



2026:DHC:8046



\$~

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

%

Judgment reserved on: 15.09.2026
Judgment pronounced on: 17.09.2026
Judgment uploaded on: 18.09.2026

CNR No. DLHC010412862026+ **W.P.(C) 12760/2026 & CM APPL. 59237/2026, CM APPL. 62726-27/2026**

VAASVI KHAITAN MINOR THROUGH HER FATHER
MR VEDANT KHAITANPetitioner

Through: Mr. Kapil Modi with Mr. Shiv
Verma and Mr. Shorya Goel,
Advocates

versus

AD-HOC COMMITTEE FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF
EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION OF INDIA
& ORS.Respondents

Through: Mr. Tanmaya Mehta, Ms. Niyati
Kohli, Mr. Rishab Parikh, Mr.
Pinank Mehra and Ms. Isha
Kakkar, Advocates for R-1 and R-
2
Mr. Ruchir Mishra, Ms. Rupali
Sinha, G.P., Mr. Sanjiv Kumar
Saxena, Mr. Mukesh Kumar
Tiwari, Ms. Reba Jena Mishra,
Ms. Poonam Shukla and Mr.
Mukul Yadav, Advocates
Ms. Rupali Sinha, G.P. for R-
4/UOI
Mr. Balbir Singh, Senior
Advocate with Mr. Kartik Yadav,



2026:DHC:8046



Ms. Sumedha Chopra, Mr. Duvva Pawan Kumar, Mr. Chirag Madan, Mr. Sai Krishna Kumar and Ms. Shradha Gupta, Advocates for R-5

Ms. Manini Brar and Mr. O. P. Harsh Singh Munday, Advocates for R-6

Ms. Kumudavalli Seetharaman and Ms. Geetika Vyas, Advocates for Indian Olympic Association

CORAM:

HON'BLE DR. JUSTICE SWARANA KANTA SHARMA

J U D G M E N T

DR. SWARANA KANTA SHARMA, J

1. The petitioner has approached this Court by way of the present writ petition, praying for grant of following reliefs:

“a. issue a writ of certiorari or any other appropriate writ, order or direction quashing and setting aside, to a limited extent mentioned in prayer (b) below, the Impugned Minutes dt. 24.8.26 & Resolution dt. 27.8.26 (**Anx P-1**) because they constitute a retrospective change in the rules of the game after the game was played, by shortening the established eight-month qualifying/ selection window of 8.11.25–25.7.26 and replacing it with a new two-month window of 8.5.26–25.7.26, thereby excluding seven of the Petitioner’s eight valid qualifying scores obtained before 8.5.26 from YOG selection, in brazen violation of Constitution Bench in *Tej Prakash Pathak*, which upheld, *K. Manjusree (3J.)*;

b. may please quash and set aside:

i. para 3(ii) of the impugned Minutes dt. 24.8.26, insofar as it retrospectively introduces 8.5.26 as the opening date and shortens the established eight-month qualifying/selection window of 8.11.25–25.7.26 to a new two-month window of 8.5.26–25.7.26;

ii. para 5(iv) of the impugned Minutes dt. 24.8.26, insofar as it confines the re-tabulation to 8.5.26–25.7.26 and thereby excludes the valid qualifying scores obtained before 8.5.26 from YOG



selection;

iii. the consequential order of merit declared in para 5(vi) of the impugned Minutes; and

iv. paras 5–6 of the Resolution dt. 27.8.26, insofar as they accept and adopt the aforesaid retrospectively altered qualifying/selection window, re-tabulation and consequential order of merit (**Anx P-1**);

c. issue a writ of mandamus, or any other appropriate writ, order or direction, directing R-1 to restore and uniformly apply the original eight-month qualifying/selection window of 8.11.25–25.7.26 and recalculate the order of merit after including all qualifying scores achieved by every eligible rider during the said window, including the seven qualifying scores excluded solely because they were obtained prior to 8.5.26, strictly in accordance with the criterion recorded in para 5(vi) of the impugned Minutes dt. 24.8.26, which states, “... considering all events of 1.30 mt height and above ...”;

and, to avoid any ambiguity, further direct R-1, while recalculating the aforesaid order of merit, to include all similarly situated scores obtained in similarly situated competitions by all riders, as per the scores included in Annexure-I to the impugned Minutes (**Anx P-1**);

d. issue a writ of mandamus, or any other appropriate writ, order or direction, directing R-1 to publish a fresh order of merit within 24 hours of completing the exercise directed in prayer (c) above and communicate the same to the Petitioner and all other riders through all electronic modes;

e. pending disposal of the instant writ, restrain R-1 to R-4 from forwarding, confirming or acting upon R-5’s (Sresht) definite entry for YOG 2026, or direct that any entry already forwarded shall remain provisional and expressly subject to the orders of this Hon’ble Court;

f. direct R-1 to preserve and produce the complete original and electronic selection record, including representations, emails, FEI verification material, spreadsheets, score sheets, calculation sheets, meeting records, metadata, drafts and internal communications; and.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

2. The facts of the case, as discernible from the petition, are that the petitioner, Vaasvi Khaitan, is a 16-year-old international show-jumping athlete who seeks to represent India at the Youth Olympic Games, Dakar, Senegal, 2026 [hereafter ‘**YOG, 2026**’]. The



2026:DHC:8046



Fédération Équestre Internationale (**FEI**) had prescribed the minimum eligibility requirements for participation in the YOG, 2026, including the requirement of a Certificate of Capability (**COC**). The petitioner states that, between December 2025 and May 2026, she obtained eight qualifying scores in 1.30 m/1.35 m competitions. On 28.12.2025, the Equestrian Federation of India (**EFI**) communicated its Selection Criteria for YOG, 2026, as approved by its Executive Committee, to the petitioner *via* email. It is stated that the same criteria was subsequently uploaded by EFI on 08.05.2026. According to the petitioner, neither of these criteria prescribed 08.05.2026 as the commencement date of the qualifying or selection period, nor did they provide that qualifying scores obtained before that date would be excluded from consideration. The petitioner's father had, on 08.05.2026, emailed EFI and physically delivered her official FEI record containing the eight qualifying scores obtained prior to that date. The petitioner thereafter states that EFI, by email dated 10.06.2026, informed her that her COC had been submitted to the FEI and that she had been approved for consideration. She was also informed that her latest competition results were required to be submitted by 25.07.2026. The petitioner further states that she obtained two additional qualifying scores on 21.07.2026 and 22.07.2026. These results were supplied to EFI by her father on 26.07.2026 and again on 03.08.2026 in the prescribed format, and EFI acknowledged receipt of the same. Thus, according to the petitioner, EFI was in possession of all ten of her qualifying scores



2026:DHC:8046



before the conclusion of the original selection process.

3. The original selection process was concluded by the Selection Committee on 06.08.2026 and the result was published by EFI on 10.08.2026 [hereafter '**Selection Decision-I**']. In the said selection, respondent no. 5, Sresht Raju Mantena, was selected to represent India at the YOG, 2026, while the petitioner was placed as the reserve rider. The petitioner states that the Selection Committee, while recording its findings regarding the relevant cut-off dates, referred to 15.05.2026 as the deadline for issuance of the COC and 25.07.2026 as the deadline for submission of results, but did not record any finding fixing 08.05.2026 as the commencement date or excluding qualifying scores obtained prior thereto. Aggrieved by Selection Decision-I, the petitioner submitted a representation dated 13.08.2026. Her principal grievance was that the qualifying scores obtained by her before 08.05.2026 were being excluded from consideration, despite there being, according to her, no prior communication informing her that such scores would not be counted for determining the order of merit. She further raised an apprehension of bias on account of an alleged sponsorship/benefactor relationship between EFI and the father of respondent no. 5. Thereafter, on 16.08.2026, EFI issued a Review Notice proposing reconsideration of the concluded selection. The petitioner also approached this Court in relation to the selection process. On 18.08.2026, this Court passed an order in *Shubh Chowdhari through his Father v. Equestrian Federation of India & Ors.*, W.P.(C) 11935/2026, pursuant to which



2026:DHC:8046



EFI was required to reconsider the selection. It is stated that the petitioner thereafter sent reminders dated 18.08.2026, 19.08.2026 and 20.08.2026 regarding her grievances. The review hearing was thereafter conducted by the Selection Committee on 24.08.2026. The petitioner's father appeared before the Committee and, *inter alia*, objected to the exclusion of the qualifying scores obtained prior to 08.05.2026. It was specifically pointed out that the Selection Criteria communicated in December 2025 were identical to those uploaded on 08.05.2026 and that, according to the petitioner, exclusion of the earlier qualifying scores had never been communicated to her during the selection process.

4. On 27.08.2026, the Ad-Hoc Committee for the Governance of EFI issued the fresh selection decision, comprising the Minutes dated 24.08.2026 of the Selection Committee, which is impugned before this Court [hereafter '**Selection Decision-II**'], whereby respondent no. 5, Sresht Raju Mantena, was retained at rank 1, being recommended to represent India at YOG, 2026, while the petitioner herein was downgraded to rank 3, from previous rank 2, and recommended as reserve rider 2, and respondent no. 6, Shubh Chowdhari, was upgraded to rank 2, from previous rank 3, and recommended as reserve rider 1.

5. According to the petitioner, while reviewing the concluded selection, the Ad-Hoc Committee and the Selection Committee retrospectively treated the period from 08.05.2026 to 25.07.2026 as



the relevant qualifying/selection window, thereby excluding seven of her eight qualifying scores obtained prior to 08.05.2026. She further alleges that only one of those earlier scores was taken into account for the purpose of her COC, despite EFI having already submitted her COC to the FEI.

6. Aggrieved thereby, the present petition has been filed before this Court.

RIVAL CONTENTIONS

7. The *petitioner's case* is that the aforesaid approach in Selection Decision-II effectively altered the basis of selection after Selection Decision-I had already been concluded and published. According to her, neither the Selection Criteria dated 28.12.2025, nor the identical criteria uploaded on the website on 08.05.2026, nor any communication issued to the athletes before the conclusion of Selection Decision-I, stated that 08.05.2026 would operate as the commencement date for counting qualifying scores or that qualifying scores obtained prior thereto would be excluded from the order of merit. The petitioner's case is also that, if all qualifying scores obtained during the qualifying/selection period which, according to her, commenced on 08.11.2025 and continued until 25.07.2026 are counted uniformly, she would have ten qualifying scores, as against five of respondent no. 5 and four of respondent no. 6, Shubh Chowdhari. On this basis, she claims that she ought to have been placed first in the order of merit and selected as the rider to represent



India at the YOG, 2026. Her principal grievance is that the basis on which her qualifying performances were assessed was altered retrospectively, resulting in the exclusion of seven of her eight qualifying scores obtained before 08.05.2026. She accordingly seeks reconsideration of the selection on the basis of the criteria which, according to her, were in force when the selection process was undertaken.

8. The **learned counsel appearing for the petitioner** argues that the impugned Selection Decision-II is wholly arbitrary and unsustainable, as respondent nos. 1 and 2, after conclusion of the selection process on 06.08.2026 and publication of the result on 10.08.2026, retrospectively altered the very basis on which the candidates had been assessed. It is contended that the Selection Criteria approved by EFI on 28.12.2025 and thereafter uploaded in identical form on 08.05.2026 nowhere prescribed 08.05.2026 as the opening date of the qualifying or selection window, and Clause 6 thereof merely stipulated that the selection process would remain open until 15.05.2026, aligned with the FEI's deadline for obtaining the COC. It is therefore submitted that there was no basis whatsoever for the Selection Committee, in the review proceedings undertaken after the selection had already concluded, to introduce 08.05.2026 as a new opening date and thereby exclude seven of the petitioner's eight valid qualifying scores obtained prior thereto. The learned counsel contends that the prejudice caused to the petitioner is manifest, since, if all qualifying scores obtained during the



2026:DHC:8046



established period from 08.11.2025 to 25.07.2026 were considered uniformly, the petitioner had ten qualifying scores as against five obtained by respondent no. 5 and four obtained by respondent no. 6, thereby placing the petitioner first in the order of merit. It is further argued that EFI was in possession of all the petitioner's qualifying scores before the selection process had concluded, having received the eight earlier scores on 08.05.2026 and the two subsequent scores dated 21.07.2026 and 22.07.2026 on 26.07.2026, which were duly acknowledged by EFI. The learned counsel emphasises that at no point between 08.05.2026 and the publication of the concluded selection on 10.08.2026 was the petitioner informed that scores obtained prior to 08.05.2026 would be excluded from the comparative assessment and, on the contrary, EFI had itself required the petitioner to furnish her latest competition results by 25.07.2026. The learned counsel also draws attention to the petitioner's COC dated 20.05.2026, signed by the President of EFI and submitted to the FEI, wherein the petitioner's qualifying result was recorded as the CSI1* Grand Prix score obtained at Lier on 15.03.2026, and argues that the impugned Selection Decision-II nevertheless proceeded on the basis that her result dated 01.05.2026 would be considered as her COC result, despite the said date not appearing on the actual COC. It is, therefore, contended that the review exercise was not a bona fide clarification of an existing criterion but an impermissible alteration of the selection framework after the relevant performances had been completed and the comparative consequences of applying the altered



criterion had become known, resulting in the petitioner being deprived of the benefit of seven otherwise valid qualifying scores and consequently being relegated to the position of second reserve, despite her otherwise standing first in the order of merit.

9. The **learned counsel appearing for respondent nos. 1 and 2**, i.e. the Ad-Hoc Committee of EFI and the Selection Committee, opposes the writ petition and argues that the petition proceeds on an erroneous premise that an established eight-month qualifying or selection window commencing from 08.11.2025 existed and was subsequently curtailed by the impugned Selection Decision-II. It is contended that no such opening date had ever been prescribed in the Selection Criteria, and that 08.11.2025 was merely the date of the FEI Jumping World Challenge held at Bengaluru, through which the India-based riders had obtained their COC, and was not the commencement of any YOG selection window. The learned counsel argues that the Selection Criteria uploaded on 08.05.2026 prescribed the requirement of 'recency of results' and that the selection process was accordingly undertaken on the basis of results obtained after publication of the criteria, with one COC result being considered for each rider. It is argued that the same methodology was applied both in the original Selection Decision-I on 06.08.2026 and upon reconsideration on 24.08.2026, while passing the impugned Selection Decision-II; consequently, there was no question of any retrospective alteration of the rules or exclusion of results which had earlier formed part of the selection process. The learned counsel further submits that



2026:DHC:8046



the petitioner herself, in her representation dated 13.08.2026 and in the first writ petition instituted thereafter before this Court, proceeded on the basis of the methodology adopted on 06.08.2026 and raised a grievance only with respect to the non-consideration of her result dated 02.05.2026, seeking application of the tie-breaker so as to place her first. The plea that an eight-month selection window existed and that seven additional results ought to be considered has been raised only subsequently, after the petitioner became aware of the tabulation and realised that inclusion of those earlier results would alter the order of merit in her favour. It is therefore contended that the present claim is an afterthought and amounts to an attempt to enlarge the field of results after the comparative assessment has already been undertaken. The learned counsel also contends that the consideration of the petitioner's results on 24.08.2026 was, in fact, undertaken to her benefit, since the Selection Committee included one pre-window result for her so as to place her at par with the India-based riders whose COC results had been considered, and the Committee accordingly selected her 01.05.2026 result as the more favourable result for that purpose. The allegation that the said treatment amounts to fabrication is therefore denied. It is further argued that the selection of a single rider for the YOG, 2026 involved an assessment of qualitative factors including recency, consistency, technical level and championship readiness, and was not a simple mathematical exercise in which every result obtained by an athlete over an indefinite period was required to be counted. It is stated that



2026:DHC:8046



permitting the petitioner to introduce results obtained between December 2025 and April 2026, when other riders planned and undertook their international competition schedules in June and July 2026 on the basis of the published criteria, would itself cause prejudice and inequity to the other participants. As regards the allegation of bias, the learned counsel argues that the same is a mere bald allegation and is unsupported by any material, as no member of the Selection Committee or Ad-Hoc Committee is alleged to have any relationship with respondent no. 5 or his family, and the order of merit had been prepared on the basis of results verified from the FEI database through a uniform methodology. The learned counsel therefore argues that the petitioner is, in substance, seeking a direction requiring the Court to substitute its own assessment for that of the expert selection body and to redraw the order of merit on the basis of a selection window which had never existed, and that no ground for interference with the impugned Selection Decision-II is made out.

10. The **learned counsel appearing for respondent no. 6** argues that the Selection Criteria was first uploaded on EFI's website on 08.05.2026, in accordance with Clause 15, sub-clause 3.2 of the EFI Statute, and therefore the selection process could commence only from that date. It is contended that any prior private communication of the criteria or consideration of results obtained before 08.05.2026 could not form part of the selection process, having not been promulgated in accordance with the EFI Statute. The learned counsel



further submits that the COC itself was required to be obtained by 15.05.2026 and was a threshold requirement for participation in the YOG, 2026. It is therefore contended that results obtained prior to the publication of the Selection Criteria, or even prior to the date on which the riders became eligible through the COC, could not be treated as part of the selection process. It is further submitted that, in any event, Selection Decision-I dated 06.08.2026 had already been withdrawn pursuant to the Addendum dated 16.08.2026 and, therefore, any challenge based on the manner in which the earlier decision considered the petitioner's pre-08.05.2026 results does not survive. The learned counsel also contends that the petitioner had a higher number of disqualifying results involving more than eight penalties as compared to the other two competing riders. It is contended that respondent no. 6 had the lowest penalty points amongst the three riders in the qualifying results and that, in assessing recent and consistent performance, EFI was required to consider results obtained during the period from 08.05.2026 to 25.07.2026, in accordance with the Selection Criteria dated 08.05.2026 and 10.06.2026. It is accordingly prayed that the present petition be dismissed.

11. The **learned counsel appearing for respondent no. 5** contends that respondent no. 5 has been selected to represent India at the YOG, 2026 purely on the basis of his merit and the assessment undertaken by the Selection Committee. It is contended that the original selection was subsequently reviewed upon consideration of



the representations made by the participating riders, and the impugned Selection Decision-II was taken after such reconsideration. It is therefore argued that no ground for interference is made out and the present petition deserves to be dismissed.

12. During the pendency of the present petition, there were some subsequent developments as well. The **learned counsel appearing for the petitioner** argues that a signed record has come to light showing that the petitioner had already been unanimously selected by the Selection Committee on 13.05.2026 to represent India at the YOG, 2026, with Neil Kendall named as the reserve rider. It is contended that the said minutes were signed by all three members of the then Selection Committee and were subsequently shared with the petitioner's counsel by its Chairman, Maj. J.S. Ahluwalia (Retd.), who has stated that he was never informed that the said selection had been set aside or reopened and is willing to affirm the minutes on affidavit. It is further submitted that the said selection was made on the basis of the COC deadline of 15.05.2026 and the petitioner's qualifying results available up to that date, and that the selection window was thereafter extended by EFI up to 25.07.2026, which the petitioner also satisfied. The learned counsel contends that, despite the earlier selection, the same Selection Committee members subsequently participated in the fresh selection and review proceedings dated 06.08.2026 and 24.08.2026, respectively, without disclosing or referring to the petitioner's selection dated 13.05.2026. It is argued that the minutes dated 13.05.2026 were thus suppressed



from the petitioner, the subsequent Selection Committees and this Court, and that the subsequent proceedings cannot be sustained without examining the authenticity and legal effect of the said minutes. The learned counsel further submits that the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), being the National Olympic Committee responsible for forwarding India's definite entry for the YOG, 2026, ought to independently verify the authenticity of the minutes and the circumstances in which the earlier selection was disregarded before any definite entry is forwarded.

13. The **learned counsel appearing for the IOA** confirms that the minutes dated 13.05.2026 have been independently verified and are authentic.

14. The **learned counsel appearing for respondent nos. 1 and 2**, while not disputing the genuineness of the minutes dated 13.05.2026, submits that the said minutes cannot be treated as the final selection of the petitioner for the YOG, 2026. It is submitted that, at that stage, only two riders, i.e., the petitioner and Neil Kendall, had approached the Federation expressing their intent to participate, and the comparison recorded in the minutes was confined to the results available up to 02.05.2026. The learned counsel submits that the minutes themselves contemplated that all seven riders who subsequently obtained their COCs would be placed on the long list, and that the remaining five eligible riders had not even been considered at that stage. It is further submitted that the events



2026:DHC:8046



preceding and following the meeting dated 13.05.2026 are material to appreciate the nature of the said recommendation. According to the learned counsel, EFI was, at that stage, proceeding under an erroneous understanding that the deadline for communicating the selected rider to the FEI was 20.05.2026. It is submitted that the FEI had, in fact, sought confirmation of the COCs, and had not communicated any deadline of 20.05.2026 for final selection of the rider. Consequently, the recommendation made on 13.05.2026 was communicated to the FEI on 19.05.2026 and 20.05.2026 along with the petitioner's COC, but on 20.05.2026 the FEI only confirmed receipt of valid COCs in respect of all seven riders, including respondent no. 5, thereby placing all seven riders on the long list. The learned counsel submits that, once the eligibility of all seven riders was confirmed, EFI consciously commenced a fresh and comprehensive merit-based exercise rather than treating the preliminary recommendation of 13.05.2026 as final. In this regard, reliance is placed upon the communication dated 10.06.2026 addressed to all seven COC holders, including the petitioner, whereby each rider was expressly informed that he or she had been included in the long list and that the final selection would be based upon an objective assessment of recent performances, consistency of results, competitiveness at CSI1*/CSI2* events and overall merit. It was further expressly communicated that the latest competition results and performance records were required to be submitted by 25.07.2026, which was stated to be the cut-off date for consideration.



2026:DHC:8046



The learned counsel argues that the petitioner herself thereafter participated in the process on the basis of the communication dated 10.06.2026 and submitted her subsequent results for consideration. It is contended that she was thus fully aware that the final selection was yet to be undertaken and that the process was to be conducted amongst all seven eligible riders on the basis of their recent performances. The respondents submit that this course was adopted precisely to ensure that the final selection was not confined to the petitioner and Neil Kendall, who were the only two riders who had initially approached EFI, before the eligibility of the other riders had been confirmed. The learned counsel further submits that there was, therefore, no question of suppression of the minutes dated 13.05.2026. The recommendation contained therein was placed before the Ad-Hoc Committee on 19.05.2026, communicated to the FEI, and thereafter superseded by the subsequent process communicated to all seven riders on 10.06.2026. It is pointed out that two of the members who had signed the minutes dated 13.05.2026 continued as members of the subsequent Selection Committees because of their experience, and that the composition of those Committees was known to the petitioner, who appeared before them. It is further contended that the minutes of the Ad-Hoc Committee dated 10.07.2026 themselves recorded that the final decision regarding YOG selection was yet to be taken and was required to be based strictly on the prescribed criteria and current form of the athletes. The reconstituted Selection Committee thereafter considered



the performances of all the eligible riders within the notified period and, on 24.08.2026, re-tabulated the results against the FEI data. The learned counsel submits that the subsequent selection was consequently a fresh, comprehensive and merit-based exercise and not a continuation or concealment of the preliminary recommendation dated 13.05.2026.

ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

I. Selection Window and Consideration of Earlier Performances

15. The ***first issue*** which arises for consideration in the present petition is whether, while undertaking the review which culminated in Selection Decision-II, the EFI retrospectively altered the basis of Selection Decision-I by introducing 08.05.2026 as the commencement date of the selection window, thereby excluding the petitioner's qualifying scores obtained prior to that date.

16. At the outset, this Court notes that it is undisputed that the Selection Criteria for YOG, 2026 was uploaded on the website of EFI for the first time on 08.05.2026. It is not the petitioner's case that the Selection Criteria was available on the website or otherwise made available to all the eligible athletes before the said date. The petitioner's case, *instead*, is that she had been forwarded a copy of the Selection Criteria by the Acting President of EFI through an email dated 28.12.2025, and the Selection Criteria which was uploaded on 08.05.2026 on the website is the same.



17. Insofar as this argument of the learned counsel for the petitioner is concerned, the attention of this Court has been drawn to Clause 3.2 of Article 15 of the EFI Statute, which provides as under:

“3.2. Selection Criteria will be prepared and forwarded to Executive Committee for approval. Thereafter it will be promulgated to all members of EFI, upload on its website and will be strictly adhered to. For any reason (s) in case the same is required to be amended, can be done by this Committee based on the suggestion of Executive Committee and such changes will be recorded. The decision taken by Executive Committee is final and binding.”

18. The aforesaid provision contemplates not merely the preparation and approval of the Selection Criteria, but also its promulgation to the members of EFI and its *uploading on the website*. Thus, while the petitioner relies upon the email dated 28.12.2025 sent to him, to contend that the criteria had already been communicated to her individually, the fact remains that the criteria was first made available on the website of EFI on 08.05.2026. In this Court's view, the selection process for YOG, 2026 concerns several eligible athletes and the criteria was required to be made known to all participants, and not just the present petitioner.

19. The material on record further shows that seven athletes had obtained their COC through results from the earlier period, six of whom had obtained their COC on the basis of results from November 2025, whereas the petitioner obtained her COC only in May 2026. Thereafter, as per the further criteria mentioned in email dated 10.06.2026, the eligible athletes were required to furnish their recent results up to 25.07.2026 for the purpose of the selection.



2026:DHC:8046



20. Significantly, none of the other athletes who participated in the selection process has approached this Court challenging the commencement of the selection window from 08.05.2026, nor is it reflected from the record that any of them had raised such an objection before the Selection Committee. This is relevant because the petitioner herein seeks to contend that there existed an eight-month selection window commencing from 08.11.2025. However, there is no document placed on record which identifies 08.11.2025 as the commencement date of the YOG, 2026 selection process. The said date was the date of the FEI Jumping World Challenge held at Bengaluru, through which the India-based riders obtained their COC. The mere fact that qualifying performances were obtained from that date cannot, by itself, lead to the conclusion that the YOG, 2026 selection window commenced from 08.11.2025.

21. On the other hand, as noted above, once the Selection Criteria was uploaded on the official website of EFI on 08.05.2026, the criteria specifically contemplated assessment of the 'recency of results', and the athletes were thereafter required to submit their latest competition results by 25.07.2026. In these circumstances, the Selection Committee treated the period from 08.05.2026 to 25.07.2026 as the relevant period for assessing recent performances, while also taking into account one result forming the basis of the COC of each rider. Such an approach, on the basis of the material placed before this Court, cannot be characterised as introduction of a new selection window.



22. In addition to the aforesaid, the petitioner has also relied upon the fact that her father had been communicating with EFI officials for several months and had been forwarding her competition results obtained prior to May 2026. It is contended that at no stage was he informed that those results would not be considered for the purpose of selection.

23. In this Court's opinion, these facts alone do not establish that EFI had represented to the petitioner that all such results would form part of the comparative assessment. The mere forwarding of the results of competitions by the petitioner's father to EFI by way of emails, cannot, by itself, amount to an assurance by EFI that every such result would be considered for the YOG 2026 selection. There is also no material to show that the petitioner had, prior to the conclusion of Selection Decision-I, sought any specific clarification from EFI as to whether the results obtained before 08.05.2026 would be included in the order of merit or what the precise selection window would be. Likewise, there is also no email on record to show that any official of EFI specifically acknowledged that all the results submitted by the petitioner during the last several months would be considered specifically for the purpose of selection of riders for YOG, 2026. *Accordingly*, the mere fact that such results were forwarded to EFI by the petitioner's father cannot be construed as creating any legitimate expectation that each of those results would necessarily form part of the comparative assessment for selection to the YOG, 2026.



24. However, the principal contention of the petitioner, on which the present petition has been filed, is that *Selection Decision-II altered the rules which had already been applied in Selection Decision-I*. According to the petitioner, Selection Decision-I had proceeded on the basis that results from the earlier period could be considered and that, only in Selection Decision-II, the Selection Committee introduced 08.05.2026 as the commencement date and thereby shortened the selection window. *However*, in this Court's view, this submission is not borne out by the record.

25. A perusal of Selection Decision-I does not show that the Selection Committee had treated all the petitioner's qualifying scores obtained prior to 08.05.2026 as part of her 'recent results' or had otherwise proceeded on the basis of an eight-month selection window commencing from 08.11.2025. In fact, Annexure-IV to Selection Decision-I records the recent results (between period 08.05.2026 to 25.07.2026) of the eligible athletes for the relevant period, along with one score forming the basis of their respective COC. Thus, there is no material to establish that the Selection Committee, while passing Selection Decision-I, had adopted 08.11.2025 as the opening date of the selection window. Therefore, both selection decisions proceeded on the basis of recent results during the relevant period, together with one result forming the basis of the COC. However, concededly, no COC score of the petitioner was mentioned in Selection Decision-I, whereas Selection Decision-II included her result dated 01.05.2026 for that purpose.



26. It is also pertinent to note that when the petitioner had challenged Selection Decision-I, by way of filing a writ petition before this Court, her grievance was not that seven of her earlier qualifying scores had been wrongly excluded from an eight-month selection window. The said writ petition as well as her representations submitted to the EFI principally concerned the non-consideration of her result dated 02.05.2026 at 135 cm. The petitioner sought consideration of that result and, in the subsequent review, her result dated 01.05.2026 at 130 cm, being more favourable to her, was taken into account as her COC result.

27. The argument now raised before this Court proceeds on the premise that all qualifying scores obtained from 08.11.2025 onwards were required to be considered for determining the order of merit. However, the record does not disclose that such a selection window was ever notified or adopted by the Selection Committee in Selection Decision-I. The Court is also unable to accept the submission that the review proceedings, leading to Selection Decision-II, by treating 08.05.2026 as the commencement date for consideration of recent results, amounted to a retrospective alteration of the rules. There would have been a case of retrospective alteration if the Selection Committee had, after the original selection, introduced a new criteria and applied it to performances which had already been assessed under a different notified criterion. However, the record shows that the Selection Criteria had been uploaded on 08.05.2026 on EFI's website, and the riders were thereafter called upon to submit their



latest results by 25.07.2026. The same period was considered while undertaking the comparative assessment.

28. In view thereof, this Court finds that the foundational premise of the petitioner's challenge – that an eight-month selection window commencing from 08.11.2025 had been prescribed but the same was subsequently shortened to a two-and-a-half-month window commencing from 08.05.2026 while passing Selection Decision-II – is not borne out from the record.

29. This Court, therefore, finds no merit in the petitioner's contention that Selection Decision-II altered the rules of the game by changing the commencement date of the selection process from 08.11.2025 to 08.05.2026. The challenge on this ground is accordingly *rejected*.

II. Effect, if any, of the Minutes of the Selection Committee dated 13.05.2026 on the Subsequent Selection Process

30. The *second issue* that arises for consideration before this Court is whether the minutes of the meeting of the Selection Committee dated 13.05.2026, recording the selection of the petitioner, have any bearing on the validity of the subsequent Selection Decision-II, particularly in view of the petitioner's contention that the said minutes demonstrate that results preceding 08.05.2026 were also taken into consideration.

31. Before examining the effect of the minutes dated 13.05.2026, it would be appropriate to notice the relevant timelines governing



2026:DHC:8046



participation in the YOG, 2026. As per the FEI Regulations for the Youth Olympic Games, 2026, Article 8, which deals with the deadlines for selection of Nations, eligibility standards and Certificates of Capability, prescribes 31.12.2025 as the deadline for National Federations/National Olympic Committees to gain eligibility to participate in the Youth Olympic Games. The deadline for submission of the COCs was 20.05.2026, whereas the final entry deadline was 25.09.2026. The Information Pamphlet issued in relation to the YOG, 2026 also indicates that the SEQ system for NOCs to finalise their entries was to open on 24.08.2026, with the deadline for Sport Entries being 25.09.2026. Thus, the dates relating to COCs and the date for submission of the final entry were distinct and operated at different stages of the process.

32. It is, however, clear from the record that the minutes of the meeting of the Selection Committee dated 13.05.2026 did record a decision to select the petitioner herein as the rider to represent India at the YOG, 2026. This position is also borne out from the correspondence exchanged between EFI and FEI between 13.05.2026 and 20.05.2026. The genuineness of these minutes is also no longer in dispute.

33. At the same time, it cannot be ignored that the said minutes themselves record that, at that stage, only two riders, i.e., the petitioner and Neil Kendall, had reached out with the intent to participate in YOG, 2026. Although seven riders had obtained their



COCs, there is nothing on record to show that, prior to the meeting dated 13.05.2026, all seven riders had been called upon specifically to express their interest in participating in the YOG, 2026. The remaining eligible riders were, therefore, not part of the comparative exercise undertaken on 13.05.2026 by the then Selection Committee. The respondents have also explained that the petitioner's name was thereafter communicated to the FEI in the context of the COC submission process. It is also not disputed that the deadlines of 15.05.2026 and 20.05.2026, relied upon in the correspondence/email exchange at that stage, related to the COC process and not to the final entry of the Indian contingent for the YOG, 2026. As noted above, the FEI Regulations and the Information Pamphlet make it clear that the final entry deadline was 25.09.2026. The record also does not show that, after 20.05.2026, the FEI treated the communication of the petitioner's name as the final and irrevocable entry for the YOG.

34. More importantly, much has transpired between the meeting dated 13.05.2026 and the present stage of the proceedings. On 10.06.2026, the EFI communicated to all seven eligible COC holders, including the petitioner, that they had been included in the long list of riders under consideration for selection to represent India at the YOG, 2026. The same communication expressly stated that the final selection would be based upon an objective assessment of recent performances, consistency of results, competitiveness at CSI1*/CSI2* events and overall merit. The riders were also specifically required to submit their latest competition results and



2026:DHC:8046



performance records by 25.07.2026, which was mentioned as the cut-off date for consideration.

35. The petitioner thereafter participated in the said process along with the other eligible riders. The riders participated in international competitions, submitted their subsequent results and appeared before the Selection Committee. The petitioner also submitted her subsequent results for consideration. Thus, irrespective of what was recorded in the minutes dated 13.05.2026, the position that emerged after 10.06.2026 was that *all seven eligible riders were being considered for the final selection*, on the basis of the criteria communicated to them and the results submitted up to 25.07.2026.

36. There is yet another aspect which this Court cannot lose sight of while deciding the present case. The final entry deadline for the YOG, 2026 is 25.09.2026, and only about a week remains before the said deadline. In these circumstances, it would neither be possible nor appropriate to remit the matter once again to the Selection Committee for commencing a fresh exercise on the basis of the material and events which existed several months ago. Such a course would require the Court to disregard the entire process undertaken after May 2026, in which all seven eligible riders participated, including by travelling to different countries, participating in international competitions, submitting their subsequent performance records and making their respective representations before the Selection Committee.



37. The Court must also remain conscious of the practical realities of selection for an international sporting event. The present case concerns equestrian sport, where the rider and horse combinations may be located at different places and participation in international competitions involves considerable logistical arrangements. The Division Bench of this Court, in **Anush Agarwalla v. Ad-Hoc Committee for Governance of Equestrian Federation of India and Others**: 2026 SCC OnLine Del 4965, while dealing with the selection process for the Asian Games, was faced with a similar constraint of time. The Division Bench noticed that, having regard to the impending deadline, it was logistically impracticable to conduct a further competition within the available time, particularly when the riders and horses were located at different places across the globe. The Court, therefore, refrained from interfering, keeping in view the larger interest of the sport and the participation of the Indian team. The relevant observations in this regard are as under:

“55. Accordingly, while we do not find any infirmity in the preparation of the list of Probables in terms of Clause 13 of the Selection Criteria, we are of the view that the requirements prescribed under Clauses 15(a) and 15(b) of the Selection Criteria were not duly complied with.

56. Having regard to the deadline of 15-7-2026, it is logistically impracticable to conduct a further competition within the time available, particularly since the riders and horses are located at different places across the globe and transporting horses from different locations to a common venue for conducting a competition amongst all six (6) Probables would not be possible in such a short span of time.

57. Having regard to the peculiar facts and circumstances of the present case and considering the limited time available before the deadline of 15-7-2026, we are constrained to refrain from interfering



2026:DHC:8046



with the Impugned judgment. Such restraint is warranted in the larger interest of the sport and to avoid any adverse impact on the prospects of the Indian Team participating in the Dressage Event at the Asian Games.

58. In view of the aforesaid discussion, the present Appeals are disposed of without interference with the Impugned judgment, with direction to EFI to strictly comply with the Selection Criteria henceforth.”

38. In the present case as well, the original selection was made on 06.08.2026, followed by the review process pursuant to which Selection Decision-II was taken on 24.08.2026 and adopted by the Ad-Hoc Committee on 27.08.2026. The seven eligible riders had participated in the process during this period. To now set the entire process aside and require a fresh selection exercise, particularly when the final entry deadline is 25.09.2026, would cause further uncertainty and leave very limited time for completion of the formalities necessary for India’s participation in the YOG, 2026.

39. This Court is, therefore, of the view that, in the peculiar facts and circumstances of the present case, notwithstanding the existence of the minutes dated 13.05.2026 and the fact that those minutes recorded the selection of the petitioner at that stage, it would not be appropriate to remit the matter for any further selection exercise. The said minutes have to be viewed in the context in which they were prepared and cannot be treated as determinative of the final selection process which subsequently commenced with all seven eligible riders being placed on the long list and being called upon to submit their latest performances up to 25.07.2026.



40. While observing so, this Court also remains conscious of the fact that the learned counsel for the petitioner herself, during the course of arguments, has not claimed that the petitioner ought to be declared selected merely on the basis of the minutes dated 13.05.2026; rather it was argued that the reliance upon the said minutes is essentially to demonstrate that the Selection Committee had, at that stage, considered results from 2025 as well as 2026 and, therefore, according to the petitioner, the subsequent exclusion of results preceding 08.05.2026 was impermissible. However, this Court has already, for the reasons recorded hereinabove, rejected the petitioner's contention that the selection criteria prescribed an eight-month selection window commencing from 08.11.2025, or that all qualifying results preceding 08.05.2026 were necessarily required to be considered.

41. Accordingly, the reliance placed by the petitioner on the minutes dated 13.05.2026 do not persuade this Court to interfere with Selection Decision-II dated 27.08.2026, at this stage.

42. The grounds raised by the petitioner in this regard, as well as the challenge to the exclusion of results preceding 08.05.2026, are accordingly ***rejected***. The impugned Selection Decision-II is accordingly not interfered with.

C. Before Parting: Observations for Future Selection Processes by EFI

43. **Before parting with the case, this Court is constrained to**



take note of the manner in which the selection process has unfolded in the present case. Though this Court would not ordinarily enter into the domain of policy formulation, it is considered necessary by this Court to make certain observations for the consideration of the Equestrian Federation of India, with a view to bringing greater clarity and uniformity in future selection processes and avoiding any uncertainty amongst eligible athletes. The manner in which the selection process has evolved in the present case, particularly the existence of the minutes of meeting dated 13.05.2026 of the earlier Selection Committee, is a matter which this Court views with concern. While this Court has refrained from interfering with the ultimate selection for the reasons recorded hereinabove, such uncertainty in a selection process involving athletes representing the country ought to be avoided. Therefore, to prevent such situations from arising in future and to ensure that future selection processes are conducted with greater clarity, transparency and consistency, the following suggestions are made for the consideration of EFI:

- (i) **First**, the EFI should, henceforth, consider prescribing, in clear terms, the selection window and the relevant timelines for each stage of the selection process, including the date from which performances would be considered, the cut-off date for submission of results and the date by which the final selection is proposed to be made. This would avoid any ambiguity as to which performances are eligible for consideration.



2026:DHC:8046



(ii) **Second**, while selection criteria necessarily requires a degree of discretion and flexibility, an endeavour should be made to make such criteria as specific and transparent as reasonably possible by setting out, wherever feasible, further particulars regarding the manner in which factors such as – recent performance, consistency, level of competition and other relevant parameters are to be assessed. This would ensure that the athletes are aware, in advance, of the basis on which their performances are likely to be assessed and would reduce the possibility of the interpretation of broad or open-ended criteria being left entirely to the discretion of the members of the Selection Committee at a later stage.

44. These observations are intended only to facilitate greater clarity, transparency and uniformity in future selection processes by the EFI.

45. The petition, alongwith pending application, if any, is disposed of with above observations.

46. The judgment be uploaded on the website forthwith.

DR. SWARANA KANTA SHARMA, J
SEPTEMBER 17, 2026/A