SPORT DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTRE OF CANADA (SDRCC)
CENTRE DE RÈGLEMENT DES DIFFÉRENDS SPORTIFS DU CANADA (CRDSC)

Citation: Karout v. Wrestling Canada Lutte, 2026 CASDRC 42
NO. SDRCC 26-0836
(ORDINARY TRIBUNAL)
Date: 2026-09-01

ALI KAROUT
(Claimant)

AND

WRESTLING CANADA LUTTE (WCL)
(Respondent)

Appearances:

For the Claimant:	Ali Karout (Claimant) Baraa Karout (Parent)
For the Respondent:	Chris Woodcroft (WCL)

Before:
Prof. Praveen Sandhu, FCIArb, C.Arb

DECISION WITH REASONS

PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

1. On 15 August 2026, the Claimant Ali Karout filed a Request with the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC) for dispute resolution by arbitration, pursuant to the 2025 Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code (the "SDRCC Code"), with Wrestling Canada Lutte (WCL) named as the Respondent.

2. On 17 August 2026, WCL filed its Answer with the SDRCC.

3. On 17 August 2026, the Claimant and Respondent attended an Administrative Conference with a SDRCC Case Manager.

4. On 17 August 2026, starting at 4:15pm ET, the Claimant and Respondent attended via video conference before the Arbitrator during which the procedure for the hearing was outlined and the substantive hearing proceeded. The Respondent WCL made submissions first, followed by the Claimant and each party was given one reply opportunity. Total allotted time for each party was 40 minutes. Neither party used all of their allotted time.

5. On 17 August 2026, before the hearing was concluded, both parties were invited to file certain additional evidence and both parties confirmed that they had no further submissions or evidence for the hearing.

6. On 17 August 2026, the SDRCC Case Manager advised that the Arbitrator's Short Decision would be issued on the morning of 18 August 2026 and that the Written Reasons for same would follow 14 days after the Short Decision.

7. Apart from the submissions at the hearing, the Claimant filed with the SDRCC the Request Form for arbitration, C-01, and documents marked C-02 to C-08.

8. Apart from the submissions at the hearing, the Respondent filed with the SDRCC its Answer Form, R-01, and documents marked R-02 to R-06.

9. On 18 August 2026 the Parties were provided with my Short Decision in which I rejected the appeal of the Claimant and confirmed the decision of WCL. I am now providing my reasons for that decision.

10. I have considered all the evidence at the hearing, arguments made, responses provided to questions from me during the hearing and reviewed all documents and evidence filed by each of the Parties. I will refer to these items in my Reasons only to the extent needed, any

summary or reference is not intended to be a complete summary of the entirety of any document, evidence or submission.

11. While I will summarize the Claimants' evidence and submissions first, at the hearing the Respondent WCL presented first.

INTRODUCTION

12. On 15 August 2026, the Respondent WCL communicated to the Claimant that it had made a decision to remove the Claimant from the roster of athletes nominated to the U20 World Team roster for Canada.

13. The Claimant athlete appealed this decision and was seeking an emergency interim stay and confirmation of his nomination to the U20 World Team roster for Canada.

14. The urgency and reason for the Short Decision was the entry registration deadline established by United World Wrestling (UWW) for the U20 World Championships. UWW is the international governing body for the sport of amateur wrestling

15. The U2 World Championships were scheduled for 22-23 August 2026 in Slovakia.

CONTENTIONS OF THE PARTIES

Claimant Athlete – Materials Filed

16. The Claimant submits that on Saturday, 15 August 2026, he was advised that the WCL High Performance Director Chris Woodcroft decided to withhold the Claimant's nomination to the U20 World Team roster. This decision, the Claimant submits, resulted from a "camp incident".

17. The "camp incident" was reported to Sport Integrity Canada by the Respondent WCL. However, the Claimant submits there has been no formal finding. That he is being barred from competing in the junior World Championships without a full hearing.

18. In communications with the Respondent, the Claimant classified the dispute as a matter of team selection combined with improper disciplinary sanction disguised as an administration action. He requested an urgent stay to freeze the roster of athlete names until after a formal hearing. He submits that the removal violates the Respondents team Selection Criteria (he met all objective criteria) and the Safe Sport frameworks (roster removal based on an uninvestigated report). He further states that the removal will cause the Claimant irreparable harm. That as of 17 August 2026, the Claimants name was still

actively on the roster, meaning that the Respondent had not yet formally carried out its decision to remove the Claimant.

19. The Claimant submits that, under section 12.1.3 of the Respondent WCL's Team Selection Criteria, once a nomination is finalized, the High Performance Director "completely loses the authority to unilaterally pull an athlete's name for behavioral or conduct allegations." Further, that an athlete can only be withdrawn for conduct issues "if the athlete is found to be in breach of the WCL Code of Conduct by a duly appointed disciplinary panel in accordance with the WCL Discipline Policy." That his nomination was finalized on August 14, 2026, one week after the Claimant returned to Canada following the "camp incident" in Hong Kong. A National Sports Organization (NSO) such as the respondent cannot "issue a career-ending sanction…based on a mere accusation."

20. The Claimant's filings included an email dated August 12, 2026 from Kale Whitton to the Claimant. The email states "I am happy to confirm your nomination for the 2026 U20 World Championships in the FS 74kg category."

21. This email was followed by a second email confirming the Claimant's flight booking.

Claimant Athlete – Hearing

22. During the hearing, the Claimant and his parent both focused on the fact that WCL made its decision based on a camp incident in Hong Kong. However, there was no hearing before an appropriate authority, being a duly appointed disciplinary panel, who could make a final determination regarding the conduct of the Claimant. That, in fairness, a full hearing must occur before he can be removed from the roster. They both made submissions to the effect that, once a formal selection is made, WCL cannot make a decision to remove the Claimant. The decision must be made by a third party.

23. The Claimant submits that he should be permitted to maintain his nomination and spot on the roster for the World Championships taking place 22-23 August 2026 in Slovakia.

24. With respect to the "camp incident", the Claimants submissions during the hearing included that:

    a. The Claimant was posing for a team photo in Hong Kong;

    b. The Hong Kong team saw the Canadian team and joined for the photo;

    c. The Claimant "hopped on a ledge to get higher in the photo", it was the ledge of a balcony;

d. A member of the Hong Kong team spoke directly to the Claimant and "did not like" the Claimant's "response";

e. There was a physical altercation between the Hong Kong team member and the Claimant;

f. The Claimant's response was self-defence;

g. The Claimant was sent home immediately following this incident, at his own expense;

h. This is the Claimant's last year as a junior athlete, that missing "the championships is the most severe consequence" (referring to the World Championships in Slovakia).

25. The Claimant's parent added that being sent home from Hong Kong was already a severe consequence to the Claimant from the Hong Kong incident. The Claimant has already been punished once. The parent was advised that the Claimant was to return home "or he is going to get arrested."

26. In response to a question from the Arbitrator, it was clarified that the Hong Kong incident was reported to Sport Integrity Canada. However, there is no urgent track for matters that will go before a disciplinary panel of Sport Integrity Canada.

27. The Claimant explained an earlier incident in Brazil in which he left the hotel for a tour, and that he understood this was contrary to rules stating no athlete is to leave alone and without first communicating with a coach.

28. With respect to Brazil, the Claimant explained that this was his first international trip, he wanted to see Brazil, wanted to do a tour, had asked other wrestlers but they were "not interested" and that "the coaches were busy" with the girls wrestling. Prior to the day he took the tour, the Claimant had four days of training twice per day.

29. In response to a question from the Arbitrator, the Claimant said he understood it was the combined impact of the Hong Kong incident together with an earlier incident in Brazil that led to WCL's decision to remove the Claimant from the roster for the World Championships in Slovakia.

Respondent WCL- Materials Filed

30. The Respondent filed its Answer in this proceeding and is seeking to have its decision to remove the Claimant upheld.

31. The Respondent's filings include a copy of an email from Frank Mensah, the Team Canada Lead Coach describing an incident that occurred on 6 August 2026 in Hong Kong when a group of athletes was taking a photograph on a balcony, with the Claimant seated on a rear ledge. This escalated into a physical altercation between the Claimant and another individual and resulted in the Lead Coach determining that the Claimant would return to Canada. The Lead Coach acknowledges that he was unable to establish who initiated the physical confrontation.

32. The Respondent's filings include the U20 Team Selection Criteria which describe the process and criteria to be used by the Respondent for selecting athletes.

33. The Respondent also filed its' WCL Safe Sport Policy Manual (April 2025), which includes, among other items, a Code of Conduct & Ethics, Discipline & Complaints Policy and an Appeals Policy.

Respondent WCL- Hearing

34. Mr. Chris Woodcroft attending the hearing for the Respondent WCL.

35. Mr. Woodcroft is the High Performance Director for WCL and he outlined his 32 years of experience in education which includes experience investigating youth conflict.

36. Mr. Woodcroft stated that his current role is to look over the entire wrestling high-performance group for WCL.

37. The names for the World Championship roster had to be submitted by the United World Wrestling ("UWW") deadline. This is the reason WCL submitted the Claimant's name. However, the Claimant was aware that the Brazil incident of July 2026 needed first to be reviewed.

38. In terms of earning a place on the roster for the World Championships, Mr. Woodcroft stated that the Claimant finished bronze in his weight class during the March 2026 Canadian trials. Only the first-place athlete has a right to go. However, the first-place athlete declined. The second-place athlete was injured. The Claimant was given a conditional spot on the roster, at Mr. Woodcroft's discretion as the High Performance Director.

39. With respect to the Brazil incident, it occurred during the U20 PanAm Championship in July 2026. WCL had communicated to all athletes in advance, including the Claimant, that Brazil is not safe to visit alone, provided a list of "do's and don'ts", and provided a Whatsapp group chat for athlete and coach communication. The parameters set for all athletes were

based on information from the local RCMP in Canada. WCL communicated its expectations, including respect and clear communication to all WCL athletes.

40. While in Hong Kong, and before the Brazil incident could be addressed, there was a second incident following which the Claimant was sent home by the Head Coach.

41. Mr. Woodcroft stated that he had reservations about the Claimant being on the roster for the World Championships as a result of the Brazil incident and had given him a conditional nomination and then this second incident in Hong Kong occurred. As a result, Mr. Woodcroft made the decision to remove the Claimant from the roster for the World Championships. However, the administrative process for the removal has been paused pending this proceeding.

42. WCL athletes are participants under the Canadian Safe Sport Program ("CSSP"), which prohibits maltreatment of another person. WCL reported the Hong Kong incident to Sport Integrity Canada, as WCL is required to do.

43. Mr. Woodcroft stated that the situation is unfortunate. It required a quick decision for the safety and well-being of the entire team of athletes. He would like to move forward in a positive light regardless of the outcome of this proceeding.

44. In response to a question from the Arbitrator on the basis relied upon by WCL, Mr. Woodcroft referred to section 9 of the Team Selection Criteria and Points 7 and 10 of WCL's Safe Sport Policy Manual.

ANALYSIS

Applicable Law

45. The SDRCC Code, at section 6.11 states:

> **Onus of Proof in Team Selection and Carding Disputes**
>
> If an athlete is a Claimant in a team selection or carding dispute, the onus will be on the Respondent to demonstrate that the criteria were appropriately established and that the disputed decision was made in accordance with such criteria. Once that has been established, the onus shall be on the Claimant to demonstrate that the Claimant should have been selected or nominated to carding in accordance with the approved criteria. Each onus shall be determined on a balance of probabilities.

46. The SDRCC Code states at subsections 6.12(a)-(c) that:

> **Scope of Panel's Review**
>
> (a) The Panel, once appointed, shall have full power to review the facts and apply the law. In particular, the Panel may substitute its decision for the decision that gave rise to the dispute or may substitute such measures and grant such remedies or relief that the Panel deems just and equitable in the circumstances.
>
> (b) The Panel shall have the full power to conduct a hearing *de novo*. The hearing must be *de novo* where:
>
> (i) the SO did not conduct its internal appeal process or denied the Claimant a right of appeal without having heard the case on its merits; or
>
> (ii) the Panel determines that errors occurred such that the internal appeal policy was not followed or there was a breach of natural justice.
>
> (c) In a team selection or carding dispute, no deference need be given by the Panel to any discretion exercised by the Person whose decision is being appealed, unless the Party seeking such deference can demonstrate that Person's relevant expertise.

47. Given the basis set out in the Claimant's Request Form for the relief sought, I am also setting out section 6.8 of the SDRCC Code which states that:

> **Conservatory Measures**
>
> (a) If an application for Conservatory Measure is filed, the Panel will invite all Parties to make submissions within the time limit established by the Panel. After considering all submissions, the Panel shall issue an order. In cases of urgency, the Panel may order Conservatory Measures upon mere presentation of the application, provided that any Parties so wishing shall be heard subsequently.
>
> (b) Conservatory Measures may be made conditional upon the provision of security.

48. There are various SDRCC published decisions on conservatory measures and the test to be applied, as set out by the Supreme Court of Canada in *RJR Macdonald v. Canada*

(Attorney General), 1994 CanLII 117 (SCC), [1994] 1 S.C.R. 311 in the context of a provisional measures application is:

(a) The existence of a serious issue to be tried on the underlying appeal;

(b) The likelihood of irreparable harm to the moving party; and

(c) The balance of convenience must favour the granting of the relief sought;

(e.g. *Manitoba Rush FC v. Winnipeg Youth Soccer Association*, 2026 CASDRC 1, at paragraphs 12-13).

WCL Selection Criteria

49. The Team Selection Criteria states at section 9 that:

> "...Where the top ranked athlete declines their selection, the HPD in consultation with the U20 Program Lead and personal coach, may make a performance-based nomination..."

50. The Respondent's U20 Team Selection Criteria states, among other things, that the High Performance Director has final decision-making authority for team selection.

WCL Policy Manual

51. This WCL Policy Manual includes a copy of the Code of Conduct & Ethics, Discipline & Complaints Policy and, an Appeal Policy.

52. The Introduction to the WCL Policy Manual begins by stating that:

> WCL has a fundamental obligation and responsibility to protect the health and well-being of the organization and its participants.
>
> WCL takes any situation involving misconduct or Maltreatment very seriously. WCL is committed to enacting and enforcing strong, clear, and streamlined policies and processes for preventing and addressing all forms of misconduct...

53. The Introduction further states that WCL has adopted the CSSP, an independent program to prevent and address maltreatment in sport, administered by the Canadian Center for Ethics in Sport (CCES), now Sport Integrity Canada, which means athletes in WCL will be subject to the CSSP.

54. The WCL Code of Conduct states, among other things, that:

Application- General

7. Any CSSP Participant that violates the UCCMS or the CSSP Rules may be subject to sanctions pursuant to the CSSP. Any Registered Participant that violates this Code may be subject to sanctions pursuant to the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*. In addition to facing possible sanctions pursuant to the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*, a **Registered Participant who violates this Code during a competition may be ejected from the competition** or practice area, and the Registered Participant may be subject to sanctions pursuant to that competition's policies.

10. **Prohibited Behaviours** under the UCCMS **include,** but are not limited to:

(a) **Physical Maltreatment**

55. The WCL Discipline & Complaints Policy states, among other things, that:

Reporting – CSSP Participants

7. **Incidents that involve alleged Maltreatment** or Prohibited Behaviour (as those terms are defined in the UCCMS or the CSSP Rules) involving a CSSP Participant **must be reported to the CCES** and will be addressed pursuant to the CSSP Rules and the CCES's policies and procedures.

Provisional Suspensions:

25. If it is considered appropriate or necessary on the basis of the circumstances, **immediate discipline** or the imposition of a **Provisional Suspension** or **interim measures may be imposed** against any Registered Participant **by** the Independent Third Party or **WCL** after which further discipline or sanctions may be applied according to this Policy.

27. **Notwithstanding the above**, **WCL** and / or Independent Third Party **may determine that an alleged incident is of such seriousness** as to warrant the **imposition of a Provisional Suspension** of a Respondent **pending completion of** an investigation, assessment and investigation by the CCES, criminal process, the hearing, or **a decision of the Discipline Panel**.

[emphasis added]

56. The Manual includes an Appeal Policy which set out the basis and procedure for an appeal to the SDRCC.

Application to Facts

57. The Claimant in his written materials says his appeal is a "matter of team selection combined with improper disciplinary sanction disguised as an administration action" and seeks an "emergency interim stay" and "immediate conservatory measure" because WCL is "Denying my nomination based on an uninvestigated report violates my right to due process, presumes guilt before a hearing, and inflicts immediate, irreparable harm to my athletic career…WCL's administrative action will permanently bar me from competing before I am afforded a fair hearing."

58. For the sake of this analysis, I have broken the basis for the Claimant's appeal into three categories: Selection Criteria, Discipline and Conservatory Measure.

(i) Selection Criteria

59. I find that the Claimant placed third in the Canadian trials in March 2026, meaning he did not earn a right to a roster position for the World Championships under section 2 of the Selection Criteria.

60. I find the High Performance Director, therefore, had discretion as set out in section 9 of the Selection Criteria on deciding whether or not to add the Claimant to the roster for Canada.

61. I find that while the Claimant's name was added to the roster and plans were made for his travel to the world championships, this was done due to time constraints and entry deadlines established by another entity, the UWW.

62. I find that the High Performance Director had clearly communicated to the Claimant and the Claimant was aware that there were reservations resulting from the Brazil incident that would need to be addressed before the World Championships.

63. I find the High Performance Director had retained his discretion as set out in section 9 of the Selection Criteria.

64. I find that based on his experience and the totality of information before him, the High Performance Director exercised his discretion not to have the Claimant on the roster for Canada in the World Championships. In exercising his discretion, the High Performance Director did not make any findings regarding the Hong Kong incident.

65. The alleged underlying conduct of the Claimant in Hong Kong and the alleged maltreatment is before a different authority, Sport Integrity Canada, and a determination on the substantive merits will be made by Sport Integrity Canada on its timeline.

(ii) Discipline

66. I have already found the High Performance Director's decision was based on discretion he had maintained under the Selection Criteria and the decision is, therefore, not a discipline or a suspension.

67. However, I will briefly address the Claimant's submissions that the removal is a "suspension" and the Claimant's request for an "emergency…conservatory measure."

68. While not specifically referred to by either party in this brief urgent proceeding, I note the Discipline & Complaints Policy, which is partially set out above, allows a provisional suspension pending the outcome of a final hearing on the merits before Sport Integrity Canada.

69. The Discipline & Complaints Policy states further that, after a hearing, a Disciplinary Panel may reinstate a suspended athlete. The reference to "reinstate" means that the WCL may in fact issue an interim suspension pending the outcome of a full hearing.

70. A fair hearing on the merits is a component of natural justice. However, there are many scenarios in various legal forums, too numerous to set out here, where an interim decision is made before a substantive hearing on the merits occurs and final determination is made.

(iii) Conservatory Measure - Emergency Stay

71. To obtain a stay under section 6.8 of the SDRCC Code, the Claimant must meet all three parts of the applicable test (set out above) in order to obtain the extraordinary remedy of a stay.

(a) *Serious Issue - Strong Prima Facie Case*

72. The Claimant is seeking to have his final opportunity to compete in the junior World Championships. That issue is serious. However, this is distinct from showing a strong *prima facie* case. Where a stay in effect will amount to a final determination on the Claimant's right to compete in the World Championships, a strong *prima facie* case must be demonstrated.

73. Based on all material before me and all submissions made in the limited time for this urgent proceeding, I am not convinced that the Claimant demonstrated a *strong prima facie* case

that he is likely to succeed before a panel of Sport Integrity Canada regarding the Hong Kong incident nor that the discretion of the High Performance Director was exercised unfairly considering all circumstances.

74. The request for a conservatory measure, therefore, fails on the first part of the test. I will nonetheless address the second two parts briefly for completeness.

(b) *Irreparable Harm*

75. The potential irreparable harm to the Claimant is a missed opportunity to participate in the World Championship as a junior.

76. To establish this harm, the Claimant must show he had a guaranteed roster spot based on the Selection Criteria or was assured of it without any reservation; That he is losing something he in fact fully had.

77. I have already found that the Claimant's name was added to the roster for the World Championships to meet UWW deadlines, that the High Performance Director was acting under his discretion when doing so and to maintain the Claimant's eligibility and, that the Claimant understood the nomination was subject to unresolved reservations.

78. I find that the irreparable harm part of the test is not met. Turning now briefly to the third part of the test.

(c) *Balance of Convenience*

79. The Claimant, on the one hand, is seeking his final opportunity to compete in World Championships while he is still a junior. WCL, on the other hand, is focused on the sport of wrestling more broadly, all athletes and applying the WCL Policy consistently to all Participants.

80. Without making any conclusive finding regarding either the July 2026 Brazil incident or the August 2026 Hong Kong incident, the balance of convenience favors removing an athlete involved in two recent incidents over risking a third incident at the World Championships later in the same month.

Conclusion

81. Based on all of the foregoing, I am declining to substitute my own selection decision for the selection decision of the Respondent WCL and declining to order an emergency stay or conservatory measure.

CONCLUSION

82. The appeal is rejected and the decision of WCL is confirmed.

83. Once again, I thank all parties for their submissions and assistance in this matter.

Signed in Vancouver, this 1st day of September 2026.

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Praveen Sandhu, Arbitrator