

French Coach Black Carded in Epee Event

Contributed by Craig Harkins
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During a tightly contested bout in the women's epee event at the 2008 Olympic Games, French coach Jean Francois Di Martino was given a black card and excluded from the fencing field of play for the remainder of the competition.

The incident occurred during the elimination match between Laura Flessel Colovic (FRA) and Weiping Zhong (CHN) in the round of 16. With the match tied at 10-10 and under 20 seconds to go in the 3rd and final period of fencing, both fencers relaxed and stepped back from each other.

The referee called passivity and reset the fencers to start a 1 minute overtime period. Flessel was awarded priority in overtime.

In the overtime period, if the bout score remains tied at the end of the final minute, the fencer with priority is awarded the victory.

Just a few seconds into the overtime period, Flessel scored the touch and started to celebrate her victory. The referee ruled that the fencers had to fence out the remainder of the period because the overtime was triggered by the passivity call. (Normally the one minute overtime period is a sudden-death period in which any score ends the bout.)

The decision infuriated French coach Jean Francois di Martino who spent the next several minutes berating the officials before he was black carded and escorted from the venue. The FIE reported that earlier in the day the French coach received a yellow card (warning) for a similar offense.

The ruling was clarified by the FIE who issued a statement quoting the regulation:

T87.3 of the FIE rules state:

"When both fencers make clear their unwillingness to fight during the third period of a direct elimination bout; i) if there has been no occurrence of the offense during the proceeding periods, the Referee will award a warning (yellow card) against each fencer and will proceed to a last minute of fencing. This last minute, which will be fenced in its entirety will be decisive and be preceded by a drawing of lots to decide the winner should the scores be equal at the end of the minute."

The FIE reported that di Martino was excluded for the remainder of the 2008 Olympic Games following the black card offense.