



Sports » Olympics

Hall hopes to catch sail to China

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By **Janice Lloyd, USA TODAY**

Farrah Hall said it was so cold when she was practicing Saturday she thought she had hypothermia. The thing is Hall is training for the Summer Olympics — not the Winter Games.

Hall's path to the Olympics is anything but normal. She doesn't hail from the yacht club families who dominate windsurfing. Hall sold everything she owned and lived out of her van to travel around the USA to windsurfing hot spots. She's currently living at home with her parents in Annapolis, Md., where the frigid waters of the Chesapeake Bay have been her latest training ground.

Next week in Providence she finds out if she has a spot on the Olympic team, a berth she held briefly, at a series of hearings. U.S. Sailing is reopening a request for redress filed by another sailor who bumped Hall off the team at trials last October. If Hall wins, she is headed to Beijing.

"The jury said they're reopening because they believe they have new evidence that merited reconsideration," said Charles Cook, attorney for U.S. Sailing.

"My suspicion is they'll do it very quickly."

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Five jurors, three from the original redress, will hear the testimony.

Hall, 26, thought she had won the lone Olympic spot for women in the U.S. Olympic trials. But after the final race of 16, Nancy Rios told a jury a collision had torn her sail and led to her fourth-place finish. The jury agreed and upgraded Rios to second place, vaulting her ahead of Hall in the final standings.

The new evidence, to be presented Tuesday, includes photos that show, Hall said, Rios' performance wasn't affected by the collision. If she loses, Hall will file for arbitration with the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Rios, 19, of Cocoa Beach, Fla., said she is training for the Olympics. She was non-committal Monday when asked what she would do if she loses the redress: "I'll make plans depending on what the jury decides. Until I know what they base their decision on, I can't say what I'll do."

John Bertrand, a 1984 Olympic silver medalist and former America's Cup sailor, has taken up Hall's cause, helping her find legal support and sponsors. Compass Marketing comes on board for Hall on Friday.

"It's my first time of ever having a real sponsor. I'm extremely happy," said Hall, adding she couldn't afford to train in Florida this winter.

Bertrand said Hall's story "has been so inspiring to me.

"She came to the sport late. She slept in the boat park once in her boat bag because she didn't have any place else to stay. She's befriended homeless people in some of the parks she stayed in at night. This is all because of this dream of hers to compete in the Olympics."

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Go athletes. There should be no boycotting of the Olympics. It makes little common sense and would be counter productive against the background of progress that we've all witnessed over the past few decades in China. It would also be the result of confused principles.....

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