

U.S. favorite Warren upset at Beijing Olympics

BEIJING (AP) — While Lee Ok-sung got his glove fixed with 35 seconds left, Rau'shee Warren turned in his neutral corner and searched for a clear voice in the cacophony of shouted advice.

Warren swore he heard somebody in the stands yelling "Move! Move!", meaning the world champion flyweight had the lead and should simply avoid getting punched to win. His coaches were screaming the opposite message from their ringside seats, because Warren actually trailed 9-8 and needed to attack.

In a painfully perfect illustration of what might be the U.S. boxing team's biggest problem, Warren listened to what he thought his friends, family or teammates were telling him.

It cost him a chance at the medal he waited four years to hang around his mother's neck.

Warren spent the final moments of his second Olympics with his gloves at his waist Tuesday night, dancing in a pointless circle around the South Korean former world champion.

The stunning loss—and

the head-scratching way it ended—crushed the first two-time American boxing Olympian in 30 years.

"It doesn't feel real," Warren said, pulling up his red tank top to dry his tears. "I didn't feel like I lost the fight, because I was fighting hard, doing everything the coaches were telling me. To get this far and then lose, I don't even know what happened."

After losing his first fight in Athens as a raw 17-year-old light flyweight, Warren declined pro boxing's riches and stuck around the amateur game solely for a trip to Beijing and his desire to present gold to his mother, Paulette. Instead, he got eight minutes of action capped by 35 seconds of awful confusion.

Warren didn't even know he had lost until he heard the news from U.S. coach Dan Campbell. He threw his headgear in disgust before the tears rolled, though he later apologized for being "unsportsmanlike."

"There was so much going on in the crowd," Warren said. "When I just stood there at the end, I thought I was up. To wait this long, and then to lose after one fight ..."



USA's Rau'shee Warren, left, fights Lee Oksung of Korea during a men's flyweight 51 kg preliminary boxing match at the Beijing 2008 Olympics in Beijing, on Tuesday.

Warren broke into sobs again.

"I was confused about why he stopped (punching)," Campbell said. "He said he heard somebody saying to him to move (and avoid Lee). He was looking up in the stands. I don't know what he

thought they were saying."

Earlier at Workers' Gymnasium, Juan Carlos Payano of the Dominican Republic upset two-time Olympic medalist Jerome Thomas of France. A few hours later, China sent its fifth fighter through to the next round

with bantamweight Gu Yu's win over Joe Murray of Britain, who angrily blamed it on a judging bias toward the hometown fighters.

Russian bantamweight Sergey Vodopyanov also advanced—but Warren, a fellow world champion, won't be joining him. Warren was a medal favorite for the tumultuous American team, along with welterweight Demetrius Andrade, another world champion who barely won his debut fight Sunday in Beijing.

USA Boxing instituted a strict training program and revolutionary coaching methods in an attempt to return to prominence, but Campbell's staff has been battered by complaints from the fighters' parents and local coaches. Most of the boxers thought the residency program in Colorado Springs, Colo., was onerous, and some discounted Campbell's coaching abilities.

The results of all that dissonance might be showing up in Beijing: Warren's loss follows bantamweight contender Gary Russell Jr.'s failure to make weight, along with early losses by Sadam

Ali and Javier Molina. Just five U.S. boxers remain in the Olympic field, and Campbell described himself as "close to speechless."

"For him to lose could be disheartening for some of our other guys," Campbell said. "That's going to be our biggest fear. ...I think they're most definitely going to be psyched out. We have a psychologist around, and we're going to make sure that she talks to this team, because I'm sure all of them are going to be psyched out by this."

Warren, a Cincinnati native, was the youngest boxer at the Athens Games and the youngest male athlete on the entire U.S. Olympic contingent in Greece.

No American fighter had been on two straight Olympic teams since Davey Lee Armstrong in 1972 and 1976. Although Cuba, Russia and other nations send their best amateur fighters to multiple Olympics, most Americans don't wait.

"He did what we would like to hope that other young boxers do," Campbell said. "He stayed around for four more years, and... he worked so hard in our program."

NASCAR defends firing of employee alleging bias

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NASCAR denied last Friday that a former official, now suing for racial discrimination and sexual harassment, ever complained to her superiors about such problems.

The former employee often referred to herself with racial stereotypes and was repeatedly reprimanded for tardiness and other behavioral issues, NASCAR said. In addition, NASCAR said the firing of Mauricia Grant last October was legitimate and not an act of discrimination or retaliation.

The claims were part of a 29-page document filed in response to Grant's \$225 million lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

A former technical inspector for NASCAR's second-tier Nationwide Series, Grant filed suit in June alleging 23 specific incidents of sexual harassment and 34 specific incidents of racial and gender discrimination over the two-plus years she worked for NASCAR.

Her suit alleges she was fired as retaliation for complaining to her superiors

about the way she was treated by co-workers.

NASCAR chairman Brian France has maintained there is no record of Grant ever reporting anything, and the response filed by the New York-based law firm Jackson Lewis LLP is consistent with his claims.

The response claims Grant acknowledged an understanding of NASCAR's "zero tolerance policy against discrimination and harassment in the workplace," attended mandatory training seminars on the topics in 2006 and 2007 and acknowledged her obligation to immediately report any offensive acts in accordance with written policies.

A request to speak to Grant and her attorney, Benedict P. Morelli, wasn't immediately granted.

Grant has insisted she did complain, and followed the chain of command all the way to Nationwide Series director Joe Balash. But she stopped short of telling human resources, Grant said, because she was reprimanded by that department for a separate incident that occurred two weeks after she

complained to Balash.

Grant said she viewed the reprimand, which included a threat of termination, as retaliation for complaining to Balash.

But in NASCAR's response, it claims Grant was reprimanded with a warning of termination for an altercation with a track security guard at Michigan International Speedway who had asked to see Grant's credentials as she passed through a gate.

The response does not indicate why Grant was fired, and NASCAR officials have refused to disclose the reason. But the response claims a pattern of tardiness that she was routinely reprimanded for.

NASCAR also claims several of Grant's co-workers complained about her pattern of lateness, and said it often prevented them from promptly performing their job duties. The response alleges that Grant coined the phrases "Colored People's Time" and "Mo Time" in reference to her lateness.

It's one of the few instances in the response in

which NASCAR directly addresses one of Grant's claims.

In her suit, Grant said she was often told by co-workers that she worked on "colored people time."

Grant's suit also alleged she was referred to as "Nappy Headed Mo" and "Queen Sheba," was subjected to sexual advances

from male co-workers, including two who allegedly exposed themselves to her, and graphic and lewd jokes.

NASCAR's has placed the two officials accused of exposing themselves, Tim Knox and Bud Moore, on paid administrative leave.

A third official, David Duke, was fired in April of this year for reasons

NASCAR said are unrelated to Grant's suit.

Since filing her suit, The Associated Press reviewed court documents that revealed that Grant had a restraining order filed against her in 2002 by a former boyfriend, was arrested for driving under the influence and charged last October for driving with a suspended license.



GOLDEN BOYS

Members of the U.S. relay team show their medals during an awarding ceremony after setting a world record to win the men's 4x100-meter freestyle swimmers relay final in the National Aquatics Center at the Beijing 2008 Olympics on Monday. They are from left: Cullen Jones, Jason Lezak, Michael Phelps and Garrett Weber-Gale.