



**TAS / CAS**  
TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DU SPORT  
COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT  
TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DEL DEPORTE

**COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT (CAS)**  
**Ad Hoc Division – The XXV Olympic Winter Games in Milano-Cortina**

**CAS OG 26/05**

sitting in the following composition:

Sole Arbitrator: Ms Annett Rombach, Attorney-at-Law, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

**AWARD**

in the arbitration between

**Angela Romei**

Represented by Mr Domenico Filosa, Attorney-at-Law in Turin, Italy, and Mr Jacques Blondin, Attorney-at-Law in Zurich, Switzerland

**(“Applicant”)**

v.

**Italian Ice Sports Federation**

Represented by Mr Biagio Giancola, Attorney-at-Law in Bologna, Italy

**(“Respondent”)**

and

**World Curling  
Italian National Olympic Committee  
International Olympic Committee  
Marco Mariani  
Rebecca Mariani**

**(“Interested Parties”)**

## I. PARTIES

1. The Applicant is Ms Angela Romei (the “Applicant” or the “Athlete”), a professional curler from Italy born on 20 February 1997.
2. The Respondent is the Italian Ice Sports Federation (*Federazione Italiana Sport del Ghiaccio*, the “Respondent” or “FISG”), the governing body for ice sports (including curling) in Italy, member of World Curling. The FISG is headquartered at Milan, Italy.
3. The Applicant and the Respondent are collectively referred to as the “Parties”.
4. The Interested Parties are:
  - World Curling (the “WCF”), the world governing body for curling, headquartered in Perth, Scotland;
  - The Italian National Olympic Committee (*Comitato Olimpico Italiano*, “CONI”), the national olympic committee for Italy, member of the International Olympic Committee, headquartered in Rome, Italy;
  - The International Olympic Committee (the “IOC”), the organisation responsible for the Olympic movement, headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland;
  - Mr Marco Mariani, Technical Director of the Italian curling team, and father of Ms Rebecca Mariani;
  - Ms Rebecca Mariani, Italian curler, and daughter of Mr Marco Mariani.

## II. INTRODUCTION

5. The present case has been commenced by way of an application to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (“CAS”) Ad Hoc Division for the Milano-Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games (the “2026 OWG”) pursuant to the CAS Arbitration Rules for the Olympic Games (the “CAS Ad Hoc Rules”).
6. This matter concerns a selection dispute. The Applicant challenges her non-selection for the Italian Olympic curling team. She argues that the selection of Ms Rebecca Mariani, who was nominated by the Respondent to compete for Italy in the Olympic curling competitions (“Ms Mariani” or the “Selected Athlete”), was the result of an arbitrary and biased decision, and that she should have been selected instead of Ms Mariani.

### III. FACTS

7. The elements set out below are a summary of the main relevant facts as established by the Sole Arbitrator by way of a chronology based on the submissions of the Parties. Additional facts may be set out, where relevant, in the legal sections below.
8. On 20 January 2026, the Respondent published on its website the names of 87 Italian athletes to compete in the five ice sports at the 2026 OWG (“Selection Announcement”). The female curling team consisted of five athletes, and it included 19-year-old curler Ms Rebecca Mariani, but not the Applicant. The Applicant had been informed personally by Mr Mariani by phone about her non-selection before the publication of the selection.
9. On 21 and 22 January 2026, the decision to include Ms Mariani into the roster, and not the Applicant, was discussed intensely in the Italian and international media. The reason for the increased public attention to the Selection Announcement was the fact that the Selected Athlete is the daughter of the curling team’s technical director, Mr Marco Mariani.
10. The public pressure displayed in numerous articles compelled the Respondent to issue a public statement defending the Selection Announcement (cited, for example, by the “Curling News”):

*“The choice made by the technical director [Mr Marco Mariani], in consultation with the coaches of the individual national teams, is purely technical in nature, based on the performance of the individual athletes over the past year.”* (The Curling News, 22 January 2026)
11. On 30 January 2026, the Applicant, through her legal counsel, sent a letter to the Respondent requesting a reconsideration of the Selection Announcement. The Applicant complained that the selection process was tainted with bias and arbitrariness in view of the family relationship between Mr Mariani and the Selected Athlete. The Applicant requested the Respondent to disclose the selection report created by Mr Mariani, and to explain the selection criteria applied for the selection process. Due to the urgency of the matter, the Respondent was requested to provide such information within 24 hours.
12. On 2 February 2026, the Respondent informed the Applicant that the selection decision had been adopted *“in accordance with the powers and technical autonomy granted to the Federation by national and international sports regulations as well as in application of the selection criteria previously approved by the competent federal bodies”*. It further explained that the decision taken by the technical director was the result of a *“reasoned process, based on complex and comparative technical assessments that took into account multiple sporting and team factors”*, and that, therefore, there was no need to reconsider the Selection Announcement (the “Challenged Decision”).

#### IV. THE CAS PROCEEDINGS

13. On 4 February 2026 at 18:33 (Milan time), the Applicant filed, together with supporting evidence, an Application with the CAS Ad Hoc Division against the Respondent with respect to the Challenged Decision (the “Application”).
14. On the same day, the Applicant requested that the present procedure be “*merged and treated together*” with the procedure CAS OG 26/06, which was not accepted by the President of the CAS Ad Hoc Division.
15. On 5 February 2026 at 9:20 (Milan time), the CAS Ad Hoc Division notified the Application to the Respondent and the Interested Parties. On the same day, at 10:43 (Milan time), the CAS Ad Hoc Division notified the Parties of the composition of the Panel:

Sole Arbitrator: Ms Annett Rombach, Attorney-at-Law, Frankfurt, Germany

16. On 5 February 2026 at 12:30 (Milan time), the Sole Arbitrator issued procedural instructions to the Parties, inviting the Respondent to file its reply to the Application (“Reply”), and the Interested Parties to file an *amicus curiae* brief, by no later than 6 February 2026, at 12:00 (noon). A remote hearing was scheduled to take place on 7 February 2026, at 12:00 (noon), which was later advanced to 9:00 am in view of availability constraints of the Applicant’s witness Ms Caldart.
17. On 5 February 2026, at 16:35 (Milan time), the CAS Ad Hoc Division informed the Parties and Interested Parties that the President of the CAS Ad Hoc Division had extended the time limit for the Panel to give a decision until 7 February 2026 at 18:00 (Milan time).
18. On 6 February 2026, at 11:43 (Milan time), the IOC filed its *amicus curiae* brief. None of the other Interested Parties filed an *amicus curiae* brief.
19. On 6 February 2026, at 11:57 (Milan time), the Respondent filed its Reply.
20. On 6 February 2026, at 13:23 (Milan time), the Sole Arbitrator invited the Parties and other Interested Parties to file their positions on the IOC’s view that the CAS Ad Hoc Division has no jurisdiction in this case, by no later than 17:00 (Milan time).
21. On 6 February 2026, at 16:57 (Milan time), the Applicant filed her position on jurisdiction. The Respondent did not file any comments on jurisdiction.
22. In accordance with Article 15 lit. c of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules, the Parties and Interested Parties, to the extent set out below, participated at the hearing which was held by videoconference on 6 February 2026, from 9:00 to 10:50 (Milan time). The Sole Arbitrator was assisted by Ms Delphine Deschenaux-Rochat, Counsel at the CAS, and joined by the following persons, all attending remotely:

- for the Applicant: Ms Angela Romei, party; Mr Jacques Blondin, Mr Domenico Filosa, counsel.
  - for the Respondent: Mr Biagio Giancola, counsel.
23. Some of the Interested Parties also attended, namely the IOC: Mr Antonio Rigozzi, Mr Patrick Pithon, counsel; CONI: Mr Alessio Palombi, Head of the Sport and Olympic Office; World Curling: Mr Colin Grahamslaw, Secretary General.
24. The Panel heard evidence from Ms Violetta Caldart, former head coach of the Italian women's national curling team (from 2016 until 2024). The Applicant made a personal statement and answered questions from the Sole Arbitrator. The Parties had a full opportunity to present their cases, to submit their arguments and answer the questions posed by the Panel, and the Interested Parties could express their positions.
25. Before the hearing was concluded, the Parties confirmed that their right to be heard had been respected and that they have been treated equally.
26. The Sole Arbitrator confirms that she carefully heard and took into account in her decision all of the submissions, evidence, and arguments presented by the parties, even if these have not been specifically summarised or referred to in this Award.

## **V. THE PARTIES' SUBMISSIONS AND REQUESTS FOR RELIEF**

27. The following outline of the Parties' positions is illustrative only and does not necessarily comprise every submission advanced by the Parties. The Sole Arbitrator confirms, however, that she has carefully considered all the submissions made by the Parties, whether or not there is specific reference to them in the following summary.

### **A. The Applicant**

28. The Applicant's submissions can be summarized as follows:
29. Regarding the issue of jurisdiction:
- The CAS has jurisdiction both *ratione materiae* and *ratione temporis*. With respect to the former, it is uncontested that this dispute arose "*on the occasion of, or in connection with, the Olympic Games*", as requested by Article 61.2 of the Olympic Charter ("OC"). With respect to the latter, the dispute arose within the 10-day-time window stipulated in Article 1 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules. Relevant for the arising of the dispute is the Respondent's issuance of the Challenged Decision, which is a new decision compared to the Selection Announcement made by the Respondent on 20 January 2026. By means of the Challenged Decision, the FISG decided to

reject the requests submitted by the Athlete (i.e. the reconsideration of the Selection Announcement in view of the evidence of arbitrariness, nepotism and conflict of interest as well as the replacement of Ms Mariani by the Athlete). The Challenged Decision is based on different facts than the Selection Announcement, and it provided for the first time explanations as to why the Applicant was not selected for the curling team. The situation is the same as in CAS OG 06/002 (*Schuler*).

30. Regarding the issue of admissibility:

- Considering that the Italian curling national team will play its first match of the 2026 Winter Olympic Games on 5 February 2026, *“the time needed to exhaust the internal remedies would make the appeal to the CAS Ad Hoc Division ineffective”* (cf. of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules).

31. Regarding the merits of the case:

- The Respondent acted unlawfully in excluding the Applicant from the selection for the 2026 OWG, for the following reasons:
- The FISG never published any list of selection criteria to be taken into account for the nomination of athletes for the 2026 OWG. The Applicant is not aware of any resolution adopted by the FISG President on 19 January 2026, which allegedly included reasons for the selection decision.
- The selection decision was taken exclusively by Mr Mariani, the father of the Selected Athlete. Although the report allegedly underlying the selection decision was also signed by the coach of the Italian curling national team, Mr Mariani himself confirmed that he alone was responsible for *“team composition and line-up”*. This corroborates the fact that the report is characterised by misleading information and that the selection process was characterised by arbitrariness, bias, and a clear conflict of interest, favouring Mr Mariani’s daughter.
- As opposed to the Applicant, whose proven track record is a testament to her excellent results at international level, Ms Mariani competed exclusively in junior championships. The Applicant’s statistics (e.g. regarding shot accuracy) in senior competitions are much better than Ms Mariani’s in junior competitions. Statistics are extremely important in curling.
- The Respondent failed to consider objective data and instead conducted a subjective assessment unsupported by evidence. The criteria relied upon for the selection are intangible and not transparent and Mr Mariani’s assessments are largely untrue or not corroborated by any evidence. The Respondent also introduced arbitrary and non-predetermined evaluation criteria and applied them in a contradictory and arbitrary manner.

- In light of the foregoing circumstances, any reasonable observer would come to the conclusion that the selection of Ms. Mariani over the Applicant goes far beyond the application of FISG' discretionary power.

32. The Applicant submits the following requests for relief:

- *Ruling that it has jurisdiction to consider the present Application.*
- *Upholding the present Application.*
- *Setting Aside the Challenged Decision.*
- *Ordering that Ms Rebecca Mariani is replaced with the Applicant. Ordering FIGS [sic] to bear the full costs of the proceedings (if any) and make a contribution towards the legal fees incurred by the Applicant."*

## **B. The Respondent**

33. The Respondent's submissions can be summarized as follows:

34. Regarding the issue of jurisdiction:

- The Respondent does not make any submissions on jurisdiction.

35. Regarding the issue of admissibility:

- The Applicant was required, as a minimum procedural step, to challenge the resolution adopted by CONI in January 2026, which constitutes the sole and exclusive decision concerning the nomination and selection of Olympic athletes.
- The letter challenged by the Applicant merely conveyed information and clarifications and did not contain any independent decisional determination capable of producing legal effects. As such, it cannot constitute a proper object of appeal. Therefore, the failure to challenge the actual decisional act renders the Application inadmissible.
- The CAS does not hold any substitutive power with respect to the selection or nomination of Olympic athletes, nor may it directly exercise the technical discretionary power reserved exclusively to the competent federation. Consequently, the Application seeking the replacement of selected athletes and entrusting the Sole Arbitrator with technical and selection assessments lying wholly outside the CAS' remit, is inadmissible.

36. Regarding the merits of the case:

- The selection process was conducted in full compliance with the competences and technical autonomy vested in the Respondent under the national and international sports legal framework.

- The Respondent properly exercised its discretion on the basis of a broad, reasoned technical report which was formally adopted and duly signed not only by Mr Mariani but also by the National Team Coach whose direct expertise and institutional role provide an additional and decisive guarantee as to the accuracy, objectivity, and truthfulness of the assessment. No violation of the principles of impartiality, fairness and transparency can be identified.
- Any potential conflict of interest was immediately disclosed by Mr Mariani and clearly identified and circumscribed in the technical report.
- The selection decision is also based on the fact that the team of which the Applicant was a member failed to achieve the sporting objectives set by the FISG. This is demonstrated by a current world ranking position, lower than that of other nations qualified for the Olympic event and by a win percentage of less than 30% in the last two international tournaments.
- The assessment of the athletes could not be limited to an uncritical and formal comparison of the individual results. It required an evaluation of the best overall composition of the national curling team, taking into account multiple technical and tactical factors. The Respondent placed particular emphasis on the versatility of Ms Mariani, who is capable of playing in the lead, second, and third positions, as compared to the Applicant, who is predominantly deployable as a second. Moreover, this role is already adequately covered by another athlete who constitutes a cornerstone of the team.
- Furthermore, no illegitimacy can be found, as the selection of the athletes was not made directly by Mr Mariani, but was adopted by FISG and was subsequently subject to further ratification by CONI, which holds the authority to carry out the actual and final Olympic nominations.
- Any references to press articles or media reports reflect third-party opinions and interpretations, for which FISG bears no responsibility.

37. The Respondent requests that “*the appeal must be dismissed.*”

## **VI. THE IOC’S *AMICUS CURIAE* BRIEF**

38. The IOC’s *amicus curiae* submission can be summarized as follows:

39. Regarding the issue of jurisdiction:

- The CAS Ad Hoc Division does not have jurisdiction in this case. The dispute between the Applicant and FISG arose at the latest on 20 January 2026, when FISG published the list of selected athletes on its website, if not

earlier, when Mr Mariani informed the Applicant over the phone that his daughter would be selected instead.

40. Regarding the merits of the case:

- The IOC understands that the FISG has not published any criteria regarding the standards for selection of athletes or qualification for quota allocations and its discretion is thus limited by the duty not to be arbitrary, unfair, or unreasonable. In situations like the present one, where the national federation has retained full discretion, the CAS usually considers that the national federation's exercise of its discretion is not arbitrary, unfair or unreasonable if it is based on considerations related not only to "sports performance" but also to other legitimate considerations like "*the future of [the sport] in [the relevant country]*".
- The IOC emphasizes the suboptimal nature of situations where discretionary selections would have to be decided by courts of law. While CAS arbitrators are chosen because of their knowledge of sport law issues, they are not best placed to substitute themselves in the exercise of the discretionary power of the body in charge of selecting the most suitable and/or deserving athlete. Hence, in the exceptional circumstances where it is established that the selecting body has abused or exceeded its discretionary power, the selection should be set aside and, to the extent possible, the case sent back to the selection body for a proper re-examination taking into account the grounds of the CAS award.

## VII. JURISDICTION

41. This Panel has been formed under the arbitration rules applicable to the CAS Ad Hoc Division, a special adjudication authority with jurisdiction limited to specific disputes occurring within a strictly set timeframe. The jurisdiction of the CAS Ad Hoc Division is set out in Article 61 of the OC and Article 1 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules.

42. Rule 61 [*"Dispute Resolution"*] of the OC provides:

*"2. Any dispute arising on the occasion of, or in connection with, the Olympic Games shall be submitted exclusively to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), in accordance with the Code of Sports-Related Arbitration".*

43. It is uncontested that the present matter – involving a selection dispute for the 2026 OWG – arises "*on the occasion of, or in connection with the Olympic Games.*" Hence, the CAS has subject-matter jurisdiction over this dispute.

44. What has been raised by the IOC is that the CAS does not have jurisdiction *ratione temporis* in the present case. To that extent, Article 1 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules provides:

*“The purpose of the present Rules is to provide, in the interests of the athletes and of sport, for the resolution by arbitration of any disputes covered by Rule 61 of the Olympic Charter, insofar as they arise during the Olympic Games or during a period of ten days preceding the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games.”*

*In the case of a request for arbitration against a decision pronounced by the IOC, an NOC, an International Federation or an Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, the claimant must, before filing such request, have exhausted all the internal remedies available to him/her pursuant to the statutes or regulations of the sports body concerned, unless the time needed to exhaust the internal remedies would make the appeal to the CAS Ad Hoc Division ineffective.”*

[emphasis added]

45. The IOC argues that the dispute has indeed arisen when the Applicant was informed over the phone by Mr Mariani that she was not selected for the team, but at the latest on 20 January 2026, when the Selection Announcement was made.
46. Conversely, the Applicant argues that the dispute arose only on 2 February 2026, when she received the Challenged Decision, in which the Respondent explained that it would not reconsider the Selection Announcement. In the Applicant's view, this decision is a “new” decision different from the Selection Announcement, because it is based on different facts, including detailed explanations provided by the Applicant after the Selection Announcement was made. The Applicant specifically relies on CAS OG 06/02 (*Schuler*) and CAS OG 24/01 (*Clunis*) to argue that not the announcement of the selection, but its (detailed) explanation vis-à-vis the non-selected athlete constitutes the moment in which the dispute arises within the meaning of Article 1 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules.
47. The Sole Arbitrator can ultimately leave the issue undecided, because the Respondent has at no time objected to the CAS's jurisdiction. In its Reply, the Respondent introduced arguments on the admissibility of the Application as well as on the merits, but did not contest jurisdiction. The Sole Arbitrator's invitation to comment on the jurisdictional concerns raised by the IOC was not answered by the Respondent.
48. Consistent with the jurisprudence of the CAS, the jurisdiction of an arbitral tribunal that would otherwise lack jurisdiction exists as soon as the respondent enters into the merits of the case without challenging jurisdiction (e.g. CAS 2023/O/9541, paras. 77 et seq.; CAS 2020/A/6693, para. 96). This follows from Article 186(2) of the PILA according to which “[a]ny objection to its jurisdiction must be raised prior to any defence on the merits.”
49. Irrespective of whether the dispute arose within the 10-days-window stipulated in Article 1 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules, the Respondent's pleadings on the merits without a jurisdictional objection resulted in a tacit arbitration agreement between the Parties in favour of the CAS Ad Hoc Division. Because the IOC is not a direct party in these proceedings, its jurisdictional remarks have no bearing.

50. On this basis, the Sole Arbitrator finds that she has jurisdiction to hear the dispute that is the subject of the Application.

### **VIII. ADMISSIBILITY**

51. The Respondent submits that the Application is inadmissible, because the Applicant should have challenged the nomination of Ms Mariani made by CONI, and in any event the Challenged Decision is not even a “decision”, but merely an (additional) explanation.
52. The Sole Arbitrator notes that these arguments do not relate to the admissibility addressed in Article 1 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules, which refers to the exhaustion of internal legal remedies. It is an issue of substantive law, to be dealt with in the context of the examination of the merits (CAS OG 20/10 & 20/11 ; TAS JO 16/27). There is no suggestion in the present case that the Applicant should have exhausted any legal remedies to set aside the Challenged Decision. The Application is, therefore, admissible.

### **IX. MERITS**

53. As mentioned above, this dispute is a selection dispute.

#### **A. Legal standards underlying the review of selection decisions**

54. When it comes to the selection of athletes for the Olympic Games, the OC establishes a clear allocation of responsibilities between the International Federations (“IFs”), the National Federations (“NFs”), and the National Olympic Committees (“NOCs”).
55. As to the NOCs’ tasks, Bye-law to Rules 27 and 28 of the OC provides as follows:

*“The NOCs perform the following tasks:*

- 2.1 *They constitute, organise and lead their respective delegations at the Olympic Games and at the regional, continental or world multisports competitions patronised by the IOC. They decide upon the entry of athletes proposed by their respective national federations. Such selection shall be based not only on the sports performance of an athlete, but also on his ability to serve as an example to the sporting youth of his country. The NOCs must ensure that the entries proposed by the national federations comply in all respects with the provisions of the Olympic Charter.”*

56. As to the IFs’ responsibilities, Bye-law to Rule 40 of the OC provides as follows:

- “1 Each IF establishes its sport’s rules for participation in the Olympic Games, including qualification criteria, in accordance with the Olympic Charter. Such criteria must be submitted to the IOC Executive Board for approval.*
- 2 The application of the qualification criteria lies with the IFs, their affiliated national federations and the NOCs in the fields of their respective responsibilities.”*

57. As to the NFs’ roles, Rule 44 OC provides as follows:

*“44 Invitations and entries*

- 4 An NOC shall only enter competitors upon the recommendations for entries given by national federations. If the NOC approves thereof, it shall transmit such entries to the OCOG. The OCOG must acknowledge their receipt. NOCs must investigate the validity of the entries proposed by the national federations and ensure that no one has been excluded for racial, religious or political reasons or by reason of other forms of discrimination.*
- 5 The NOCs shall send to the Olympic Games only those competitors adequately prepared for high level international competition. Through its IF, a national federation may ask that the IOC Executive Board review a decision by an NOC in a matter of entries. The IOC Executive Board’s decision shall be final.”*

58. It follows from Rule 44.4 of the OC and has been consistently recognised in CAS jurisprudence that NFs enjoy a broad discretion in recommending athletes for selection to the Olympic Games (see, *inter alia*, CAS OG 18/06, para. 6.13). It has equally been established by CAS panels that, for any decision involving a discretionary power, the reviewing body is principally not entitled to substitute its own assessment of the “just result” for that of the decision maker (e.g. CAS OG 04/05, para. 13).
59. The discretion federations enjoy in selecting athletes is, however, not unlimited. Even where selection criteria involve subjective elements, or where no purely objective qualification standards exist, a NF has a legal duty not to act arbitrarily, unfairly, or unreasonably, both as regards the decision-making process and the result (CAS (Oceania Registry) A1/2016; CAS OG 14/01, para. 7.15; CAS OG 12/06).
60. The Sole Arbitrator is conscious that she is not called upon, nor would she be competent, to determine which curling athlete – the Applicant or the Selected Athlete – is better or more likely to perform successfully at the Olympic Games. Her scope of review is strictly limited to examining whether the selection procedures have been properly and fairly exercised by the body entrusted with the power to make the selection (CAS 96/153, para. 26(h)).
61. Within this context, the Sole Arbitrator must therefore assess whether, by not selecting the Appellant, the Respondent violated the OC, the applicable rules of the FIGC or CONI, and whether the selection criteria were applied in good faith and in a fair, equal, and reasonable manner (see CAS OG 06/002; CAS OG

14/03). In making this assessment, the Sole Arbitrator recalls that the principles of fair play and non-discrimination form part of the legal framework governing Olympic selection decisions and constitute inherent limits on the manner in which selection discretion may be exercised (see CAS 2000/A/278, paras. 6, 12).

**B. Application of these standards in the present case**

62. The Applicant is of the view that the decision to select Ms Mariani over her for the Olympic team was arbitrary and tainted with bias because:
- Her own track record is better than Ms Mariani's;
  - Her statistics at senior level (e.g. with respect to shot accuracy) are better than Ms Mariani's;
  - She has been playing for the national team for the last eight years and has gained robust international experience at senior level, whereas Ms Mariani only appeared in junior competitions;
  - The selection decision was taken by Ms Mariani's father, who had only recently (in December 2025) assumed this responsibility from the head coach. As such, the decision suffers from an apparent conflict of interest, which prevented Mr Mariani from taking a neutral decision based on objective criteria.
63. The Respondent refutes the notion that the decision was arbitrary. It maintains that it properly exercised its discretion on the basis of a broad, reasoned technical report which was formally adopted and duly signed not only by Mr Mariani but also by the National Team Coach, Mr Sören Gran.
64. At the outset, the Sole Arbitrator notes that, while no selection criteria have been communicated to the Applicant prior to the selection process, this fact alone does not render the selection decision unlawful, as long as the Respondent can establish that the decision was not taken arbitrarily, unfairly, or unreasonably. The Respondent had apparently adopted (albeit not shared until after the Selection Announcement) a valuation report, in which relevant athletes (including the Applicant and Ms Mariani) were assessed on the basis of different criteria, namely "*Technical Skills*", "*Team Work*", "*Team Dynamics*", and "*Performance*". At the hearing, Ms Caldart, former head coach of the national team, confirmed that, in her previous role, she applied similar criteria, including technical skills, shooting skills, understanding of tactics and team player/group participation skills.
65. The Sole Arbitrator sees no reason to take issue with any of these criteria. She recalls that curling is a team sport, and that the selection of the members of a team does not rest solely or even preponderantly on objective criteria, but rather involves a subjective judgement as to whether an athlete fits into the contemporaneous composition of a team or not. It is not for a decision maker with limited expertise in a specific sport and no access to internal team dynamics to replace the decision of those closely involved in the process with his or her own assessment.

66. For Ms Mariani, the selection report explains, *inter alia*, that she “[h]as shown significant improvement over the last two years” and is able “to cover lead, second, and third roles”. It is further highlighted that she was “evaluated according to the same technical performance criteria applied to the entire selection group” despite the fact that the technical director is her father.
67. For the Applicant, the report notes that “[i]n the last season, as a lead, performances did not reach the required standards. In the second role, performance appears potentially more suitable”. She is characterized as an “excellent sweeper” with “room for improvement” in the pressure management of her shooting.
68. The Applicant’s primary complaint is that these assessments are fully subjective and not corroborated by any objective data. In this context, the Applicant emphasizes the importance of statistics in curling, and the Respondent’s complete failure to make its assessments plausible by reference to any such statistics.
69. The Sole Arbitrator is not unsympathetic to the Applicant’s concerns, and understands her grief with respect to the subjectiveness of the assessment displayed in the selection report, in addition to the fact that the Technical Director of the Italian curling team, Mr Mariani, is also the father of Ms Rebecca Mariani. However, under the applicable legal standards governing the review of selection decisions, it is not for her to overturn such assessment without any clear indication of arbitrariness. The fact that the Applicant has better statistics (e.g. a higher shot accuracy) than Ms Mariani is not in itself such indication, just as the fact that one striker scored more goals than another striker in the season preceding a big football competition is an indication that the former has to be selected over the latter for the national football team. The selection report makes ample reference to Mr Mariani’s versatility (“[a]ble to cover lead, second, and third roles”), a criterion that is reasonable and prudent to be taken into account in a team sport, just as much as it is reasonable and prudent to account for the “the future of [the sport] in [the relevant country]” (CAS OG 14/03, para. 7.7 and 8.3, referring to “the evolution and projection in the future”).
70. The Applicant seems to suggest that the Respondent’s subjective assessments, which the Sole Arbitrator agrees are very difficult to counter, have been fabricated to justify Mr Mariani’s desire to see his own daughter appear in the Olympic Games. The Sole Arbitrator does not find sufficient evidence for this suggestion. The selection report states that the “evaluations [...] were carried out in compliance with the established technical and performance, according to uniform applied to all observed athletes, ensuring impartiality and decision-making consistency throughout the selection process”, and it was signed not only by Mr Mariani, but also by the head coach of the national team, Mr Sören Gran. The report also confirms that the athletes have been observed and monitored by both Mr Mariani and Mr Gran. The Sole Arbitrator does not find it likely that the head coach of a national team, whose interest is to select the strongest team with the

largest success prospect, would readily agree to include an athlete in his Olympic team that is clearly inferior to another athlete simply to help a member of the federation to include family into the Olympic roster. She finds it equally unlikely that he would readily sign false or fabricated statements in a selection report to justify such decision. Against this background, the Sole Arbitrator gives little weight to Mr Mariani's message of 29 December 2025, in which he generically informed the athletes that he would take the decisions on the team composition and line-up.

71. Ms Caldart's "shock" and surprise over the non-selection of the Applicant is of no avail either. Ms. Caldart has not trained either the Applicant or Ms Mariani in 1.5 years, but confirmed that she only watched them on TV. As a result, she has no immediate knowledge of her former athletes' development within the relevant time frame. More particularly, she is not in a position to comment on the assessments in the selection report, which relate to the time after she resigned from the team coach position later obtained by Mr Gran. Moreover, the Sole Arbitrator notes that Ms Caldart confirmed that she liked Ms Mariani's understanding of matches as a skip, and did not contest her versatility.
72. All in all, the Sole Arbitrator does not find sufficient evidence demonstrating that, under the applicable standards, and considering that many soft factors are relevant for the selection of team sport players, the decision to select Ms Mariani over the Applicant was arbitrary or unreasonable.
73. As disappointed as the Applicant may – justifiably – be, in view of the hard work invested in her goal to appear in the Olympic Games, from the relevant legal perspective, she does not have any claim to replace Ms Mariani in the team selected by the Respondent.

#### **X. CONCLUSION**

74. In view of all these considerations, the Application must be dismissed.

#### **XI. COSTS**

75. According to Article 22 para. 1 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules, the services of the CAS ad hoc Division "*are free of charge*".
76. According to Article 22 para. 2 of the CAS Ad Hoc Rules, parties to CAS Ad Hoc proceedings "*shall pay their own costs of legal representation, experts, witnesses and interpreters*".
77. Consequently, there is no order as to costs.

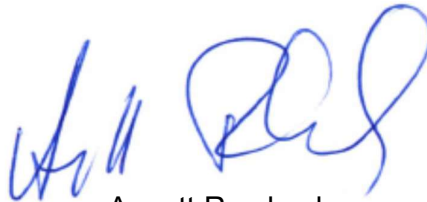
## **DECISION**

**On these grounds, the Ad Hoc Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport renders the following decision:**

The application filed by Angela Romei against the Italian Ice Sports Federation is dismissed.

Award with grounds: Milan, 8 February 2026

**THE AD HOC DIVISION OF THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT**



Annett Rombach  
Sole Arbitrator