

Athletes and citizenship: stories

Athletes who do not have the Italian citizenship have to face big difficulties: they cannot have their records recognised by the Italian federations and take part in international competitions under the Italian flag. Most of them were born, or grew up, in Italy; however, the difficulties of having the Italian citizenship, in some cases, put their careers at risk. Here are their stories.

■ Yassine Rachik

A marathon runner, Yassine came to Italy from Morocco when he was ten years old and claimed for the Italian citizenship after twelve years, in 2015. However, the length of the procedure, which lasts from two to four years, put his participation to the Under 23 European Championships at risk. For this reason, the Italian deputy of Moroccan origin, Khalid Chaouki, made a petition to help Rachik obtain the Italian citizenship soon. Thanks to the petition, the citizenship was granted and Rachik was able to compete in the European Championships representing Italy in 2015.



■ Great Nnachi

Born in Turin to Nigerian parents, at 14 years old Great set an Italian youth record in the discipline of pole vault, which was not initially recognised because she was not an Italian citizen; for this reason, she was unable to represent Italy at the European Championships. In 2021 she was named *Alfiere della Repubblica* by President Sergio Mattarella for her effort of continuing training in difficult situations and her care in helping younger athletes to train. Fortunately, in 2022, she was able to get the Italian citizenship and in 2023 she was enrolled as an athlete in the Carabinieri military corps.



■ Danielle Madam

Born in Cameroon, Danielle has lived in Italy since she was 7 years old. At the age of 14 she started competing in shot-put events and at 16 she obtained qualifications for the World Championship, but her results were not recorded as she was not an Italian citizen: the lack of continuous residency, due to having domiciles in community facilities, prevented her from obtaining citizenship. In 2020, after the case of the mock exam taken by the footballer Luis Suarez to obtain the Italian citizenship, she wrote a long post on Facebook, protesting for her situation. Her post got her a lot of solidarity and attention on the topic and in 2021 she was finally able to get the Italian citizenship after seventeen years in Italy.




■ Alessia (Olesya) Korotkova

The story of this taekwondo champion became known in 2019 when, after having won five national titles in her career since the age of 13, Olesya announced to be going to abandon the sport, as she could not respond to the national team call-up because she still hadn't obtained the citizenship she had applied for two years earlier. Alessia, who was born in Siberia but had lived in Reggio Emilia since she was 3 years old, could not even compete for Russia since she was not a resident in her native land. Her story got the attention of the authorities, who speeded up the process for the Italian citizenship, which she obtained in 2020.



1  **Which of the athletes...**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. arrived in Italy at 3 years old?
.....</p> <p>2. was born in Italy but to foreign parents?
.....</p> <p>3. was able to compete in the World Championships but her results were not recorded?</p> <p>4. got Italian citizenships thanks to a petition?
.....</p> <p>5. did not have a continuous residency in Italy, according to the authorities?</p> | <p>6. was thinking of giving up competitive sport?
.....</p> <p>7. was awarded an important title for her merits?</p> <p>8. protested for her situation on social media?
.....</p> <p>9. experienced the excessive length of the procedure to obtain citizenship?
.....</p> <p>10. got Italian citizenship after seventeen years in Italy?</p> |
|--|---|

2  **Stories like those of the athletes mentioned often raise a debate about *ius soli* and *ius scholae*. Do you know what these two expressions refer to? Search the internet for information. Are you in favour of these rights? Discuss with your mates.**