

Top Russian Female Biathlete Drops Out of Olympics After Failed Doping Test

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 30, 2014

The  **Moscow Times**

The leader of the Russian women's biathlon team announced Thursday that she is leaving the Winter Olympic squad after failing a doping test, just one week ahead of the Games starting in the Russian city of Sochi.

In a letter to the Russian Biathlon Union, or RBU, biathlete Irina Starykh said that she was leaving the team indefinitely after she "got into a difficult situation" when informed of the positive test and resulting suspension by the International Biathlon Union.

Ranked sixth in the world, Starykh said in her letter, which was published on the RBU's website, that she was surprised by the news and immediately decided to undergo a second drug test sample, but added that she did not want to "cast a shadow on the team."

Previous biathletes who's positive doping tests were confirmed by second samples received bans from competition of two years.

The International Biathlon Union also suspended a Lithuanian and Russian Yekaterina Yuriyeva, who was not believed to be slated to compete in the Olympics, The New York Times reported.

Starykh, 26, was Russia's top woman biathlete on a team that won the relay at the World Championships and was looking to recover from previous doping scandals and a period of lackluster performances.

Billionaire, Brooklyn Nets owner and sometimes politician Mikhail Prokhorov took over the leadership of the RBU ahead of the Winter Olympics in Sochi and has reportedly personally invested in a program budget estimated at more than \$10 million.

It is unknown if Prokhorov has any previous experience with biathlon, though he now has high hopes for the team and said he would resign if the team did not win at least two golds.

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