and 2017. On July 31, 2017, she e-mailed to HKWPA and requested to compete in Asian Classic Powerlifting Championship in Dec, 2017. (Appendix 1 -e mail communication in 2017). Our Association supported her request although she did not compete and have a score in the Hong Kong Powerlifting Championship in April, 2017, which is a usual pre-requisite for a lifter to join overseas competition. We informed her our funding principle and she understood. We follow the funding principle we have been laid down all along. We have a system for funding good lifters and the system has been used for the past 10 years and it can be found in our website and prospectus of all the Annual Powerlifting and Bench Press Championships . (Appendix 2- funding system). She also signed an Agreement with our Association. (Appendix 3-agreement). She gave a deposit of HK\$5000 as a confirmation and bought a set of track suit with HK\$600 and a T shirt with HK\$100. This is the practice of HKWPA all along to request lifters to submit HK\$5000 as a confirmation to participate in overseas championship. She then represented Hong Kong, participating in the Asian Classic Powerlifting Championships in December, 2017. She got 2 gold medals and 2 silver medals. Her participation in this Championship was fully funded with air ticket, accommodation and participation fee and payment was arranged by our Association. In the same Championship, 2 other lifters were also fully funded by our Association, including Mr. Tyler Man. Another lifter was funded 90% of the competition expenses.

Her deposit was returned shortly after the competition. When she came to collect the deposit and also the trophy for overall 2<sup>nd</sup> runner-up, she expressed that she wanted to participate in the World Classic Powerlifting Championship in 2018. Tentatively, we support lifters to participate in other international championships. She understood our procedure that she needed to confirm with a deposit of \$5000. As she collected back the \$5000, that was an indication that she was not determined to compete in World Classic Powerlifting Championship at that point of time. She was informed that there is a pre-requisite of getting a score in the Hong Kong Powerlifting Championship in 2018. The possibility that she might not be funded was explained.

There was no communication between Ms Means and HKWPA afterwards until mid-March.

### **Course of events of Ms Means's case:**

Mr. Man sent a Whatsapp message to our President, Mr. Kim-Won Pok, on Feb 22, 2018, informing Mr. Pok that both he and Ms. Means would like to participate in the World Classic Powerlifting Championships in June 2018. (Appendix 4 – Mr Pok 's WhatsApp

communication with Ms Man in mobile phone) However Ms. Means has not communicated directly with our Association by any means (including telephone, e-mail, or any form of text messaging including Whatsapp or Wechat) about this issue. She has never indicated that Mr. Man is to act as her representative. Mr. Pok discussed with Mr. Man on the phone about resources, as Mr. Man is a Junior age group lifter, our Association is of the view that all Junior lifters should be accompanied by a team manager on overseas competitions. (Appendix 5 – Mr Pok’s statement) IPF also requests nations to provide with the nominated lifter’s coach and team manager in the nomination form (Appendix 6- nomination form of World Classic Powerlifting Championship). The coach needs to sign and submit a coach responsibility form during weigh in (Appendix 7- Coach responsibility form).

It is standard practice in our Association to arrange air tickets and accommodations for lifters for every overseas competition. As most of the expenses are non-refundable, all lifters participating in overseas competitions need to submit a deposit of HK\$5000 as a confirmation of acceptance of their nomination. The deposit will be refunded based on published guidelines after the competition. Ms. Means has participated in overseas competition before and she should be fully aware of these arrangements. She never turned up again to pay \$5000 to confirm her commitment to participate in the World Classic Powerlifting Championship. For competitions at a later date than the World Classic Powerlifting Championship, there are committed lifters to participate in World University Powerlifting Cup in July, 2018 and World Powerlifting Championship in Nov, 2018 and they have paid a deposit of \$5000 to HKWPA as a confirmation.

Our Association uses a pre-determined amount of funding from LCSD every year to send lifters to participate up to 10 international championships. The championships include Asian Classic PL Championship, Asian Classic BP, Asian Geared PL Championship, Asian geared BP Championship, World Classic PL Championship, World Classic BP Championship, World University Powerlifting Cup, World Geared PL Championship, World Geared BP Championship and World Sub-junior and Junior PL Championship. (Appendix 8- IPF calendar in 2018-2019).

After discussion among our President, and Executive Committee members by phone, our Association has decided to send lifters to 6 overseas championships in 2018, including Asian geared Powerlifting Championship, Asian geared Bench Press Championship, Asian classic Powerlifting Championship, World geared Powerlifting Championship, World University Powerlifting Cup and Asian Classic Powerlifting Championship. Our Association would not to send a team to the World Classic Powerlifting Championship. Mr Pok has communicated our Association’s decision to Mr. Man (Appendix 5 – Mr Pok’s statement).

Ms. Means came to the Wanchai Sports Ground Weightlifting room on March 19, 2018 and talked to Mr. Pok requesting to participate in the World Classic Powerlifting Championships. Mr. Pok through translation by Ms Ip informed her of our Association’s decision as stated above. Mr. Pok welcomed her to participate in the championships that we have decided to bring lifters

including the Asian Geared and Classic BP Championship, World Geared Powerlifting Championship, Asian Classic Powerlifting championship.

On 19/3/2018, Ms Means sent an e-mail to secretariat of IPF inquiring to compete on an individual capacity. IPF secretariat answered that nomination must be made through one's national Association. The email was cc copied to Mr Pok (Appendix 9- Ms Means's email to IPF office and reply)

On 20/3/2017, she created a petition on the online platform [www.gopetition.com](http://www.gopetition.com) and requesting for signatures to support her request. ( Appendix 10- webpage)

The original wordings of the petition are as follow:

The HK Powerlifting Association will not let me compete at the World IPF Classic Championships this June in Canada. This is despite the fact that:

- I won gold at the Asia Powerlifting Championships Dec 2017
- I hold all of the HK national records for my category
- All flights and accommodations would be paid by myself, as they have in the past

This government funded association has refused to nominate me to compete, due to 'limited resources.' This is despite the fact that every single athlete pays their own accommodation and flights to compete. I would have done so for the World Championships. This association would rather have me compete in other Asian competitions, and win medals, so that they can receive more funding. But not at the World Champs.

Dec 2017: The HKWPA told me I would have to travel on my own, and pay for myself.

Feb 2018: The HKWPA told me I would have to also pay for a HKWPA committee member to accompany me.

Mar 2018: The HKWPA told me that the 'executive committee' has decided not to send anyone this year - that I should wait to compete in the Asian Championships again and win a medal.

I need your signature to help me show how WRONG they are.

Our Association would like to point out multiple untrue statements, parts highlighted in red are not based on facts:

1. For her participation in the Asian Classic Powerlifting Championships in December, 2017, it was fully funded by our Association. She has wrongly mentioned that all lifters were self-funded.
2. Most of the lifters we invite and send to overseas championships receive funding from our Association. Regulations for funding support of lifters in overseas competition are posted on our website. Her remarks regarding every lifter being self-funded is untrue.

3. The funding support from LCSD to participate in overseas competition remains the same in 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 (HK\$137916) (Appendix 11- LCSD funding document). There is no increase of funding despite her winning gold medals in the Championship in 2017. She was funded HK\$10667 for the whole trip, which is 7.7% of the funding of the year.

4. After collecting her trophy for the Asian Classic Powerlifting Championships from us in December 2017, she did not have any direct communication with our Association until mid March, including phone calls, e-mails, letters, texts (Whatsapp etc). We only know of her intention to participate in the World Classic Powerlifting Championships through the Whatsapp communication of Mr. Man to Mr. Pok. All communication was made by Mr. Man. He represented himself and he did not express that he was also representing Ms. Means. It is untrue that our Association communicated with her in February 2018.

5. We have clearly informed her that she can compete in the World Powerlifting Championships and other Asian Championships. It is untrue that our Association wants her to wait until she competes in an Asian Championship again and wins a medal.

On the same day, Ms. Means also sent an e-mail to IPF President, IPF General Secretary and APF President. The original e-mail (Appendix 12- e mail of Ms Means to IPF and APF) is as follows:

Dear Mr. Parage, Mr. Soltani, and Mr. Keller,

My name is Daniella Means, a Hong Kong powerlifting athlete who won gold at the u63kg female category at the Asia IPF Championships 2017. I am also a Hong Kong national record holder in all lifts.

The Hong Kong Weightlifting and Powerlifting Association have refused to nominate me to come to the World Classic IPF Championships due to 'limited resources.' This is despite the fact that I have always paid for my own expenses, membership fees, and competition fees, and have made it clear I would do the same to come to Canada.

The HKWPA told me in December 2017 that I would have to travel on my own, and pay for myself.

In February 2018, they told me I would have to also pay for a HKWPA representative to accompany me. Last week, they told me that the 'HK executive committee' has decided not to send anyone this year - that I should wait to compete in the Asian Championships again and win a medal.

Representing the country that I was born and raised in means everything to me. I have sacrificed other opportunities to train for this event in Canada, and the fact that the HKWPA have given me such late notice, the chance of me competing elsewhere has been ruined because of my training cycle and planning. Even when willing to pay for 100% of own expenses, I am barred from competing as they do not believe I am likely to win a medal. This is completely unsportsmanlike behaviour in my opinion, and does not support athletes which is the purpose of an association; to promote their sport, and the athletes.

I am writing to you in the hope that I may be allowed to represent Hong Kong, and be a representative from Asia at the World Championships. To raise the level, we must compete against those better than us. Asia needs to improve, and to improve, we need to be allowed, and ABLE to compete on the world stage. All I desire, is the chance to compete.

Yours sincerely,

Daniella Means

APF president directed her e mail to Ms Ip. Ms Ip have reported the course of events to the APF President, IPF President and IPF General Secretary in details. ( Appendix 13- email reply of Ms Ip)

The wordings highlighted in red are untrue:

Besides the points mentioned above, after the Asian Classic Powerlifting Championships, Mr. Pok met her again for the first time in March, 2018. Our Association on principle does not emphasize on the winning of medals. We emphasize that our lifters demonstrate good sportsmanship, and to attain their personal best. Besides sports performance, good personal character and integrity are qualities that heavily influence our choice of Hong Kong representatives.

On the same day, South China Morning Post (SCMP) gave a call to office of HKWPA asking about her case and the staff who can speak good English was on leave. We requested SCMP staff to call us again on the following Monday. The next day, a column article appeared in SCMP.

She also gave incorrect information in an article in South China Morning Post. The original article ( Appendix 14 – original article) is as below:

Asian powerlifting champion Daniella Means has had her hopes of representing Hong Kong on the world stage crushed by a “backwards” organisation that has left her considering leaving for the United States. On winning her category at the Asian Classic Powerlifting Championships in India three months ago, the Hong Kong Weightlifting and Powerlifting Association told the 28-year-old she could compete at the World Classic Powerlifting Championships in June, a decision Means said it had now reneged on.

“What this brings to light is just how backwards and bureaucratic it is,” said Means, who has also represented Hong Kong at rugby sevens. “It really angers me and I have come to the point where I have possibly taken powerlifting as far as I can go in Hong Kong.

“I’m a Hong Kong passport holder, born and raised in Hong Kong, so representing my country really does mean a lot to me and I would love that country to continue to be Hong Kong.

“The only choice this leaves me with is to potentially try to represent the US because I’m also a US passport holder.”

Means, who competes in the under-63kg category and holds a host of Hong Kong records, has started a petition to get the decision overturned and holds out some hope she can successfully plead her case by the April 6 nomination deadline.

She has contacted the International Powerlifting Federation but was told she must have the consent of the HKWPA to compete.

“I asked [the HKWPA] straight after, will I be able to compete at the World Championships, and they said ‘yes, yes, yes, that’s fine, you’ll have to pay yourself but you can compete’,” Means said.

“That was fine by me because I paid for India on my own and you basically get reimbursed depending on how well you do. Since I won gold, I got reimbursed.

“Last month they said to me and another athlete that if we want to compete we would also have to pay for a member of the association to accompany us.

“At the time I was completely outraged, because this is a government-funded federation. Then I went to visit them last week and they told me ‘the executive committee has had a meeting and we have decided due to limited resources we are not going to send anyone to the World Classic Championships’.”

Asked to respond, a HKWPA spokesperson said it could only do so by Monday.

Means competes in the classic version of powerlifting rather than equipped – where lifters wear equipment to help them – but is a victim of the fact only two classic lifters from Hong Kong want to attend the world championships.

“They told me ‘in order to send you to the World Classic Championships we need a team, we can’t just send two people because we have limited resources and limited manpower’,” said Means, adding that the HKWPA has advised to her to wait for the Asian championships later this year.

“I think because of the structure of how athletics works in Hong Kong, winning a medal means you get more funding.

“If it’s not possible for me to win a medal, then why bother? They would rather go and compete at these smaller regional competitions and win than allow their athletes to pit themselves against the best.”

Means expects backlash for speaking out, but hopes it will ensure more opportunities for Hong Kong athletes across the board.

“There is a local championship next month that I’m signed up to compete in, but I fully expect them to kick me out,” she said.

“Possibly they think that I’m too outspoken, that I’m too westernised and I don’t have the right attitude. To me, there is no risk for them in letting me compete because I have always paid for myself.

“Since I started making a big fuss about all of this I’ve had numerous athletes reach out to me about the politics behind this and how it doesn’t promote Hong Kong athletes.

“I’ve had people from the dragon boating team, the rowing team, the karate team, body builders. A lot of body builders want to do powerlifting as well because they like being strong and they were told they have to pick between body building and powerlifting and they’ve just gone to body building because in powerlifting they don’t help you, they make it difficult.”

Multiple similar inaccuracies have been clarified above. SCMP did not call to follow up afterwards. On March 28, 2018, our staff noticed that there was an email enquiry dated March 21, 2018 that was missed as he was on leave. It is untrue that our Association is pending the answer of questions raised by SCMP. In addition, our Association has never commented on the sport of Body Building. Ms Ip has replied SCMP’s request that she can be communicated by e-mail or face to face discussion. (Appendix 15- e mail from SCMP and reply). There is no further request till present.

Ms Means sent an email on 13/4/2018, the day before the local championship, to withdraw her participation for the local Powerlifting Championship. (Appendix 16- e mail of Ms Means) She sent another email to Mr Pok on 17/4/2018 informing that she will participate in Australia Fitness Challenge Powerlifting Championship. (Appendix 17- e mail of Ms Means on 16/4/2018) As the said Championship is non-IPF approved and HKWPA did not approve her to participate. The consequence was informed to her by Whatsapp and she was advised to withdraw from the competition (Appendix 18- letter to Ms Means dated 19/4/2018). However she did participate. She has violated HKWPA rules Clause 47(a) (Appendix 19 - relevant part of HKWA constitution.) She has also violated IPF rules and regulation 14.9: **Participating of Non IPF competition, any lifter, coach, referee or official who competes or participates in an international powerlifting or Bench Press competition not organized, sanctioned or approved by the IPF shall not be permitted to take part in any IPF international or regional competition for a period of 12 months from**

**the date of that non-approved competition; and 14.10.5: Any lifter who participates in a contest with other countries without permission of his national federation is subjected to suspension and expulsion. ( Appendix 20- relevant part of IPF Constitution & By-laws).**

Ms. Means gave untrue information through multiple media platforms and have posed negative impact to the image of our Association. Our Association works fairly, judiciously and transparently. Our Association has decided to form an ad hoc Investigational and Disciplinary Committee in the Emergency Executive Meeting on March 24,2018. This complies with Clause 17 of HKWPA Memorandum & Articles) ( Appendix 19 - relevant part of HKWA memorandum & articles). This panel here is holding a hearing to fully investigate and clarify this incident. Involved individuals will assist us by providing full disclosure of the facts necessary to clarify the issue. The hearing is open to all members of our Association. Non-members who has expressed concern about the matter are also invited to hear and understand the case. It will proceed whether Ms Means is present or absent for the hearing. The deliberation will be passed back to EC for further consideration.

The memorandum and articles of HKWPA Clause 17-(i) & (k) ) ( Appendix 19 - relevant part of HKWA memorandum & articles) empowers the EC of HKWPA in terminating or suspension membership of a member.