

Judy Simons  
President  
Bermuda Olympic Association  
19<sup>th</sup> June 2021

### **Appeal of BOA's decision to reject universality**

Dear Judy,

I would like to take this opportunity to make a final appeal to the Bermuda Olympic Association ("BOA") to change their policy on Universality at the Olympic Games that has impact on Athletics and Swimming. I will speak specifically to swimming as I have full understanding of the process and the history of the process in Bermuda. The International Olympic Committee ("IOC") approved the qualification procedure that was produced by Federation Internationale de Natation ("FINA") which is the International Federation of swimming. That qualification process has been accepted by our regional partners Pan Am Sports, Union Americana de Natacion (the American Swimming Union or "UANA"), the Central American and Caribbean Amateur Swimming Confederation ("CCCAN") and by Bermuda Swimming (the Bermuda Amateur Swimming Association ("BASA") which is the national sports governing body.

I know that all aspects of the sport of swimming were considered when creating the standards and selection process. The sport of swimming is represented by the most countries in the world at the Olympics and now been considered the most popular sport at the games. FINA has spent considerable time and effort on long-term athlete development, and have considered what support and guidance is needed for all levels of sports nation.

From a long-term athlete perspective, the two candidates for the Tokyo Olympics for Bermuda Jesse Washington and Madelyn Moore both learned how to swim and were trained by local coaches in local clubs from an early age. They progressed to national team participation where they represented Bermuda at our regional competitions. After progressing through the age group ranks with much success that has been covered by our local press, they continued to develop. They have participated at Youth Commonwealth Games, Youth Olympic Games, Youth World Championships and Junior Pan Pacific Swimming Championships. The next step in their progression was CAC Games, Pan Am Games and FINA World Championships. They both continued their education and received NCAA scholarships from their swimming. They have been recognized locally and internationally for their ability in this sport. The ability level and the performances that these athletes have demonstrated have progressed continually throughout development from the age group to the senior level. There have been plateaus during their journey, which is expected for any athlete and should not be used as mark against their progress. I felt it was important to give some insight in to the journey so far so that I can frame my appeal to you.

Bermuda is a small town in the middle of the ocean that produces talent in sports at a very high level. We have reached the highest heights but have also produced athletes that did not reach the top, but their level deserves our full celebration. We all have an important role to play in developing our young people to be positive well-adjusted members of our country. The people that dedicate their lives to sports know the positive impact that can be created and want to help to give opportunities for that impact to be realized. In the history of Bermuda sports, we have one athlete who has reached the podium, several that came close and countless others that participated at the games, flew the flag high and made our country proud. It can be easy to fall for chasing podiums and the accolades that come

from that achievement. Deep down we know that it is the journey to reach the games and the dream of reaching the games that is important. We have young people in Bermuda that have negative influences all around them and making the right choices has become more challenging for each generation. When we have young people that have made the right choices, sacrificed social time, family time and potential experience for work, we have to hold them up. They are the role models for the next generation that we hope will choose the path.

Being on the Olympic journey is a very difficult path to follow. When athletes reach the point of development to senior athletes, they make professional sacrifices in order to stay focused and dedicated to their sport. Yes, there is some financial support but not at the level that happens in much larger sports nations with more resources and opportunities. When FINA created the qualification process, they considered all of these factors and the IOC accepted their process. This is why I appeal to you for a change in the BOA position which is currently to overrule the policy that has been put in place by FINA, approved by the IOC and adopted by our region and Bermuda swimming. We should be in the business of advocating for our athletes, supporting them in every way possible and giving them all opportunities that are provided. FINA has invited Madelyn Moore and Jesse Washington to participate in the Tokyo Games. The cost is not a burden on Bermuda. FINA has taken into consideration the worldwide pandemic that has interrupted training and competitions for over a year. The athletes that are not professional with large country funding have been impacted the most by the pandemic.

If the BOA is not willing to sign the document that needs to be submitted by June 20<sup>th</sup> it will have made a decision to restrict the Bermuda athletes to the A standard only for selection. This standard was set from the top 14 times from the 2016 Olympics. This would mean that all athletes in Bermuda would be asked to be at the top 14 level just to compete at the Olympics. With our world champion Flora Duffy being ranked 19<sup>th</sup> at the moment it highlights what level of restriction this BOA decision creates. How did we reach a point of creating further obstacles for our young Bermudians when our international partners have welcomed them with open arms? What data has the BOA used and what analysis have they done that has justified overruling the International Federation that governs our sport? How is this going to help our young Bermudians? How does this help to lift the spirit of our country?

If this decision was because we now only expect to reach podiums, we need to be reminded of the following that I know you will recognize.

*“OLYMPISM IS A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE, EXALTING AND COMBINING IN A BALANCED WHOLE THE QUALITIES OF BODY, WILL AND MIND. BLENDING SPORT WITH CULTURE AND EDUCATION, OLYMPISM SEEKS TO CREATE A WAY OF LIFE BASED ON THE JOY FOUND IN EFFORT, THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF GOOD EXAMPLE AND RESPECT FOR UNIVERSAL FUNDAMENTAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES. “*

*“The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.”*

We have been given an open door by FINA and the IOC. I know that they have been in contact with you to try to persuade you to reconsider. Please take a moment to consider why any member of the BOA would want to encourage Bermuda to close this door.

- What is the positive outcome that is expected by overruling FINA in this matter?
- Is the BOA sure that the result they are looking for will be achieved by crushing the dreams of these young Bermudians?
- And is the BOA advocating on behalf of Bermuda's athletes with this restrictive policy?

We have already had to read the story of a young Bermudian athlete that cannot attend because Bermuda did not accept the spot for him. Look at his progress which shows that he was deserving of that opportunity. When you look back will you say you did everything you could to promote sport in Bermuda and develop our young people?

Please sign the letter from FINA and return the form.

Let Bermuda celebrate our young people. Let's work together to help them through obstacles and not create unnecessary ones. I know that there are Bermuda families waiting with anxiety in hope that you reconsider. I thank you for your attention and hope that you will support my appeal to you.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Smith  
Head National Swimming Coach



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