

Russian Coach Kazarin to Sue Over TV Doping Claims

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Olympic 800-meter champion Maria Savinova.

Vladimir Kazarin, the coach at the center of a German TV documentary which made claims of widespread doping in Russian sports, says he is suing the program's maker, Hajo Seppelt.

Kazarin is also filing lawsuits against Russian middle-distance runner Yulia Stepanova and her husband Vitaly Stepanov, a former Russian Anti-Doping Agency official whose claims were at the center of the program's claims.

Stepanova, a former 800 meters world championship finalist under her maiden name Rusanova, is currently serving a two-year doping ban.

She and her husband have now gone into hiding after making claims of widespread and systematic doping, cover-ups and payoffs, particularly in athletics, all of which were denied by Russian officials.

"Together with the Russian athletics federation, we will be filing law suits against Yulia

Stepanova, her husband Vitaly as well as against the director of the film Hajo Seppelt," the 62-year-old Kazarin told Reuters in a telephone interview on Tuesday.

"This documentary came about due to clever editing. I did not give anyone banned substances.

"It is a really strange situation: Yulia was disqualified for doping offenses and at the same time says she wants the sport to be clean," he added.

Kazarin will fly to Moscow on Wednesday to meet with his lawyers.

"I plan to visit the Russian Athletics Federation, RUSADA (the country's anti-doping organization which Vitaly Stepanova worked for), as well as getting acquainted with the legal case" he said. "This is all that I can say at the moment."

The program was aired in three parts by German channel ZDF/ARD with many of its claims denounced as "lies" by the head of Russia's Athletics Federation Valentin Balakhnichev.

Balakhnichev has since stood down from his role as treasurer of the International Association of Athletics Federations while the allegations are investigated.

The World Anti-doping Association has also appointed an independent commission to investigate the claims.

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