

Note by Mr David Goodfellow:

Rule 7.5.8.2 clearly states “Maximum sling width is 40 mm”. However, Rule 6.8.13 states, “A Jury must decide all cases that are not provided for in the ISSF Rules. Such decisions must be made within the spirit and intent of ISSF Rules”. All members of Juries are often confronted with situations where there is no specific guidance to assist in the interpretation of a rule, and are appointed for the purpose of considering the rule and circumstances and giving a fair and reasoned decision. In this case, based on the photograph that I have seen, it appears that the way in which the sling was being used did increase its width and exceeded the permitted 40mm at the point where it passed around the hand, and if I had been present I would probably have made the same decision! Most athletes, including myself when I was competitive, use a sling tensioner or keeper to hold both sides of the sling together so as to form a single entity, as opposed to a loop which could obviously move apart which is what had happened in this case. That rule has been in existence for at least the 24 years that I have held a Judges licence and to my knowledge has not caused any difficulty in interpretation. I could possibly have been a Jury member at competitions where Mr Leppa had used the sling in the way that has been described but if so I had not noticed it, and apparently neither had many other Judges during that time. The fact that the athlete had been using it before without a problem, or that it passed EC, is irrelevant because the circumstances of use might have changed. I have been asked by Paul Gumn to suggest a form of words that could be incorporated in Rule 7.5.8.2 to clarify the intent and hopefully prevent a recurrence of the circumstances, which I will do.

That said, there are clear procedures to be followed in circumstances where an athlete or Coach can protest against a Jury decision. Those procedures seem to have been followed, with an initial appeal to the Range Jury, followed by the Jury of Appeal, all of whom are experienced Judges licence holders, who all agreed that the original interpretation was correct and did not uphold the Appeal. Rule 6.16.6 states “**The decision of the Jury of Appeal is final**”. Undoubtedly, the Athlete, his Coach, and the Finnish Shooting Sport Federation which includes his father, are understandably aggrieved by the eventual outcome. I do, however, strongly object to the fact that the Finnish Shooting Sport Federation are not prepared to accept the decision of the Jury of Appeal and widely circulated this matter to a long mailing list, including members of the Executive and Athletes Committees. The email included the Protest Form, the Jury Decision and the Appeal form to the Jury of Appeal plus a letter containing a thinly veiled criticism of the Jury and the suggestion that they acted in a biased and unsportsmanlike manner. This is grossly unfair and undermines the Jury who made their decision based on the ‘spirit and intent of the Rule’ as is their responsibility and prerogative in circumstances where a rule is unclear or misunderstood. I trust that the Finnish Federation can be advised accordingly!

Of course any Federation can ask for a clarification of a Rule, but there is an established procedure which should have been followed and not contained and circulated in such an email.

I trust that this explains the situation to the best of my understanding, and will ensure that there is no repetition in Cairo.

Regards,

David