

China Faces Weightlifting Ban After Weightlifters Lose Doping Appeal

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has dismissed the appeals filed by Cao Lei (75kg) and Liu Chunhong (69kg) who were stripped of the gold medals they won at the 2008 Beijing Olympics after they failed doping tests conducted eight years later.

In January, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) ordered the two Chinese female weightlifters to return their medals from the Beijing Games after re-tests of samples tested positive for prohibited substances. Lei and Chunhong tested positive for banned [human growth hormones](#). Compatriot Chen Xiexia, who won gold in the 48kg category in Beijing, was also disqualified by the IOC.

In a statement, the CAS said it had upheld decision of the International Olympic Committee against the two athletes. CAS said, the athletes as a consequence are disqualified from the events in which they participated: Chunhong Liu – Women’s 69kg (gold medal), and Lei Cao – Women’s 75kg (gold medal).

Liu was also the 2004 Athens Olympics champion in her weight class. Chen and Cao were world champions in 2007. Lei and Chunhong both tested positive for GHRP-2 that is known to stimulate the production of growth hormone while Liu also tested positive for [Sibutramine](#), a banned stimulant. The IOC disciplinary commission, because of the similarities of the cases, urged the International Weightlifting Federation to investigate Chinese team coaches and officials. The IOC had then remarked that this suggests a possible involvement of the athlete’s entourage in these cases and the IWF is invited to investigate that situation and, if adequate, to take action against relevant people in the athlete’s entourage.

The lawyer for both athletes argued to the Court of Arbitration for Sport that the doping cases should be dropped as GHRP-2 was not specifically named in the prohibited list of substances published by the World Anti-Doping Agency. The single judge of CAS accepted the IOC case that a section of the list relating to "hormones and related substances" applied in these cases.

The gold medals won by Liu and Cao are now set to be reassigned to Oksana Slivenko of Russia and Kazakhstan’s Alla Vazhenina respectively. The medal of Chen has already been re-allocated to Chen Weiling of Taipei.

Under new rules adopted by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), a country can be banned for up to a period of four years if three of its lifters test positive in drug tests within a year. It is believed that China, in this first instance, may be handed a ban of one year. The IWF had promised automatic bans if a nation had three athletes testing positive in the IOC’s Beijing and London retests.

In June, the International Olympic Committee warned that [weightlifting](#) event could be dropped from the 2024 Olympics because of repeated doping failures. About 50 weightlifters have delivered positive results in drug retesting from Beijing 2008 and London 2012 Olympics. Thomas Bach, the President of IOC, had remarked the International Weightlifting Federation has until December 2017 to deliver a satisfactory report to the IOC on how they will address the massive doping problems this sport is facing.