Rule 40

Guidelines for Athletes – Updated October 2019
Dear athlete,

As you enter one of the most important and rewarding periods of your career and seek to confirm your place at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, we recognise this can be a busy time with many distractions.

As your Athletes’ Commission we have been working with the British Olympic Association (BOA) to review the organisation’s current position on the commercial rights of athletes around the Games. As you may appreciate, there are many considerations around the application of Rule 40 which governs what can and can’t be done at Games-time. We want to ensure that the guidance in this document gives you the information you need and highlights what you can do with personal sponsors and how you can embrace the opportunities around the Games.

We have been able to define a new, more flexible application of Rule 40 ahead of Tokyo 2020, especially in relation to personal sponsors, giving you the opportunity to thank these sponsors at Games-time. However, we also must be aware that for all athletes to be able to compete at an Olympic Games there is a need for balance between the allowances for official Olympic sponsors and those sponsors that choose to support individual athletes.

It is worth reiterating that the BOA has a unique funding model and is one of the world’s few National Olympic Committees to receive no public or Government funds. The money raised through commercial partners and fundraising benefits all Team GB athletes and enables us to travel and compete at the Games as one of the most prepared teams.

As ever we will continue to represent athletes’ views and rights in this ongoing process with the BOA and the International Olympic Committee, whilst supporting the BOA’s ability to raise the funds necessary to support all athletes of all ages, regardless of status, and at all events.

Your views are important, and we remain here to listen, discuss and support with any questions you may have.

Best wishes with all your preparations for Tokyo 2020.

Ben Hawes  
Chair, British Olympic Association Athletes’ Commission
About the British Olympic Association (BOA)

The BOA is a not-for-profit organisation, where revenue raised goes towards supporting Team GB and providing the optimal performance environment for athletes at Summer, Winter, European & Youth Olympic Games.

Amongst other things, money raised by the BOA goes towards:

- Travel and accommodation
- Kit provision
- Games and pre-Games training facilities
- Medical and team support functions
- Optimising Games-time operations – working with sports pre-Games on planning, strategy and learning
- Engagement and leadership of programmes such as ‘Nearest and Dearest’
- Development programmes for the next generation of Olympians, such as the Ambition Programme

The BOA also has a role in developing and promoting the Olympic Movement within the UK. This includes, amongst other things, mass participation activities such as I Am Team GB and connecting with over 26,000 schools across the UK reaching over 1 million young people a year through the Get Set programme.
Team GB funding

The BOA needs to raise in excess of £60m to support Team GB during the four-year cycle up to Tokyo 2020.

During this period the BOA will have taken over 700 athletes to eight Olympic Summer and Winter Games, European Games, World Beach Games, Youth Olympic Games and European Youth Olympic Festivals.

The bulk of this money is raised from sponsorship, through domestic Team GB partners and the IOC Worldwide TOP partners – some of which filters down to National Olympic Committees.

Other revenue comes from events such as the Team GB fundraising ball, sales from licensing the Team GB name and private donors. The IOC’s Worldwide TOP partners and Team GB’s domestic partners are listed* below:

* Correct as of October 2019
What is Rule 40?

Rule 40 governs how athletes and their personal sponsors can use their image or name in any advertising (including online, broadcast, tv, radio or physical appearances) during the period of 14 July 2020 – 11 August 2020 (otherwise known as the ‘Games Period’).

Why is Rule 40 important for Team GB?

Team GB’s participation at Olympic, European and Youth Games is funded entirely by private income. The BOA does not receive any central Government or National Lottery funding. Rule 40 helps allow the BOA to generate this necessary income to fund taking all athletes – funded or unfunded – and support personnel to the Games by protecting the exclusive rights of Olympic commercial partners for a short period during the Games.

How does Team GB use this money?

Funds raised are used for numerous performance-led initiatives and support infrastructure before and during the Olympic Games, all aimed at delivering the optimum environment for every athlete to achieve their best at Games-time.
Rule 40 – what has changed?

All athletes are now permitted to promote their personal sponsors, and all personal sponsors are permitted to use athlete imagery before, after and during the Games Period in accordance with the principles in this document.

How can I benefit?

Since London 2012 we have continued to relax the application of Rule 40 to allow athletes to promote their personal sponsors in certain circumstances, including ‘thank you’ messaging during the Games.

Athletes are encouraged to embrace opportunities of personal sponsorship, including appearing in advertising for their personal sponsors through involvement in transparent and well-planned advertising campaigns before, during and after the Olympic Games.

Generic advertising continues to be permitted by the BOA for athletes and their personal sponsors and the timescale and process for informing the BOA has been simplified with the ‘in-market’ period now shortened to three months prior to the Games Period.

Some limitations on these activities during the Olympic Games help to secure funding to support Team GB’s participation in the Games, allowing all athletes to enjoy opportunities to compete regardless of their profile, sport or personal funding status.
Example opportunities

As an athlete you can:

Post or blog about your Olympic Games experience, and post imagery from the Olympic Games from personal accounts or websites.

ALLOWED
Why? No personal sponsor branding or references

Encourage your personal sponsors to read the BOA’s Rule 40 Guidelines, at: www.teamgb.com/rule-40
Example opportunities

As an athlete you can:

Send **one** ‘thank you’ message for each personal sponsor during the Games, provided it doesn’t contain any Olympic branding (e.g. a medal, or Team GB kit) or references, and doesn’t promote or endorse specific products or services. So, if you have five personal sponsors, that is five individual ‘thank yous’ you can post.

Each message can be posted at the same time across multiple social media channels and / or personal website and this shall only count as one post. In this instance paid spend/amplification is not allowed.

*Encourage your personal sponsors to read the BOA’s Rule 40 Guidelines, at:* [www.teamgb.com/rule-40](http://www.teamgb.com/rule-40)

---

**ALLOWED**

*Why?* No Olympic Games or Team GB imagery or intellectual property used. Organic tweet with no paid spend behind it.
Example opportunities

As an athlete you can:

Promote your personal sponsors – even if they conflict with the BOA's partners – **before 14 July 2020 and after 11 August 2020.**

Encourage your personal sponsors to read the BOA’s Rule 40 Guidelines, at: [www.teamgb.com/rule-40](http://www.teamgb.com/rule-40)
Other examples

During the ‘Games Period’ you cannot:

Promote your personal sponsors during the ‘Games Period’ (14 July 2020 – 11 August 2020) except for the previous, generic example of ‘thank you’ mentions.

Encourage your personal sponsors to read the BOA’s Rule 40 Guidelines, at: www.teamgb.com/rule-40
Other examples

During the ‘Games Period’ you cannot:

- Post any ‘field of play’ video from Olympic Games venues natively on your personal accounts i.e. you may retweet official rights-holding accounts such as from the BBC, Eurosport or Team GB.

**NOT ALLOWED**

Why? Sound or video of Olympic Games events or competition cannot be published.

Encourage your personal sponsors to read the BOA’s Rule 40 Guidelines, at: [www.teamgb.com/rule-40](http://www.teamgb.com/rule-40)
FAQs

**Why is Rule 40 applied by Team GB?**

Team GB is funded entirely by private partners and donors. The commercial revenue from these partners and donors is the key reason that Team GB is so well supported at the Olympic Games. This funding also allows a large cohort of athletes from different sports (irrespective of their funding status) to attend at no cost to them and with a world class support infrastructure.

To secure the necessary income to do this, partners are given certain exclusive rights when it comes to the use of Team GB and Olympic assets, such as the Olympic Rings. This protects their support of Team GB and ensures we can continue to comprehensively support our Olympic teams.

**Does Rule 40 mean that athletes are not allowed personal sponsors?**

No. We understand the importance for athletes to market themselves and optimise their commercial opportunities, and we fully support athletes working with sponsors, both as teams and individuals. However, during Games-time only, there are some commercial restrictions which Team GB athletes must follow. By accepting these limited restrictions on their activities during the Games, athletes with personal sponsorship deals are helping to secure the funding that supports all athletes’ participation in the Games, as well as the supplementary support provided at the Games, and to aspiring Olympians at Youth Olympic Games and Festivals.
How does Team GB’s application of the Rule 40 differ to other nations?

The IOC provides guidelines for Rule 40, but it is up to each National Olympic Committee (NOC) to implement and enforce Rule 40 in its own country. Using the IOC framework, each country will come up with its own rules depending on its funding structure. For example, NOCs who obtain government funding, such as Germany, have much less reason to protect their revenue so carefully, so can afford to be more flexible with their restrictions on athletes.

Although it’s good to understand how other nations interpret the rule, the differences in funding and relationships with sponsors makes the enforcement of Rule 40 a very individualised process.

What would happen if we removed Rule 40?

There will always be challenges getting the balance right, between empowering athletes and protecting the support the BOA provides to the whole team. If the rule was considerably relaxed, then there could be significant implications on the BOA’s ability to generate sponsorship income. As a National Olympic Committee, we would therefore not be able to support as many athletes travelling to the Games, provide the comprehensive preparation and training camps we do, or fund the comprehensive support staff network required, as well as the added ‘extras’ that athletes tell us they appreciate on their Olympic journeys.
FAQs

What does Rule 40 really mean for Team GB athletes during Tokyo 2020?

The application of Rule 40 historically has meant that athletes competing for Team GB at the Olympic Games were not permitted to publicly promote or thank personal sponsors. We understand how important it is for athletes to acknowledge and thank their supporters (both personal and commercial) when competing at the Games, and have added an allowance to send a public message of thanks to those who support them, during the Games.

Can my sponsors also congratulate me during the Games?

Whilst congratulatory messaging from sponsors is not permitted during Games-time, the BOA recognises that small, local businesses will want to show their support for local athletes they sponsor with messages during the Games. The BOA encourages this as far as possible provided no commercial conflicts exist with existing Olympic and Team GB sponsors. Brands and businesses should get in touch at rule40@teamgb.com to discuss their plans.

Are the any other exceptions to the enforcement of Rule 40?

The BOA is continuously striving to understand how we can empower Team GB athletes further; supporting commercial opportunities whilst protecting the commercial revenue that allows us to be ‘One Team GB’. The BOA will consider exemptions on a case-by-case basis, and athletes, their sponsors and brands are encouraged to contact the BOA at rule40@teamgb.com to discuss these matters.
Please get in touch with the BOA at rule40@teamgb.com if you have any questions.

These guidelines have been formulated in consultation with and the support of the BOA’s Athletes’ Commission. Please do not hesitate to contact the Chair of the BOA’s Athletes’ Commission directly if you would like to discuss any part of this guidance ben.hawes@teamgb.com.

These guidelines only summarise the BOA’s more detailed guidelines for agents and brands, available at www.teamgb.com/rule-40.

We encourage small, local businesses who don’t conflict with our sponsors to support you – please ask them to get in touch with us at rule40@teamgb.com.