The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Tennis Champion Sharapova Fails Drug Test

By Anna Dolgov

March 08, 2016



Maria Sharapova

Russian tennis champion Maria Sharapova said Monday she had tested positive at Australian Open for a recently banned drug that she had been taking for a decade for health reasons.

The five-time grand slam champion and the highest-paid woman in sports told a news conference in Los Angeles she had received a letter from the International Tennis Federation, saying her drug test showed positive results for meldonium.

She said the drug had been prescribed to her ten years ago under the name of mildronate by a family doctor to control a variety of health issues, according to a video of the news conference available online.

The ITF has provisionally suspended Sharapova, and one of her biggest sponsors, Nike, said it was suspending ties with the tennis star until the investigation is complete, Reuters reported.

Other sponsors, including the watch manufacturer Tag Heuer International, Evian mineral water and German carmaker Porsche have also decided to temporarily freeze their contracts with Sharapova.

“We are saddened and surprised by the news about Maria Sharapova,” Nike said in a statement quoted by Britain's The Telegraph. “We will continue to monitor the situation.”

“We have decided to suspend all planned activities until further details," Porsche representatives announced, Forbes reported.

Sharapova said she had “made a huge mistake.”

“I let my fans down and I let the sport down,” she said. “I take full responsibility for it.”

“I know that with this I face consequences and I don't want to end my career this way. I really hope that I will be given another chance to play this game," she told the news conference.

Sharapova is the seventh athlete in a month to test positive for meldonium, which was only banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) at the start of this year, Reuters reported.

Meldonium, used to treat a variety of conditions, including chest pain, heart troubles and diabetes, is manufactured in Latvia and is also available in Russia and other former Soviet republics. It has not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration in the United States.

The drug increases blood flow which enhances athletic performance.

Sharapova is facing a four-year ban if convicted of deliberate consumption of the prohibited drug, the Kommersant news agency reported Tuesday.

Contact the authors at newsreporter@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/03/08/russian-tennis-champion-sharapova-fails-drug-test-a52084