

Russian Swimmer Yefimova Breaks Down After Silver Medal Win

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Yulia Yefimova of Russia poses with her silver medal in Rio. **David Gray / Reuters**

Russian swimmer Yulia Yefimova has blamed the stress of Russia's turbulent Olympic journey for her failure to get into "proper shape" for this summer's Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

The four-time World Champion broke down in front of reporters on Monday after taking second place in the women's Olympic 100-meter breaststroke final, the TASS news agency reported.

"The last few weeks were really hard for me. I don't remember when I slept longer than four hours a day," the swimmer said, confessing that she had failed to get in proper shape for the Games. "I don't even know how I managed to get to the finals."

U.S. swimmer Lilly King, who took the gold medal position, used her interview after the race to apologize to Yefimova for not shaking hands during the podium ceremony.

King had made a number of comments about Russian swimmer in the press following the semi-finals, where King had called her Russian rival a "drugs cheat."

"If I had been in Yulia's position, I would not have wanted to be congratulated by someone who was not speaking highly of me. So if she was wishing to be congratulated, I apologize. She had a fantastic swim," King told during a news conference on Tuesday, the NBC Olympics reported.

Yefimova claimed that she had paid no attention to her rival's words, maintaining that "athletes are supposed to stay out of politics."

"I thought that the Cold War was long over. Why would you wage it again through sports?", she told TASS.

Tensions have already flared on several occasions at the swimming competition, with spectators booing a number of Russian athletes before races. While King's comments have drawn condemnation in Russia, U.S. Olympic champion Michael Phelps was among those supporting her anti-drugs stance.

"I think people should be speaking out more," Phelps told journalists Monday. "You know I think [Lilly] is right. I think something needs to be done.

"It's kind of sad that today in sports in general, not just in swimming, there are people who are testing positive and are allowed back in the sport, and multiple times.

I think it just breaks what sport is meant to be."

A number of Russian swimmers, including Yefimova, was originally excluded from the Games after the International Olympic Committee ruled that Russian athletes with previous doping offenses would be ineligible to compete. They were later admitted to the Games after their appeal the Court for Arbitration of Sport (CAS) was successful.

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