The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Athletics Team Ineligible for the Olympics

By Sophia Guy-White

June 17, 2016



The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) has decided to uphold its ban against Russia's track and field athletes, the federation announced Friday.

The ban means that the Russian track and field team will be ineligible to compete at the summer Olympic Games in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro, unless the International Olympic Committee (IOC) overturns the IAAF decision on June 21, which would be controversial.

The decision was made without Russian representative in the IAAF — the Secretary-General for the All-Russia Athletics Federation (ARAF) Mikhail Butov — who left the meeting hall in order to avoid a "conflict of interest," the TASS news agency reported.

Renowned Russian pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva announced that she is going to appeal the decision, claiming that it is based on nationality and violates human rights. On Wednesday, The New York Times published a story titled "Let Me Compete in Rio," in which Isinbayeva urged the commission to permit her to participate in the Olympics. "I understand that the

IAAF has to take strong action to eradicate doping, but I think it is not fair to forbid me or other clean Russian athletes from competing," she wrote.

Leader of Russia's hammer throwing team Sergei Litvinov commented on the ban, saying that he "expected such a decision and was mentally prepared for it." He added that the suspension was likely extended for "arbitrary reasons," the Sport Express news website reported.

Russian State Duma deputy and member of the Committee for Physical Culture and Sports Vasily Shestakov said that Russia needs to take all possible measures, including those of a legal nature, to ensure that Russian athletes make it to the Olympics, TASS reported. "Why should the clean athletes suffer?" he added.

The ban imposed by the IAAF will inflict terrible damage to Russian athletics, high jump coach Yevgeny Zagorulko told TASS, adding that the disqualification may lead to an end of many athletes' careers. "I regret that nobody cares about Russian athletics anymore. But I can confirm that our athletes are the cleanest," Zagorulko added, TASS reported.

The IAAF imposed the ban on Russian athletes in November 2015 after an independent commission by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The WADA report recommended that the ARAF be declared "non-compliant" with the IAAF's anti-doping code and be suspended from competition.

A total of 4,027 Russian track and field athletes were covered by the ban. They have been barred from participating in international competitions organized by international governing bodies IAAF or Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS).

In November 2015, Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko, a FIFA executive committee member and head of the committee organizing the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, insisted that Russia was being persecuted. "Russia's [doping] problems are no worse than other countries," he said. "Whatever we do, it's always bad."

The WADA independent commission was investigating allegations made in a German documentary about Russian athletes. The first installment of German broadcaster ARD/WDR's investigation, titled "Secret Doping Dossier: How Russia Produces Its Winners," was released in December 2014.

The second installment "Doping Secrets: Showdown for Russia," was released on June 8. It showed footage and witness testimonials that it said proved that race-walking coach Viktor Chegin was still involved in training athletes.

The International Olympic Committee will now discuss whether to allow the bar the entire Russian team from the games on June 21. "Clean" athletes, who have never been caught using performance-enhancing drugs, may still be given the chance to appear at the games, the RBC news outlet reported Friday.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/06/17/russian-athletics-team-ineligible-for-the-olympics-a53332