

Board Censures Dan Gable

CHICAGO, Ill. — The USA Wrestling Board of Directors has voted to censure 1984 Olympic coach Dan Gable, saying he "took the side" of former Hawkeye wrestler Randy Lewis in arbitration to determine which would represent the United States in the Olympic Games, the board president said September 11.

Werner Holzer, board president, said that the censure would have no practical effect, but instead is a "formal reprimand" from the governing body.

The following is the complete text of the USA Wrestling resolution censuring Olympic coach Dan Gable, along with Mr. Gable's statement.

RESOLUTION

Whereas, USA Wrestling is the National Governing Body of wrestling, and

One of USA Wrestling's primary responsibilities is to protect every athlete's right to a fair, unbiased opportunity to earn a spot on the Olympic team, and

The Smith-Lewis Controversy

By Phil Conley

Tryouts for the spot on the 1984 Olympic team at 136.5 pounds started out routinely enough with four extremely talented wrestlers all given an equal chance to make the squad. But, unlike the relatively simple process of selecting a high school or even a college team, the rules and methods change. In high school or college, the coach was the referee, therefore there were no protests, no video tapes, no questions about judgment calls. But, when a lifetime dream, a spot on the Olympic team is at stake, the simplicity ends. There were certain rules established to govern such circumstances, and those rules were fully tested in the trials for this year's Olympic team.

Amateur Wrestling News feels there can be no villains in this whole unfortunate series of events. That the success of our Olympic wrestlers should overshadow anything negative that happened before or since. But, in case you have been in Siberia for the past few months, we would like to give you the facts in the selection process for the 136.5-pound spot on the 1984 Olympic team.

Starting with the final Olympic trials, the four wrestlers who were to vie for the spot in question were ranked as follows: 1. Rick Dellagatta 2. LeeRoy Smith 3. Randy Lewis 4. Darryl Burley. The Olympic coaching staff decided that each wrestler would wrestle each of the other wrestlers two out of three matches because the weight was so even that all wrestlers should have the same equal chance of making the team.

On day one, Thursday, June 21st,

To fulfill this responsibility, USA Wrestling's Board of Directors established, and the U.S. Olympic Committee approved, specific policies and procedures for the Olympic coaching staff, and

By accepting a position on the Olympic coaching staff, an individual is bound to abide by these policies and procedures, and

The freestyle Olympic coach, Dan Gable, did not abide by these established rules in the 1984 Olympic Trials, protest and arbitration involving Randy Lewis and Lee Roy Smith and took the side of an individual athlete in this dispute and challenged the integrity of several USA Wrestling representatives,

Therefore we, the Board of Directors of USA Wrestling, do hereby censure Dan Gable for the above violations.

Werner Holzer,
President
USA Wrestling

Dellagatta defeated Darryl Burley two out of three matches. The second match was between LeeRoy Smith and Randy Lewis. Lewis had apparently won two matches in a row, but Smith protested a call in the second match. Smith felt he had scored two points on a side roll counter to a gut wrench, and that the points were awarded by the mat official but was not confirmed by the mat judge or mat chairman. This protest was allowed to be heard according to the USA Wrestling Rules and Regulations prepared in January of 1984.

A committee of six, less one member who disqualified himself because of a friendship with one of the wrestlers, viewed the matside video tape, and voiced an opinion in favor of LeeRoy Smith's protest. After viewing still another tape, the committee voted 5-0 that Smith had won the match and the match should be re-wrestled from the beginning. The match was re-wrestled and Smith won 13-0. This required a third match. This third match was won by Smith on an injury default, with Smith leading 8-2.

During the next two days of the trials, Lewis was not able to wrestle his remaining matches because of the injury. Smith, meanwhile, defeated Burley and Dellagatta in straight matches. LeeRoy Smith was awarded the spot on the Olympic team.

However, the story doesn't stop there. Randy Lewis then protested the committee's decision to the U.S. Olympic Committee, on the grounds that the match should have been re-wrestled from the point of dispute rather than from the beginning, but his protest was denied. Lewis then protested to the American Arbitration Association in Chicago. This association called a hearing, and, on July 5th, announced that a victory by LeeRoy Smith over Randy Lewis be re-wrestled from the point of protest, or the last 84 seconds.

LeeRoy Smith, Sr., on behalf of his son, filed suit in Payne County Oklahoma district court to restrain USA Wrestling from carrying out the instructions of the American Arbitration Association, but to no avail. At the

Dan Gable's response:

Attached to this response is a copy of the USA Wrestling notice regarding their vote to censure me. With regard to the board action which states, "Dan Gable recognizes that the rules were violated, regardless of his intention, and that he has expressed regret over the incident," I am prepared to accept their judgment and the resulting censure.

It is unfortunate that this controversy has taken away from the accomplishments of our 10 Olympic freestyle competitors, seven of whom including Randy Lewis won gold medals. My actions were motivated solely by my interest in a fair outcome, rather than any personal interest in one of the competitors.

Those who know me know that if the situation had been reversed, I would have given Lee Roy Smith the same consideration. Lee Roy is a young man I have coached for over three years in international competition and in whom I have the highest regard, both personally and as an athlete.

I recognize the need for rules to insure a fair and equal opportunity for each and every one of the athletes, and acknowledge that these rules were set up to insure this goal. I further recognize my obligation to apply these rules fairly and impartially, and any mistakes on my part in the application of these rules were made in good faith.

I regret that my testimony was taken as an attack on the integrity of the protest committee, and apologize to those persons who feel that this occurred. I can assure all of these people that I have the highest regard for them and that I was not in any way attacking their integrity.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to continuing my close personal relationship with the administrators of USA Wrestling so that we can all work together for amateur wrestling in the United States. I now consider this matter over with and behind me, and I will make no further public statement.

Dan Gable
Olympic Coach

arbitration hearing, the arbiter apparently struck down the initial committee's protest procedures, and that the mat referee's judgment should have been final. The arbitrator simply did not feel that other means of evaluating the outcome of a match should be used other than judges themselves.

On Friday night, July 13th, the last 84 seconds of the rematch was re-wrestled, with the score 5-4 in favor of Lewis. The only points scored in the remaining seconds were two points by Lewis as he countered a Smith underhook attempt for a two-point tilt.

A final legal attempt to keep LeeRoy Smith on the Olympic wrestling team failed Saturday, July 14th, when a federal judge in Los Angeles turned down a request for a temporary restraining order which would have barred USA Wrestling from removing him from the team.

These were the facts as told to the public, and hopefully, the way it actually happened. Of course there will be countless questions left unanswered, and we hope rule changes that will only further the good of amateur wrestling so that incidences such as this will not happen again.

Amateur Wrestling News

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By MYRON RODERICK

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To the Editor and the Wrestling Public,

At the final Olympic Trials the 136.5 pound weight was ranked in the following manner:

1. Rick Dellagatta, NYAC
2. LeeRoy Smith, Cowboy Wrestling Club
3. Randy Lewis, Hawkeye Wrestling Club
4. Darryl Burley, Lehigh

It was the opinion of the coaching staff that this weight was so even that each wrestler would wrestle each of the other three wrestlers two out of three matches, with each pairing occurring and completing each day.

DAY #1, THURSDAY:

- #1, RICK DELLAGATTA vs #4, DARRYL BURLEY

Dellagatta won two out of the three matches.

- #2, LEE ROY SMITH vs #3, RANDY LEWIS

Lewis won two matches in a row. Smith protested the second win. This followed the USA Wrestling Associations Rules and Regulations prepared in January of 1984 approved by the Olympic Coaching Staff in January of 1984 distributed at all Olympic Qualifying events in 1984. These rules state that if a wrestler feels a mistake has been

made in scoring his match, he may protest. Lee Roy felt he had scored two points on a side role counter to a gut wrench. The mat official did score this as two points. Neither the Mat Judge or Mat Chairman confirmed and points were not awarded. The protest committee consisted of the following as specified by the rules and regulations.

1. USA Wrestling Team Director.
2. Event Pairings Master or his designated replacement. The Event Pairings Master disqualified himself because of friendship with Lee Roy.
3. Chief Tournament Official or his designated replacement. The Chief Tournament Official disqualified himself because he had worked the protested match.
4. Qualified Official not involved in match.
5. Qualified Official not involved in match.
6. Ex-Official Member, the Head Olympic Coach with no voting rights.

After viewing the matside video tape, the committee voiced an opinion in favor of Lee Roy's protest. Mr. Gable, the Head Olympic Coach, was adamantly opposed to this opinion. He requested that the committee view more tapes if available. The Rules and Regulations permitted this. He left to try to obtain another tape. He returned with a tape that one official understood belonged to a college coach. This tape showed a very good view of the protested situation. In fact, it showed even more clearly that Lee Roy had scored two points. Mr. Gable was still adamantly opposed to this opinion. The committee voted 5-0 that Lee Roy had won the match. The Rules and Regulations gave the Protest Committee three options on their actions:

1. Deny protest.
2. Uphold protest, and declare winner.
3. Uphold protest, and re-wrestle the entire match if they feel that if points had been awarded correctly either wrestler could have won the match.

They chose Option #3. This match was re-wrestled and Lee Roy won 13-0. This required a third match be wrestled that day as specified by the Rules and Regulations. This was done and Lee Roy won on injury default at a time when he had an 8-2 lead.

DAY #2, FRIDAY:

- #1, RICK DELLAGATTA vs #3, RANDY LEWIS

Lewis did not appear at weigh-in and had not withdrawn. Lewis was dropped from consideration. Dellagatta received a bye.

- #2, LEE ROY SMITH vs #4, DARRYL BURLEY

Smith won two matches in a row.

DAY #3, SATURDAY:

- #1, RICK DELLAGATTA vs #2, LEE ROY SMITH

Smith won two matches in a row.

- #4, DARRYL BURLEY received a bye.

Lee Roy was awarded, announced and advertised as the Olympic Team Member. Rick Dellagatta was the Olympic Team Alternate. Mr. Gable tells Lee Roy, 'I hope the action to be taken on Randy's part does not interfere with our friendship.'

After the tournament, the Mat Judge of the protest match, reviewed the films. He stated that he agreed that

Lee Roy had scored and therefore should have won. This means a total of seven people were unanimous of Lee Roy's winning the protest. Let me correct that, 7-1, if you count Mr. Gable. Around this time the film procured by Mr. Gable disappears.

Let's establish a clear understanding of the position at this time. Lee Roy has won according to the Rules and Regulations adopted by USAW in January of 1984. These rules and regulations had been reviewed by Mr. Gable and approved by Mr. Gable in January of 1984. Now in June of 1984, after Mr. Gable's wrestler, Randy Lewis, loses by these rules, they start their attempt to get these rules changed.

Lewis protested to the U.S. Olympic Committee. His protest was denied. Lewis brings Federal Arbitration vs USAW and USOC. At this arbitration, Lewis has five sworn witnesses, Mr. Gable, two other Olympic coaches and two officials. The following things occurred in the arbitration:

1. Mr. Gable presented two films of the protested match. One was the matside video film. He tried to pass off the second film as the one which best supported Lee Roy's protest. It was called to his attention by USAW that this was not a film used by the protest committee. He admitted this and stated, 'he'd made an honest mistake.' After viewing their two films, Mr. Gable, the other two coaches, and the two officials, all indicated that the mat officials and the protest committee were incompetent in their opinion, that in no way could this match have been won by Lee Roy.

2. One of the Lewis witnesses stated that video tapes had never been used before to question mat officials decisions. USAW challenged this statement, but the arbitrator believed the Lewis witness. The arbitrators' report states that this was a first. I'm surprised Mr. Gable did not remember that video tapes were used to select the 1983 World Tournament Team, especially since he was very active in the protest reviews at that event. Probably another honest mistake. Also, I'm surprised that someone did not point out that video reviews have been used for several years in World and Olympic Tournaments.

3. One of the Lewis witnesses testified that the fair thing to do was to re-wrestle the re-wrestle starting at the point where the mistake was made.

4. One of the Lewis witnesses testified that the Olympic Team Director should have stepped down from the protest committee because he lives in the same town as Lee Roy. (Why didn't Mr. Gable step down as an ex-official member of the protest committee, since he was Randy Lewis's college coach and a very personal friend).

5. They went on and on trying to persuade the arbitrator to give them a new set of rules. They were successful. The arbitrator was impressed in my opinion by Mr. Gable and gave them what they wanted. They re-wrestled the re-wrestle under their rules and their wrestler won. USAW appealed the arbitrator's decision in Federal Court and were denied.

In USAW's opinion and in legal people's opinion, the arbitrator exceeded his authority granted by Title 36 (The National Sports Act). I feel congressional action will be taken at the request of the U.S. Olympic Committee

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to close this loophole. Nonetheless, it was done. We took legal action and we were dead to begin with. We were fighting time and attempting to get a Federal Judge to overrule another Federal Judge and a Federal Arbitrator. Our attorneys advised us that our chances were slim to none. We had to try. We don't know how to give up.

In summary, I feel that Mr. Gable took from Lee Roy a lifetime dream that he had achieved. Lee Roy stated in 1968 at the age of ten that someday he would wrestle in the Olympics. After years of hard work and extreme sacrifices he obtained this goal. Then Mr. Gable cut his throat. Not Lee Roy's, but his own.

I was very proud of Lee Roy throughout this whole ordeal. One of his comments in particular will always remain in my mind, 'I only hope and pray that what I have been through will in some way help the sport I love.'

Lee Roy Smith, Sr.
Del City, Okla.

To the Editors:

We feel obligated to add a "third round" to the Mark DiGirolomo case.

Prior to the state tournament in California (which includes 10 sections) there was a Northern California Invitational, which included five sections or about 40% of the state's schools.

Mark won the central coast section title three times, being defeated by Cupectino H.S. wrestler Greg Hill in the semis (Guy went on to wrestle for San Jose State).

DiGirolomo won the Northern California Invitational four times at 98, 106, 115 and his senior year (though weighing only 117 or so) won an unprecedented fourth title at 123.

Mark is now a successful painting contractor in the San Francisco Bay area.

Since the inception of the state meet in 1973 there has been only one wrestler to reach the finals four times — this year's NCAA runner-up Marty Kistler (Notre Dame H.S.). Marty won twice and was twice runner-up.

Bill Grant
Larry Prosper
The California Wrestler
Monterey, Calif.

"The Family"

One major difference between wrestling and other sports is "The Family." By the Family I mean a lot of different things. The family can mean the father, mother and children aspect. This is very apparent in wrestling because of the participant's dedication and diet. To be competitive this dedication has to go beyond the few hours of practice to a complete life style change. Dad, mom, brother, and sister must become involved in the changes and in giving support if the participant is to be successful. This usually means that the family lives wrestling all year and so the little brothers wrestle when they get the chance because they like the family feeling, too. Sisters also like the feeling that surrounds the family during wrestling and become mat maids, managers, and stat. keepers.

The Family in wrestling also means the feeling in the practice room and on trips and even in the halls of school. The wrestlers aren't usually a part of

IN OUR MAIL BAG

the great press media that follows the big three; football, basketball, and baseball. Wrestlers find they must give each other the support that is needed to reach inside themselves to achieve greatness and success. This makes wrestlers on the team more like brothers. They fight. They push each other. They compete for the same goals. But if someone outside the family tries to put their teammate down or hurt him they are the first guys to stand up and protect him. This protection extends to every member of the team including coaches, mat maids, and managers.

The Family also contains the other wrestling teams in your state. They are like close cousins, uncles, and aunts. You see them every weekend from early November at the pre-season tournaments through early June at the post-season tournaments. You share their joys and their sorrows. Young and foolish is the coach that does not encourage his team members to get close to their opponents. Some of my best friends are the people that love to beat my teams and me.

The Family also means the other wrestling teams in the nation which are like distant, not often visited cousins. You receive a few letters from them to tell you how they are doing. These letters are like our national publications which are read by few people that are outside the family of wrestling. These letters keep us aware of new developments, of success, and of disappointments. For those of you involved in wrestling, you may be surprised to find that these intimate letters do not exist in other sports.

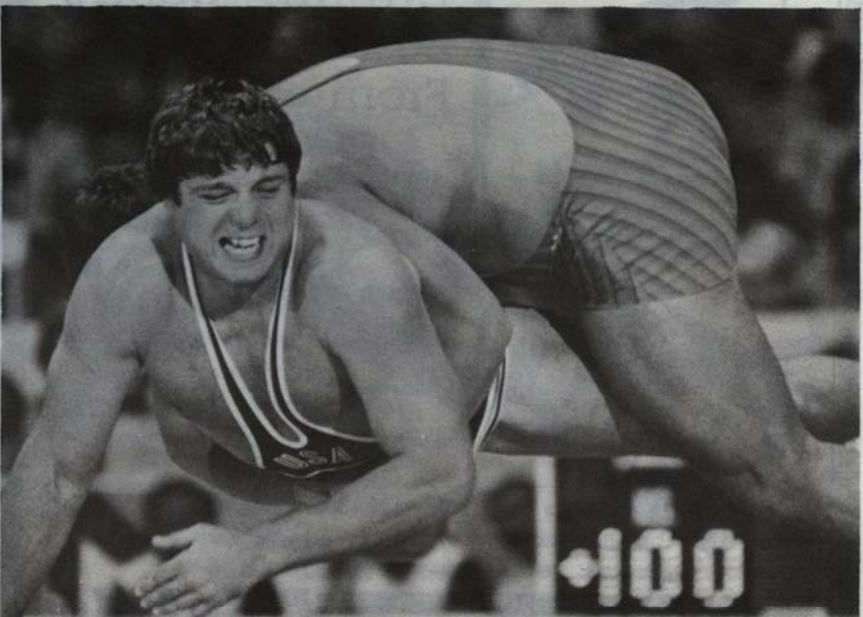
The reason I am writing about the Wrestling Family at this time is because it has become so apparent to me in the past few months how special the family

part of wrestling is. Oregon has had a tragic year, and the Family has had to pull together to help make it through. First, in January the University of Oregon had a van full of wrestlers plunge off on icy highway killing two young wrestlers and permanently crippling two others. Then in May at the Cultural Exchange tryouts for teams to Germany and New Zealand, a two time state champion was permanently paralyzed in a belly-to-back suplay. Jeff Zerba of McLoughlin Union High School is starting his senior year of high school as a quadriplegic.

The Wrestling Family has been of tremendous support through Jeff's tragedy. Hours after Jeff's accident, Mrs. Toppliff (the mother of U of O wrestler, Larry Toppliff hurt in the van accident and also a quad) had contacted Jeff's father and helped him find the best medical personnel available. Wrestlers, wrestler's parents, coaches, teammates, wrestling fans and all those other members of the Wrestling Family started visiting, sending letters, and money to help Jeff. This same support was also there for the U of O wrestlers.

Jeff Zerba of McLoughlin and Larry Toppliff of the University of Oregon and Sandy High School still have a long way to go, and some big goals to achieve. Both of these wrestlers competed in the Iowa City National Tournaments in 1982 and 1983. They are a part of the wrestling family. I wanted to share with you their situation, and also let you know how great the Wrestling Family really is. If you would like to write to Jeff or Larry their addresses are below. Jeff Zerba, McLoughlin Union High, 120 S. Main, Milton-Freewater, OR 97862. Larry Toppliff, Sandy Union High School, 17100 Bluff Road, Sandy, OR 97055.

Jerry Ewing
Wrestling Coach
McLoughlin Union High School
Milton-Freewater, OR



1984 OLYMPIC GRECO-ROMAN CHAMPION JEFF BLATNICK works against Sweden's Thomas Johansson in Olympic heavyweight finals during the 23rd Olympic Games held in Anaheim, California. Photo by Steve Brown—USA Wrestling.