

October 14, 2020

Ms. Kacie Wallace, Athlete Ombudsman
Colorado Springs Olympic & Paralympic Training Center
One Olympic Plaza
Colorado Springs, CO 80909

Submitted via email (kacie@usathlete.org)

Re: Request for Investigation

Dear Ms. Wallace:

We, the undersigned Team USA athletes and concerned citizens, request that you investigate USOPC's violation of its *Bylaws*, as discussed below, by its Milk Life partnership and promotion of the consumption of cow's milk to Team USA athletes and the general public.

Bylaws

According to Section 2.1 of USOPC's *Bylaws*, the mission is to empower Team USA athletes to achieve sustained competitive excellence and wellbeing. That same Section also includes the core principles of the USOPC of (1) promoting and protecting athletes' rights, safety, and wellness; (2) championing the integrity of sport; (3) engaging as a trusted and influential leader to advance the global Olympic & Paralympic Movements; (4) and honoring and celebrating the legacy of Olympic & Paralympic athletes.¹

The Milk Life partnership ("partnership") and the promotion of the consumption of cow's milk to its athletes and the general public violates Section 2.1 of the USOPC's *Bylaws*. As shown below, the partnership and related promotion of the consumption of cow's milk inhibits Team USA athletes' ability to achieve competitive excellence and wellbeing and fails to protect their safety and wellness. The partnership does not champion the integrity of sport, promote trust or advance the Olympic & Paralympic movements or honor or celebrate the legacy of Team USA athletes. In fact, it does the contrary.

a. **Lactose intolerance and malabsorption symptoms—minorities disproportionately affected**

According to the National Institutes of Health ("NIH") statistics, at least thirty-six percent (36%) of all Americans are lactose intolerant.² Even worse, those lactose intolerance statistics are even higher among persons of color—including, but not limited to, African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans and Hispanics/Latinos. In fact, persons of color are more likely to suffer from lactose malabsorption and symptoms of lactose intolerance after consuming cow's milk.³ Therefore, the Team USA Council on Racial and Social Justice should also explore the racial and social justice consequences of the partnership and related promotion of consumption of cow's milk. Individuals who are lactose intolerant experience truly uncomfortable and even painful symptoms such as bloating, diarrhea, and other gastrointestinal distress. According to NIH's statistics cited above, at least one in every three Team USA athletes may suffer from those debilitating symptoms after the consumption of cow's milk. There is little to no public awareness or education about lactose intolerance nor does the USOPC provide any such information to

¹ *USOPC Bylaws Effective June 18, 2020*, <https://www.teamusa.org/Footer/Legal/Governance-Documents> (accessed October 5, 2020)

² National Institutes of Health, *Definition & Facts for Lactose Intolerance*, <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/lactose-intolerance/definition-facts#morelikely> (accessed on October 5, 2020)

³ *Id.*

its athletes. Because of this lack of information and awareness, many Team USA athletes suffer in silence, as they have no idea what is causing the debilitating lactose intolerance symptoms.

b. Asthma and breathing difficulties

Excessive cow's milk consumption has been linked to increased respiratory tract mucus production and asthma.⁴⁵ Asthma is the most common chronic medical condition found in Olympic athletes.⁶ In fact, at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996, twenty percent (20%) of the Team USA athletes had asthma.⁷

c. Increased cancer risk

Because cow's milk contains hormones from a pregnant cow, human consumption of cow's milk has been strongly linked to the development of hormone-dependent cancers such as breast, ovarian, and prostate cancer.⁸

d. Cardiovascular disease

Consuming foods high in saturated and trans fats, like cow's milk, are also detrimental to cardiovascular health.⁹

Conclusion

In light of the above, the partnership is at odds with the most basic mission of the USPOC--the health and athletic performance of its athletes. Accordingly, the undersigned Team USA athletes and concerned citizens request that the Ombudsman investigate this matter to find the partnership and related promotion of the consumption of cow's milk to be in violation of Section 2.1 of the USOPC's *Bylaws*.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. We will consider legal recourse if we don't receive a response to our request within thirty (30) days.

Sincerely,

Alex Morgan, Soccer, Captain Team USA, Olympic Gold Medalist 2012, 2x World Cup Champion
Dotsie Bausch, Track Cycling, 2012 Silver
Heather Mitts Feeley, Soccer, 3 x Gold, 2004, 2008, 2012
Jennie Reed, Track Cycling, 2004, 2008, 2012 Silver
Dustin Watten, Volleyball, Team USA, World Cup Champion
Michelle Akers, Soccer, Olympic Gold, World Cup Champion, top female soccer players of all time

⁴ Bartley, J and McGlashan, S. *Does milk increase mucus production?* Medical hypotheses 2010; 74(4):732-4.

⁵ Frosh A, Cruz C, Wellstead D, Stephens J. *Effect of dairy diets on nasopharyngeal mucus secretion.* Laryngoscope. 2019 Jan; 129(1): 13-17

⁶ Fitch KD *An overview of asthma and airway hyper-responsiveness in Olympic athletes* Br J Sports Med 2012; 46(6) 413-416

⁷ Arie S *What can we learn from asthma in elite athletes?* BMJ 2012; 344:e2556

⁸ Ganmaa D, Sato A. *The possible role of female sex hormones in milk from pregnant cows in the development of breast, ovarian and corpus uteri cancers.* Med Hypotheses 2005; 65(6):1028-37.

⁹ de Souza RJ, Mente A, Maroleanu A, Cozma AI, Ha V, Kishibe T, Uleryk E, Budylowski P, Schünemann H, Beyene J, Anand SS, *Intake of saturated and trans unsaturated fatty acids and risk of all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes: systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies.* BMJ. 2015 Aug 11;351:h3978. doi: 10.1136/bmj.h3978.

Tamara Jenkins Cheek, Canoe/Kayak, 2000. President Southern California Olympians and Paralympians
Rebecca Soni, Swimming, 2008, 2012, 3 Gold & 3 Silver
Leslie Osborne, Soccer, Team USA, FIFA World Cup player