



Soldiers Shine at Olympics as Runner Wins, Loses, Wins Silver Medal

By Pablo Villa, NCO Journal

While he holds the distinction of being an All-American runner from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Spc. Paul Chelimo never won an NCAA championship.

Now, he's an Olympic medalist.

But the path to the silver medal claimed by Chelimo on Saturday night in the men's 5,000-meter race at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, wasn't easy. In fact, it was downright unusual.

The 25-year-old water treatment specialist and member of the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program at Fort Carson, Colorado, stayed with the front of the pack of 15 runners throughout the race. He opened up his stride in the final 150 meters to outkick every competitor save for the exceptional Mohamed Farah. Farah won the 10,000 and 5,000 in Rio, the same pair of races he won at the 2012 London Olympics.

But Chelimo's second-place finish was astounding, considering he was relatively unheralded and needed a frenetic effort at the end of his semifinal qualifying race just to earn a spot in the final. Nonetheless, Chelimo finished the final with a personal best time of 13:03:90, and the American celebration began as his second-place effort meant the first American medal in the race since 1964.

But on the way to a television interview, officials dropped a bombshell – Chelimo was disqualified. He was notified during the interview. A crestfallen Chelimo stepped back from the microphone but continued the interview.

"My intention was not to impede anyone," Chelimo said.

Spc. Paul Chelimo, center, opens up his stride in the final 150 meters of the 5,000-meter race at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Spc. Paul Chelimo, center, opens up his stride in the final 150 meters of the 5,000-meter race at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Spc. Paul Chelimo, center, opens up his stride in the final 150 meters of the 5,000-meter race at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Just like that, Chelimo's impressive feat was nullified. Television replays showed his left foot land slightly out of bounds while rounding a curve. He could also be seen extending his arm while bumping occurred among the pack of runners. Neither of these actions is uncommon in distance running and officials have discretion when considering whether they give runners unfair advantages. In Chelimo's case, the initial verdict was lane infringement.

But this edition of the Olympics has not been without unique appeals. The U.S. women's 4x100 relay team successfully lobbied to rerun their race after they complained of being impeded by Brazilian runners. They went on to win the gold medal.

U.S. track officials appealed Chelimo's disqualification immediately. After further review by the governing International Associations of Athletics Federations, Chelimo was reinstated as the silver medalist an hour after being stripped of the honor.

"Now, I'm really happy," Chelimo told reporters after the successful appeal. "It's the best feeling ever. It's the best, best feeling ever."

NCO helps lead boxer into history

Team USA's Olympic gold-medal drought for men's boxers will last 16 years.

But one of the country's female boxers vaulted herself into the annals of boxing with her performance Sunday. And an NCO from WCAP had a hand in it.

Claressa Shields beat Nouchka Fountijn of the Netherlands by unanimous decision for the women's middleweight boxing title. It was Shields' second consecutive gold medal win, having previously claimed the prize at the 2012 London Olympics. Shields is the first American to win back-to-back gold medals.

One of the coaches that helped her make history is an NCO.

Sgt. 1st Class Joe Guzman is part of the coaching staff led by Billy Walsh. For Guzman, who is an assistant boxing coach for WCAP, the Olympics are familiar territory. He was part of the staff for Team USA Boxing at the 2012 London Olympics as a trainer. This time around, he is a full-fledged assistant, part of a staff that includes Augie Sanchez in addition to Walsh.

The coaching staff led bantamweight Shakur Stevenson to the gold-medal match Saturday but fell short against Cuban Robeisy Ramirez Carrazana.

NCO completes pentathlon

Sgt. Nathan Schrimsher entered the final day of action in the modern pentathlon in ninth-place overall after an impressive day of fencing.

But the 24-year-old motor transport operator and WCAP member couldn't close the gap. Schrimsher finished in 11th place among the field of 36 athletes. He was the only American competing in the pentathlon.

The best performance by an American in the competition came in 1912 when George S. Patton, the man who would eventually become a famed U.S. Army general, finished in fifth place at the Summer Games in Stockholm, Sweden. ■

NCO JOURNAL

<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

