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Yueling Chen On Way to Olympics As Chinese Decide to Give Waiver

Dateline: August 10, 2000

It was high drama in the Olympic racewalking community for the past two weeks as China first refused to grant a waiver for their 1992 gold medalist Yueling Chen to compete as a new US citizen, then decided to grant the waiver after U.S. Olympic Committee president Bill Hybl stepped into the fray.

"I am very happy that I will be able to join my fellow U.S. Olympic Race Walking Team members and represent this wonderful country at the 2000 Games in Sydney, Australia. Even though I continued to train while this difficult issue was being settled, I can now focus more clearly on the 20KM racewalk scheduled for the 28th of September in Sydney. I believe my participation in this competition will further strengthen the bonds between China, the land of my birth, and my new home, America," Yueling Chen stated.

USOC President Bill Hybl spoke with Chinese Olympic Committee leaders by telephone August 9 and received a letter on August 10 from his counterpart granting the needed waiver. "This sportsmanlike gesture on the part of the Chinese Olympic Committee signals another chapter in the continuing warm and positive relationship we enjoy with them," said Hybl. "The USOC is thrilled that Yueling Chen now gets the chance to realize her dream of competing for the United States in Sydney."

Chen emigrated to the US in 1993 after becoming the first Chinese female track athlete to win an Olympic gold medal - in the 10,000 meter walk in Barcelona. She retired from racewalking while getting the education she sought. She received her US citizenship on April 12, 2000.



Chen tries on her US Olympic Team uniform, July 2000

Chen earned a berth on the US Olympic Team in the 20K Walk at the Sacramento Olympic Trials, July 16, coming in second behind Michelle

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Rohl. However, International Olympic Committee (IOC) Charter Rule 46.2 requires that there be a three year waiting period after acquiring new citizenship before allowing an athlete to compete for a new country. This period can be waived with the agreement of both the former and new National Olympic Committees and the International Federation for that sport. China gave for three other Olympic athletes this year.

The Chinese National Olympic Committee informed the US Olympic Committee in late July that Yueling Chen would not be allowed to compete for the US at the Sydney Olympic Games in September, 2000. Chen's manager/trainer Derek Boosey went into high gear to protest the decision to the IOC and the support of the US Olympic Committee to pressure China to change the decision.

Though it appeared a week ago that the issue was dead, after the Chinese National Olympic Committee informed the USOC that its original request for the waiver had been rejected, Hybl decided that he would make another attempt on a more personal basis and contact the Chinese Olympic Committee by phone and letter. The two had a fruitful conversation and the issue was settled in favor of the athlete.

"The rule is a good rule because it stops athletes that hop from one country to another. But Yueling retired in 1992 and got stamps from everyone in China to move to the US to continue her education. When she came to the US she did not train for six years. She proceeded to become a citizen by the normal process and in 2000 became a citizen. So, everything she has done has been the normal process. Some countries have one year, two years or immediately to become a citizen," said Chen's manager/coach Derek Boosey.



Chen at Sacramento Olympic Trials July, 2000

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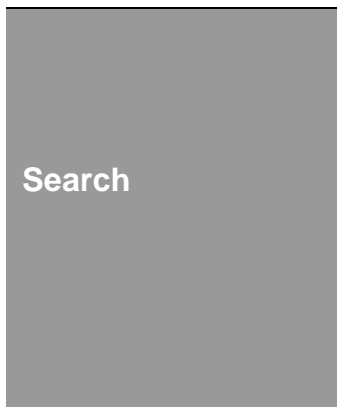
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