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Russian Figure Skater Valieva Tested Positive for Banned Drug, Testers Confirm

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Kamila Valieva, 15, led the ROC to gold in the team figure skating event and became the first woman in history to produce a quad jump at the Games. **Natacha Pisarenko / AP / TASS**

The International Testing Agency confirmed Friday that 15-year-old Russian figure skating star Kamila Valieva had tested positive for a banned substance and that it will appeal the Russian anti-doping agency's decision to lift her provisional suspension for the 2022 Beijing Olympics.

Reports of Valieva testing positive for a banned heart medication emerged after the team medals ceremony, in which the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) was due to receive gold medals, was scrapped Tuesday.

Valieva led the ROC to gold in the team figure skating event and became the first woman in history to land a quad jump at the Games.

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The International Testing Agency (ITA) said Valieva's sample taken on Dec. 25 returned a positive result for trimetazidine on Feb. 8.

The World Anti-Doping Agency banned trimetazidine, a metabolic agent prescribed for the treatment of angina and vertigo, because it can increase blood flow efficiency and help endurance.

The ITA said that the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) provisionally suspended Valieva after the results came in, but the skater successfully challenged that decision on Feb. 9 and was allowed to compete in the team event. She was seen training in the Chinese capital on Friday, AFP reported.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) will now hear an expedited case on Valieva's lifted suspension before she takes part in the next individual event Feb. 15.

"The IOC will exercise its right to appeal" RUSADA's decision to lift Valieva's provisional suspension, the ITA said, adding that it will lead the appeal on behalf of the International Olympic Committee before the court.

NBC reported that Valieva could be stripped of her Russian national title won in December, when the positive sample was taken, but could still be cleared to compete in Beijing next week.

It added that because Valieva is a "protected person" under the anti-doping code due to her age, her coaches and team doctors face a mandatory investigation as "athlete support personnel."

The Russian Olympic Committee said it is taking "comprehensive measures" to keep the gold medal that Valieva helped her team win. ROC head Stanislav Pozdnyakov called into question the timing of the positive test, suggesting that it was "held back" until the end of the team event in Beijing.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov characterized Valieva's doping test controversy as a "misunderstanding" and urged patience ahead of the CAS ruling.

Russian athletes are competing in the Beijing Games under the ROC banner after the country was banned from competing over a massive state-sponsored doping scheme.

AFP contributed reporting

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