

21-Year-Old Russian Biathlete Dies During National Race

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Alina Yakimkina

A 21-year-old Russian biathlete has died of heart failure while taking part in a national competition, the country's biathlon union said.

Alina Yakimkina, a sports academy student representing the Russian republic of Udmurtia, collapsed Saturday during the final stage of the women's 15-kilometer race in the Siberian city of Tyumen.

The Russian Biathlon Union said in an online statement that Yakimkina's "heart stopped during the race." Medical personnel had been on the scene but were unable to save her life, according to the union.

The young athlete lost consciousness just 700 meters short of the finish line, regional investigators said Saturday in a statement, adding they would probe the circumstances surrounding Yakimkina's death.

Igor Krasnov, the sports minister of the republic of Udmurtia, dismissed suspicions that performance enhancing drugs or medication could have played a role in Yakimkina's death, the TASS news agency reported Sunday.

"She [Yakimkina] is clean, like all our female athletes," Krasnov was quoted as saying saying. "Doping is out of the question [as a cause of death]."

Krasnov also said that Udmurtia's female biathletes had not been appointed a team doctor, but that this had nothing to do with a lack of funding.

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