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Final Decision of the Disciplinary Commission

Case No. 2025-02

23 June 2025

In the matter of

THE INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

Mr Benoit LAVOIE, Vice President Figure Skating,

Mr Fabio BIANCHETTI, Chair of Technical Committee Single & Pairs,

c/o International Skating Union ("ISU")

Complainants

represented by

Prof Dr Michael Geistlinger, ISU Legal Advisor

against

Ms Dr Katalin BALCZO

Alleged Offender

and

Hungarian National Skating Federation (HNSF)

Interested ISU Member

Regarding Violations of the ISU Code of Ethics and Duties of a Judge

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I. History of the Procedure

1. On 29 March 2025 the ISU Vice President Figure Skating Mr. Benoit Lavoie and the Chair of the Singles and Pairs Technical Committee Mr. Fabio Bianchetti on behalf of the International Skating Union (ISU) (hereinafter referred to as the "**Complainant**"), filed a complaint against the Alleged Offender together with eight exhibits.
2. On 7 April 2025, following appointment of DC Panel Members (hereinafter referred to as "**DC Panel**"), the Statement of Complaint, Exhibits and Statements of Independence from the three Disciplinary Commission Panel Members were sent to the Alleged Offender and to the Interested ISU Member by email. These documents were also sent to the Alleged Offender by DHL courier.
3. The Alleged Offender and Interested Party were invited, by the ISU Disciplinary Commission, in Order No 1, to file a Statement of Reply within 21 days upon receipt of the complaint.
4. On 14 April 2025 (within the 21-day period), the DC Panel received from the Alleged Offender by e-mail the Statement of Response, then on 16 April 2025 the same Statement of Response as attached letter to the e-mail and finally on 26 April 2025 the Supplement to the Statement of Response.
5. On 26 April 2025 (within the 21-day period), the DC Panel received from the Hungarian National Skating Federation as Interested Member, the Statement of Clarification.
6. All the Statements from the Alleged Offender and from the Interested Member were forwarded to the Complainants.

II. Procedural Matters

7. According to Article 25, Paragraph 1 of the ISU Constitution 2024, the ISU Disciplinary Commission serves as a first instance authority to hear and decide all charges referred to it by an ISU authority against an Alleged Offender accused of a disciplinary or ethical offence.
8. In the "Declaration for Competitors and Officials entering ISU Events" signed on 17 July 2024, the Alleged Offender confirms:

I/we, the undersigned,

I) accept and undertake to fully comply with the ISU Constitution and all ISU Statutes as defined in Art. 39 of the ISU Constitution, in particular the ISU Code of Ethics (ISU Communication 2450 and any update), the ISU Anti-Doping Rules and Anti-Doping Procedures and all related and otherwise applicable anti-doping rules replicating or derived from the WADA Code including the List of Prohibited Substances and Methods and all other International Standards and Technical Documents issued by WADA,

and

II) accept the jurisdiction of the ISU Disciplinary Commission, accept the authority of any other competent National Anti-Doping Organization disciplinary authority, accept the exclusive jurisdiction of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne, Switzerland as the arbitration tribunal authorized to issue final and binding awards in all matters under the ISU Statutes, in particular the ISU Anti-Doping Rules, and/ or under other applicable national anti-doping rules.

9. According to Article 25 Paragraph 6 a) of the ISU Constitution 2024 the Complaint must be filed with the Disciplinary Commission within one year of learning of the facts or events, which constitute a disciplinary or ethical offence.
10. The present case arises out of an ISU International Figure Skating Competition before the Short Program of Junior Pair Skating at the Bavarian Open 2025 in Oberstdorf (Germany), on 22 January 2025, where the Alleged Offender participated as a judge. The Statement of Complaint arrived at the ISU Disciplinary Commission via e-mail on 29 March 2025 and respects the one year time limit. Therefore, the DC has jurisdiction to hear and decide the present case.
11. According to Article 4, Para. 1 of the ISU Disciplinary Commission Rules of Procedure (Communication No. 2551) the DC rules on Complaints brought before it pursuant to the applicable provisions of the ISU Statutes, in particular the ISU Constitution, the General Regulations, the Special Regulations, other special rules, including the ISU Code of Ethics, the ISU Anti-Doping Rules, the ISU Anti-Doping Procedures, the Technical Rules, the DC Rules of Procedure, and other decisions of the ISU Council made in accordance with Article 17 of the Constitution, communicated and published in accordance with the provisions of Article 28 of the Constitution and general principles of law.

12. According to Article 3, Para. 2 of the DC Rules of Procedure, the proceedings are based upon the written submissions of the Parties. The Panel, at its sole discretion, may decide to hold a hearing.

III. Facts

13. The Alleged Offender is a Hungarian International Referee for Single and Pair skating and an ISU Judge for Single and Pair skating. At the Bavarian Open 2025, she served on the Panel of Judges for the Junior Pairs competition.
14. On 22 January 2025, after the Initial Judges Meeting, the Alleged Offender approached another judge in the judges' room (the contacted judge) and asked if the contacted judge knew the new Hungarian Junior Pairs couple. The Alleged Offender mentioned that the Pair needed the minimum technical score for the Junior World Championships.
15. The contacted judge told the Alleged Offender that she judged what she sees and that she does not care about point limits. The Alleged Offender continued, referring to their coach, and asked if the contacted judge could support them.
16. The contacted judge reported this situation to the Referee of the competition. Another Judge from another nation (the witness judge), also reported this incident to the Referee, and had been a witness to the short discussion between the contacted judge and the Alleged Offender.
17. On the evening of 23 January 2025, the Alleged Offender approached the contacted judge again, apologized to the contacted judge and told her that should not think of her as a bad judge. The contacted judge replied that she was aware of her duties as a judge and the Code of Ethics. The Alleged Offender cried and said that she was under pressure from the Federation and added that it was also the government, and that they were all Russians. The contacted judge was not clear what the Alleged Offender meant by that. The contacted judge informed the Referee about this second conversation as well.
18. Subsequently, the contacted judge described the entire incident in her written statement dated 14 March 2025.
19. The Referee for this Junior Pairs competition described the whole incident in the Referee's Report as a case of non-compliance of judge Mrs. Katalin Blaczo with the Code of Ethics 2024 (ISU Comm. 2641). A judge, the contacted judge, had reported the facts. The Referee reported that before the Short Programme for the Junior Pairs, the Referee was

approached by Mrs. Balczo regarding the Hungarian Junior couple competing at the Bavarian Open 2025. Mrs. Balczo informed the contacted judge that the Hungarian junior couple had not yet met the minimum combined TES (Total Element Score) for the Junior Worlds 2025 in Debrecen. Mrs. Balczo asked the contacted judge could help them. The contacted judge replied that she knew of her duties as a judge and ended the conversation. A few moments later, the witness judge came also to the Referee to report the incident, and had been witness of the short discussion.

20. The witness judge confirmed the incident as described by the contacted judge in her written, undated statement, and added that at the end of the incident, Mrs. Katalin Blaczo apologized to the contacted judge.
21. The Alleged Offender declared in her short Statement of Response, which was sent to the Disciplinary Commission by e-mail on 14 April 2025, that she had been a member of the Skating Family since 1982, so for more than 40 years. Throughout this time she had only ever received one judging assessment, and that had nothing to do with National Bias. During her career as a judge, she stated she had always performed to the best of her abilities and had been dedicated to fairness. Regarding the case in Bavarian Open 2025 in Obersdorf she stated she made a mistake whilst under immense pressure, and she took responsibility for the incident. She continued to state that in three years time she would turn 70 years old and a ban of two years for her actions would practically end her contribution as an ISU judge.
22. Subsequently, on 26 April 2025 the Alleged Offender delivered a short Supplement to her Statement of Response, in which she wrote that she did not mention the Federation; however, it was expected that the male member of the pair (as the only Hungarian-born skater) should be a participant at the World Junior Championships. This atmosphere oppressed her personally, so she made an inappropriate decision.
23. The Interested ISU Member, the Hungarian National Skating Federation (HNSF), through its President Mr. Lajos Kosa, sent the Disciplinary Commission a Statement of Clarification dated 24 April 2025 which responded primarily to the part of the contacted judge's testimony where it stated that the Alleged Offender said she was under pressure from her Federation.
24. The Interested ISU Member stated that the Hungarian National Skating Federation (HNSF) affirms its unwavering respect for the independence and integrity of all judges. Decisions made by Judges in favor of clean sport are recognized as the result of their expertise and personal judgment. It is important to strongly emphasize that HNSF had never exerted pressure on any judges to benefit Hungarian Athletes, nor has it ever engaged in or encouraged any form of collusion with judges to gain advantages for Hungarian Athletes.

The HNSF stated it remained fully committed to upholding the principles and regulations of the ISU and clean sport, as it has consistently done in the past.

V. Law and Application to this Case

25. By Article 430 General e) of the ISU Special Regulations and Technical Rules Single & Pair and Ice Dance the Alleged Offender, as an ISU Official, is bound to the ISU Code of Ethics.
26. The Alleged Offender acted as Judge at the Junior Pair Skating Competition at the Bavarian Open 2025 and, thus, as an ISU Official falls under the personal scope of the ISU Code of Ethics, as per Article 2.1. In addition, the Alleged Offender has signed the Declaration of Officials, most recently on 17 July 2024 for the season 2024/2025.
27. As per its Announcement, sanctioned by the ISU, the Bavarian Open 2025 was an International Competition and, thus, an ISU activity as in Articles 1 and 2.2 of the ISU Code of Ethics. Protecting an International Competition from manipulation is clearly an ISU interest. Therefore, according to Article 2.2. a) of the ISU Code of Ethics, the issue falls under the material scope of that Code.
28. Article 3, first part of the ISU Code of Ethics reads as follows:

"Persons subject to this Code of Ethics shall:
- exemplify, by their conduct and by their written and oral communications, the highest standards of honesty, respect, fairness, fair play, ethical behavior, and sporting attitude and shall not act in any manner which might damage the reputation of the ISU or the ISU sports;
- inspire internal and public confidence in the fairness, honesty and integrity of the ISU, the ISU sports and all who act under the auspices of the ISU sports."
29. The Panel affirms the positive actions of the contacted judge, the witness judge and the event Referee, in immediately reporting this incident.
30. The Panel finds it proven that the actions the Alleged Offender is accused of occurred as described in the Statement of Complaint. These actions are confirmed by direct witnesses the contacted judge and the witness judge and also confirmed indirectly by the Referee's Report. In addition, the Alleged Offender also confirms and admits that she contacted the judge in order to help obtain the minimum technical score for the Hungarian Junior pair so that they could qualify for the upcoming Junior Worlds 2025 in Debrecen, Hungary.

31. By the Alleged Offender's attempt to influence another judge in the Junior Pair Skating competition at the Bavarian Open to give better marks to the Hungarian pair so that they could achieve the Minimum Technical Score for the Junior World Championships, the Alleged Offender did not respect honesty, nor fairness, nor fair play. Her behavior was unethical, and she did not show sporting attitude.
32. The Alleged Offender's behavior damages the reputation of the ISU and the sport of figure skating. The community of skaters, their support personnel, sponsors and suppliers, and the general public must be able to rely on objective judging of figure skating. As soon as doubts arise about the objectivity of judging, the sport appears to be corrupt. The Alleged Offender, thus, has violated Article 3 of the ISU Code of Ethics and at the same time Article 430 General, e) of the ISU Special Regulations and Technical Rules, Single & Pair and Ice Dance.
33. The Alleged Offender has also violated Article 12.1 of the ISU Code of Ethics, which reads as follows:

"12.1 Persons subject to this Code of Ethics shall refrain from any action or attempt to improperly influence or manipulate the course and/or results of any Skating event under the jurisdiction of the ISU in any manner that is contrary to sporting ethics and sporting conduct or the principle of fair play."
34. By approaching the contacted judge in the Junior Pair Skating Competition, who could have then manipulated her results, the Alleged Offender set in place a relevant action and attempted *"to improperly influence or manipulate the course and/or results of a Skating event under the jurisdiction of the ISU."* The manner used was contrary to sporting ethics and sporting conduct, but also to the principle of fair play.
35. The Alleged Offender's action is to be considered as most serious, because it hits the core of the ISU sport of Junior Pair Skating, which depends on the reliability and honesty of judging. Rankings in Junior Pair Skating depend on judging. If one cannot trust the honesty of judging, there is no fair play in that sport. This sport is then corrupted and not worthy of being an ISU discipline.
36. The ISU is permanently improving its technical and physical support to achieve the best possible judging system. The Alleged Offender's actions undermine this aim of the ISU.
37. Since the Alleged Offender, by her attempt to instigate the contacted judge to favor the Hungarian Junior pair, she showed bias for the Hungarian pair and against the others and, thus, was not *"completely impartial and neutral at all times"*. She also violated Article 430

General f) of the ISU Special Regulations and Technical Rules Single & Pair and Ice Dance.

38. The Complainants accept that it is the first time the Alleged Offender has been witnessed attempting to manipulate a Competition during her almost 40 years of judging. The Complainants also accept that the Alleged Offender later apologized to the contacted judge for her attempt and obviously regretted her action. Nevertheless, the Complainants submit the appropriate sanction for the Alleged Offender is suspension from all ISU activities for two years.
39. The Panel recognizes and supports the efforts of the ISU to rigorously to follow up any attempt of adducing judges to manipulate judging. It is in the interests of safeguarding the integrity of the sport of Figure Skating to deter other persons from acting in manner similar to that of the Alleged Offender.
40. The ISU Disciplinary Commission has dealt with several cases in the past where judges have attempted to influence other judges to favor some skaters by incorrectly evaluating their performances. In the past, the ISU Disciplinary Commission has sanctioned judges for similar acts with a two year suspension from all ISU activities (or even a life ban). However, in all of these cases, the accused judges denied their intention or actions and thus never regretted their actions.
41. The Complainants accept, and it is clear from the Alleged Offender's Statement of Response, that the Alleged Offender realized that her actions were wrong. She apologized to the contacted Judge and expressed genuine and sincere regret for her failure.
42. The Panel has taken this all into account when rendering its Decision, including that in almost 40 years of serving as an International and ISU Judge, the Alleged Offender has never committed a similar offence.
43. Based on the above considerations, the Panel rules as follows:

VI. Decision

1. Ms. Dr. Katalin Balcó is found guilty of a violation of the duties of judges and the ISU Code of Ethics 2024 at the ISU international competition - Bavarian Open 2025.
2. A one year suspension from participation in all ISU activities as an International Judge, International Referee and ISU Judge is imposed on Dr. Katalin Balcó, beginning on August 1, 2025 and ending on July 31, 2026.
3. The parties bear their own costs.



Sue Petricevic (Chair)



Dr. Allan Böhm



Jean-François Monette

The present decision is subject to appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, Avenue de Beaumont 2, CH-1012 Lausanne, Switzerland, within 21 days upon receipt of the decision, in accordance with Article 25 Paragraph 12 and Article 26 of the ISU Constitution.