



**Committee: IOC**

**Topic: Placing Age Limitations for Olympic Participation**

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The International Olympic Committee, or IOC, is a type of organization that exists independently and is mainly dedicated to everything related to sports. The Baron Pierre de Coubertin-designed committee was established on June 23, 1894, two years before the debut Olympic Games, which were held in April 1896 and for which the IOC is accountable as a governing body for the Olympic movement. Currently, its president is Thomas Bach.

The IOC is responsible for attracting various collaborations of Olympic Families, National Olympic Committees, international federations, different athletes, Olympic Games organizers, and even partners who count the Olympic Games around the world, as well as the United Nations (UN), where they show the triumph of their projects. In doing so, it shows the regular organization of the Olympic Games. It develops the Olympic Games in a healthy way, where the Olympic values of each participating country are promoted. The (ITA) has been in charge of anti-doping since 2018. The IOC's mission is to promote Olympism worldwide and to lead it as a movement. In addition to ensuring this event happens, people can see in practice what sports society practices, regardless of sex, age, social origin, or economic situation. This has been practiced for many years around the world.

The age limit at the Olympic Games has been causing controversy in the past years, since there is no specific age limit stated by the IOC, and every International Sports Federation (an institution that governs individual sports) can implement the age limit for its participants. This means that anyone of any age can participate in the Olympic Games depending on the sport. Until today, only a few International Federations (IF) had set an age limit for the Olympics, such as Gymnastics with an age limit over 16 years, and boxing with an age limit over 18. During this year the IOC asked the IF to "address the matter of establishing a mandatory age to participate in the competition" at the Olympic Games, ahead of Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028.

One of the biggest concerns that have caused disputes regarding age limits for Olympic participation is youth doping, considering the increase in positive tests for banned substances in younger athletes. This issue sparks questions; Is It time to change the regulations and add a minimum age limit? Would an age limit help reduce doping in minors?

On the other hand, an age limit could exclude athletes with very high potential, thus leaving us without the spectacle and competition of these young athletes. Another relevant topic to the age of the competitors is the Youth Olympic Games (YOG). In these games, athletes from 15 to 18 years old can participate, but what causes conflict is that an athlete under 15 years of age can participate in the conventional Olympic Games, taking away the purpose of the YOG. Mental health should also matter since minors who usually participate in the Olympics, are usually under extreme physical and mental pressure. This can also lead us to question the convenience of children participating in this type of event. Participating in sports usually generates physical and psychological benefits for the youngest athletes, but at the same time, we should consider that high-performance sports could cause health issues for minors.

Returning to the topic of youth doping, one of the most recent examples of these cases is Kamila Valieva, a 15-year-old Russian girl, participating in figure skating, who tested positive for trimetazidine, an illegal substance in the Olympic Games. She has not been the first and will not be the last if this problem is not taken seriously. Another example is a 12-year-old boy from Poland, who resulted positive for the use of nikethamide, he was too young to participate in the YOG, but he was part of the Olympics, again contradicting the viability and use of the Youth Games, a 6-month ban was applied, after reducing his sanction because of the age. Two 17-year-old wrestlers tested positive at the first YOG, they were suspended for 2 years, and both their medals and certificates of participation were removed. These incidents have been happening for many years. American swimmer Rick DeMont was stripped of his gold medal in 1972 after failing a drug test for ephedrine, at the age of 16.

Restricting younger participants to compete at the Olympic Games could deprive us of a high level of performance and great spectacles, for example, Fu Mingxia a diver from China won first place receiving a gold medal on the 10 meters springboard at the age of 13, during the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. The well-remembered Nadia Comaneci, a Romanian gymnast, who achieved the perfect 10 at the age of 14, at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Considering a limit at the age regulations could help reduce the consequences of overtraining, the physical and mental abuse, and exploitation experienced by young athletes.

The IOC has begun to consider these issues and in response created two documents that aim to establish protection for athletes in sports. First, the Olympic Charter, which considers the IOC's performance in athlete health care, and second the Olympic Movement Medical Code, which decrees that all interested parties are in charge of "promoting fair play and sportsmanship, ensuring that sports are practiced in the safest way possible, implementing the security measures required for the protection of the

participants, and minimizing the risk of physical injury and psychological harm". Under these statements, the IOC has added several statements regarding the care and protection of the health of young athletes in sports.

In the Olympic Letter, the fundamental laws of the IOC and the Olympic Games state that there is no specific rule where there is a minimum age for athletes. Rule number 42 states that there cannot be any age limit for those who decide to participate in the Olympic Games that have not been decreed by the rules of the IF (International Federation) approved by the IOC. Most of the time the IOC executive board takes action on the matter.

But along with this, the Olympics thrive mostly on children or young participants as they demonstrate great performance during the competitions of their respective sports during the Olympics, an example would be at the Tokyo 2021 Olympics when skateboarding was inaugurated at the Olympics where gold medal winner Mojimi Nishiya of Japan and silver medal winner Naissa Leal of Brazil, at only 13 years old were honored by the IOC and President Thomas Bach. This attracts the audience as well as the media itself as it shows the great talent that some children from all over the world possess. This also has its concerns as it can lead to various consequences during the competition, but young people do not take much importance to this. Do they want to risk themselves for the opportunity to have fun?

The short answer is "yes", young people cannot be denied participation because the Olympic Games allow their participation. But the risks associated with the Olympics have tested different mechanisms to maintain protection for their young participants while they are training so that they will not be affected during the event.

Personal counselors are those who give security to young athletes as they make sure they learn to control the pressure and their necessary fatalities, and there are also places where they help the families of the athletes who are sensitive to the pressure they are feeling at the moment.

During the Winter Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne in 2020. They analyzed 1,783 athletes between 17 to 25 years old where more than 228 participants were injured and 167 others contracted an illness during 14 days; most accidents happened in sports like ski cross, snowboard cross, bobsleighbing, snowboarding, big air, etc.

But they did not only happen in Lausanne. The first time where injuries were detected during the Olympic Games was in Singapore in the summer of 2010 when 100 athletes were injured during that event.

Over the years, injury rates have dropped considerably with young athletes, but this is also a downside as recent studies show that some of these athletes may be at risk of

contracting osteoarthritis, which can result in participants losing their physical activity over the years. Around the world 80% of children do not comply with the required rules for health, the most important thing is to maintain positive habits for the participants of the Olympic Games so that they have good mental and physical health.

It is known that during all these years the Olympic Games have been evolving, along with their fans and athletes. So much time has passed that even young people can participate. This has been thanks to the different boards of directors. We know that during this time, rules have been generalized and that there are constantly new participants much younger than the rest. That is why the IOC is urgently looking for a solution for all those young participants who may suffer from participating in Olympic competitions, and provide greater security for them both physically and psychologically, as well as their families. That is why the IOC has made different solutions during these years, with the purpose to prevent young people from suffering during competitions, but some of the solutions that have been applied haven't been efficient. There are possibilities that during different Olympic Games, some youth athletes will have the need to use doping and it may exponentially affect their health.

The committee should keep in mind there is an age restriction for the Youth Olympic Games, contrary to the conventional Olympics, where the competitors should be at least 15 years old in the year the games are held, and taking into account the maximum age limit to compete at the YOG is 18 years old. A possible implementation could be stating an age limit at the Olympic Games, and making the corresponding use of the YOG, by allowing participation in the Olympic Games only for adults and the YOG for minors. This could cause controversy since the youth standing performance has always been a point of support for the marketing represented by the IOC and the Olympics. Another possible solution that could be considered would be requiring the official guardians of the minor athlete to sign and authorize their participation in the Olympics, this could prove convenient since guardians would be aware of the possible activities in which the young person participates, besides the injuries or illness they could suffer during the Olympic event, an antidoping test would also be considered, together with psychological examinations on the athlete.

The implementation of an age limit can only be done through the support and cooperation of every member of the International Olympic Committee, maintaining the care and safety of the participants.

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