

U.S. TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETES PROTEST OLYMPIC RULE 40



On Monday, runner Sanya Richards-Ross said that the Olympic Twitter protest by American Olympic athletes of restrictions on promotion of sponsors is in support of their peers who struggle financially to continue playing their sports. During the third day of the London Games, multiple track and field athletes from the United States started their campaign on Twitter. Their tweets target rule 40 of the Olympic Charter. Rule 40 of the Olympic Charter does not allow athletes to take part in advertising for anyone but the official sponsors of the Olympics during the Summer Games. "People see the Olympic Games, when athletes are at their best but they don't see the three or four years before when many of my peers are struggling to stay in the sport," Richards-Ross said. Richards-Ross has won the Olympic 4x400 meters relay twice. "The majority of track and field athletes don't have sponsors. In the sport, a lot of my peers have second and third jobs to be able to do this. We understand that the IOC is protecting its sponsors but we want to have a voice as well." The 11 international companies that sponsor and help pay for the Olympics are protected by rule 40. Some of those companies include Coca-Cola, Visa and McDonald's, all of whom pay \$100 million each for global rights to sponsor the Winter and Summer Olympic Games for four years. Sponsors and companies of National Olympic Committees, even the United States Olympic Committee, do not have to follow the rules that were written to stop 'ambush marketing' or to prevent non-sponsors from obtaining publicity for free because of the Olympic Games. "Only two percent of U.S. athletes are able to tweet about their sponsors because only two percent of athletes have USOC or IOC sponsors," said Richards-Ross. Mark Adams, the spokesman for the International Olympic Committee said that the ban occurs just one month every four years. He also said that Rule 40 is "entirely the right thing to do" because Rule 40 supports athletes who depend on the IOC for money. Close to 92 percent of the IOC's revenues are returned to its stakeholders. The IOC stakeholders include international federations, Games organizers and National Olympic Committees. "A huge number of athletes would understand why we are doing this and not endorse products that do not give money to the Olympic movement," Adams said. Earnings for track and field athletes from the U.S. continue to decline, especially over the previous two decades. Ed Moses was the Olympic hurdles champion in 1976 and in 1984 and he said that the ability to earn money was much higher back then than it is now. "Track and field has fallen behind a lot of the professional sports," Moses said. "In 1983, I was making more than professional NFL quarterbacks in the United States, being an amateur athlete. There is nobody in track and field who can even get close to those guys now, not even one person." Richards-Ross said that the track and field athletes do not want to distract the team with the protest. "We don't want to start a war because we want to come out here and run well," she said.

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