

## **MEDIA RELEASE 28 July 2011**

### **Tribunal allows speed skater's appeal against non selection for NZ team**

The Sports Tribunal has allowed an appeal by Samantha Michael against a decision of New Zealand Federation of Roller Sports ("Roller Sports") not to select her for the New Zealand Junior Women's team to compete at the 2011 World Championships in South Korea.

The New Zealand speed skating team for the World Championships selected by Roller Sports consisted of senior men, junior men and a senior woman. No skaters were selected for the junior women's team. Ms Michael contended she should have been selected for the junior women's team.

Roller Sports acknowledged Ms Michael as the best junior female speed skater in the country but considered she was not able to meet the selection criteria in terms of a Top 10 placing.

When Ms Michael inquired about her non selection, she was provided reasons for her non selection, specifically that the selectors considered she had not realised her potential since the 2007 World Championships and in their opinion considered she had a fitness problem.

Ms Michael achieved ninth place in the 2007 World Championships, which was the only top 10 result for a New Zealand junior skater in the last five years. In 2008, she fell and broke her wrist and collarbone which took her out of the sport until 2009 when she achieved two top 20 placings. She decided not to participate in 2010 to allow full recovery and return her fitness and confidence back to 2007 levels. In January 2011 she moved to Timaru to start intensive training, including fitness training, under an internationally regarded coach as well as training with the New Zealand woman's champion.

Ms Michael appealed her non selection on a number of grounds, most of which the Tribunal dismissed. The Tribunal emphasised it is concerned primarily with process not the merits of the selection decision. It is not its role to substitute its evaluation. It was not influenced by comparative results which the selectors were well capable of evaluating.

The Tribunal upheld her appeal on process grounds that selection criteria were not properly followed or implemented in relation to determining her prospects of a top 10 finish and that the selectors had not properly brought to account Ms Michael's potential at international level when she moves to senior ranks. The Tribunal considered the 2007 top 10 result had to be evaluated against injury and the recovery process. Too much emphasis should not be placed on one race, when she finished second to the New Zealand woman's champion, when the selectors concluded she showed a lack of aggression. The Tribunal also considered selectors had not assessed her fitness on the evidence available in relation to World Championship prospects, particularly in light of her recent training.

The Tribunal referred back the matter back to Roller Sports for reconsideration in accordance with the selection criteria and expressly recorded this was not a direction to select.