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Russia's Maria Sharapova Banned From Tennis

By The Moscow Times

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Maria Sharapova

Maria Sharapova has been banned from tennis for two years by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) for failing a drugs test. The Russian-born player was provisionally suspended in March after testing positive for Meldonium, a banned performance-enhancing substance. Sharapova in a statement called the ban "unfairly harsh."

She said the ITF had been unable to prove that she intentionally violated doping rules, and she would appeal the ban. Shapova, 29, says she's been using the drug since 2006 for a range of health issues. It was prohibited from Jan. 1 this year.

"I will fight to be back on the tennis court as soon as possible," she said in her statement. The ITF said Sharapova's ban would date from Jan. 26, the day she provided the urine sample during the Australian Open tournament in Melbourne which later tested positive.

Following the scandal around Sharapova earlier this year it emerged that Meldonium was used extensively by Russian athletes. Her ban has caused outrage in Russia, and comes as authorities battle allegations of widespread, state-sponsored doping during Olympic Games in London and Sochi.

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