

What do Regular Russians Think of the IOC's Olympic Doping Ban?

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"This is undoubtedly a political decision," says Igor, 40.

In Moscow, news that Russia's entire Olympic team had been barred from next year's Winter Games was still sinking in on Wednesday afternoon.

In the latest chapter of the Russian doping scandal, the International Olympic Committee's President Thomas Bach on Tuesday evening announced that Russian athletes and officials were being barred from competing in South Korea in February.

There is still a ray of hope — Russian athletes can apply to a special IOC panel to be exempt from the ban if they can prove they are clean.

But even those who are approved will only be able to compete under a neutral flag. That means no Russian tricolor or national anthem in Pyeongchang.

The Moscow Times went to Prospekt Mira's Olympic stadium in Moscow — built for the 1980 Summer Olympics — to ask what Russians think of the IOC's ruling.

Martha, 23, architect

"It's disgusting. Our ice-hockey team is the strongest in the world."

Lyudmila Sherenkina, 48-year-old manager at cleaning firm

"The ban is pure nonsense. Any country is at risk once sport becomes political. Athletes should represent their own country. Their country sends them [to the Olympics] as emissaries of hope and supports them.

"I will definitely watch the Olympics to support our athletes!"

Yevgeny, 73

"We shouldn't have doped in the first place. We should have never stooped that low. We should've used our minds yesterday, and not just now when we're faced with the facts."

Igor, 40, engineer

"This is undoubtedly a politicized decision."

Yelena Smirnova, 54, medic

"They want to bring us down. Russian athletes should participate under our flag, they're the pride of our nation. It's completely unjustified. And our 'dear' Vitaly Mutko, who should defend our athletes, is not defending them, but he's quashing them, together with the U.S."

Sergei, 48, courier

"I'm a patriot. The most humiliating thing is that we're meant to compete under the Olympic flag. This is unprecedented."

Name withheld, 60s, employed in the defense industry

"We're proud of our athletes no matter what, whether or not they go. It's shameful that from all sides they're trying to bring down our great Russia. They should be ashamed of themselves.

"These Western sports officials, they've sold out. We're ashamed of them. The West's pharmaceutical industry is just more advanced than ours which means it's more difficult to catch people doping. Everyone knows that."

Victoria Khlynova, 45, stay-at-home-mother

"I think those athletes who want to go compete under a neutral flag should pay for it themselves. Or they should collectively refuse to go and not let themselves be humiliated. We've been set up, I don't believe a single word about the supposed swapping of samples and all that. It's pure nonsense."

Victoria Stravinsky, 20, student

“This is beastly. From what I know, even clean athletes have to compete under a neutral flag. That’s an absolutely politically motivated decision. I’m probably not going to watch the Olympics now.”

Ivan, 26, engineer

“We should go [to the Olympics.] We all know they’re Russian and for us this is important. I think the IOC’s decision was politically motivated, but I also think it’s just.”

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