

**Written Statement of Paul Hamm**  
***Oversight Hearing on "The Olympic Family -- Functional or Dysfunctional?"***  
**June 9, 2005**

Hello. I want to thank the committee for inviting me to speak about my experiences at the 2004 Olympics, and the concerns I have about the three federations overseeing my sport: The United States Olympic Committee, The Federation of International Gymnastics, or FIG, and USA Gymnastics.

It is interesting that this hearing is entitled "*The Olympic Family - Functional or Dysfunctional?*" The answer is both, but throughout the controversy surrounding my gold medal these three organizations acted in many ways that were dysfunctional. All three bear responsibility in the creation and continuation of the controversy.

I went to Athens to compete in the sport of gymnastics for my country, for my team, for my family, and for myself. After a come-from-behind performance I was awarded the gold medal in the all-around event.

The next day one of my opponents, Yang Tae Young from Korea, protested the results. Months later the highest sports court in the world (CAS) ruled that I was, in fact, the rightful champion.

From the day the Koreans protested until I returned home eight days later, no one from FIG ever spoke to me about the situation. No one from the USOC ever spoke to me. Bob Colorossi, President of USAG, only spoke to me twice, to say that nothing could change the medal standings, according to the rules.

During these same days and without my knowledge or consent the USOC and USAG entered into negotiations with the Koreans about the disposition of my medal. Without my knowledge or consent the USOC and USAG spoke to the press about the notion of awarding a second gold medal. They allowed me to be surprised and blindsided by questions from the press about their position. The USOC met with the International Olympic Committee to propose the double gold idea without discussing it with me. The IOC rejected their proposal.

On the day I returned home, I was informed of an impending conference call from the USOC, described to my agent, Sheryl Shade, as a marketing call. My parents and my agent got wind that this call would be momentous and arranged to have Tom Schreibel, Congressman Sensenbrenner's chief of staff, participate in the call, along with my freshly hired attorney, Kelly Crabb.

The call began by informing me of a letter from Bruno Grandi, the President of FIG. This letter was addressed to me, but delivered to the Korean delegation and the USOC by way of Mr. Colorossi. It was to be released to the press. Mr. Grandi had written that he would appreciate it if I would give back the gold medal.

During the first part of this call I, and my complete team, firmly believed that the USOC's intent was to convince me to do just that. After listening to my position for the first time, and listening to the position of my representatives, we all agreed to take a break and reconvene in an hour.

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When the call resumed the first words they said were they had had a change of heart. This change of heart meant that they, now, would aggressively support me, and my medal.

In Athens the Koreans had scheduled a press conference for the next day. Even though their other gymnasts had returned to Korea, Yang Tae Young remained behind. It seems clear that they fully expected to announce a change in the medal standings. Now, actively supporting me, the USOC scheduled its own press conference in advance of the Koreans. They denounced Grandi's letter in the strongest terms and came out for the first time absolutely in defense of my medal. The Koreans cancelled their press conference.

Two days later the Koreans filed an appeal with CAS.

Originally the USOC made no offer of either legal or financial support to defend my medal. My family was told to start building a defense fund. It was the efforts of Representative Sensenbrenner and others that persuaded them to agree to pay for and mount a vigorous defense of my medal.

To this day I cannot think of any honorable reason why the USOC failed to support me and my medal flat out; and why they did support the idea of double golds. Their own athlete had won the Olympic competition fair and square, by the rules on the field of play.

I believe that if the USOC had stepped in to vigorously support me from the beginning of the controversy much of the succeeding pain, expense, damage and embarrassment to sport could have been avoided.

The same thing can be said about USA Gymnastics. I can only speculate why USAG didn't consistently and vigorously support me. I do know that USAG and its President, Mr. Colorossi, were not happy that I had decided not to participate in the USAG tour after the Olympics. At the time Mr. Colorossi was also actively seeking a position on FIG's Executive Committee.

These three groups failed to defend the basic principle of sport: play by the rules. They also showed a disregard for the interests of athletes. No one bothered to talk to me, but many tried to speak for me. I believe that no one should negotiate or represent an athlete without their prior agreement and expressed consent. That is exactly the type of thing that belongs in an Athlete's Bill of Rights.

There was a time in Athens when I felt that the whole world was against me, but I have learned that I wasn't alone. I especially want to thank all the Americans who have stood behind me with their unwavering support.

Again, thanks to the Committee for inviting me to speak, and I would be happy to answer any questions.