

Winston & Strawn Paves the Way for Groundbreaking USATF Decision

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Erin Taylor-Talcott to Compete in World Race Walking Team Championships

NEW YORK, NY – Following Winston & Strawn’s successful petition to the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) on behalf of race walker Erin Taylor-Talcott to permit women to compete in the 50km race walk for the first time in history, USA Track & Field (USATF) has named Ms. Taylor-Talcott to the men’s 50km race walk roster for the upcoming IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships on May 7-8 in Rome, Italy. Ms. Taylor-Talcott will be the first-ever female participant in the event at the IAAF World Championships.

“Being on the team and having the opportunity to compete in Rome has to be one of the absolute highlights of my life,” said Ms. Taylor-Talcott. “I can’t wait to go and race the best that I can. I am going to enjoy this experience and show women everywhere that they can do it, too.”

Ms. Taylor-Talcott’s ability to enter the men’s 50km at the 2016 IAAF event was a result of the firm’s petition on behalf of Ms. Taylor-Talcott and the IAAF Council’s action last week permitting women to qualify for and compete in all IAAF 50km race walk events under the same standards that men compete. The decision also allows all women’s results in Rome to count equally with the men’s towards the overall team result.

“We applaud USATF for setting an example for sports organizations around the world by standing up for gender equity,” said Jeffrey Kessler, Winston co-chairman and co-chair of the firm’s Sports Litigation Practice.

Winston previously reached a settlement with USATF that provided for equal prize money to be awarded at all USATF race walk events regardless of gender and called for the organization to advocate for women’s participation in the 50km at the international level, which for years was reserved only for men. As part of that 2014 agreement, Ms. Taylor-Talcott was retroactively awarded prize money for her first-place finish in the women’s 2013 USATF 50km Race Walk Championship.

That settlement paved the way for Ms. Taylor-Talcott and another American woman, Susan Randall, to compete on behalf of Team USA in the first international 50km race walk for women, the 2015 North America Central America Caribbean Association Race Walking Championships in Chile last May. Ms. Taylor-Talcott finished first in that historic race, which was conducted in conjunction with the men’s 50km event at the 2015 Pan Am Race Walking Cup.

Ms. Taylor-Talcott, 37, won her first junior national championship as a teenager and has since medaled in distances ranging from 1,500 meters to 50 kilometers. She participated in the 2012 Olympic trials, but was informed that she could not enter the men's-only 50K race walk during the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, even if she secured a qualifying time. Ms. Taylor-Talcott faced a similar barrier in 2014 when she earned a qualifying time in the 50K race walk and was not permitted to compete in that event at the World Race Walking Cup because IAAF only conducted races for men at that distance.

Winston attorneys including Mr. Kessler, New York Partner and Co-Chair of the Sports Litigation Practice David Feher, and Associates Timothy Nevius, Joseph Litman, Rebecca Litman, and Isabelle Mercier-Dalphonc represented Ms. Taylor-Talcott on a pro-bono basis in her efforts to advance gender equality in sports.

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