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Russian Tennis Pair Andreeva, Shnaider Win Silver at Paris Olympics

By AFP

August 05, 2024



Silver medalists Mirra Andreeva and Diana Shnaider. **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

Mirra Andreeva and Diana Shnaider took home a silver medal in women's tennis doubles on Sunday, making them the first Russian athletes to get a medal at the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

Competing as Individual Neutral Athletes, known by the French acronym AIN, Andreeva and Shnaider lost the final to Italian tennis players Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) banned athletes from Russia and Belarus from team sports in the Paris Games over Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

However, the IOC has allowed their gradual return under a neutral banner, providing the athletes concerned meet strict conditions. In Paris, there are just 15 Russians and 17 Belarusians competing.

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"It doesn't matter to me," said Andreeva when asked about competing as a neutral. "I just go on the court to play and I fight. That's what we did together this week."

Shnaider refused completely to discuss the ban on the Russian flag and anthem.

"We are here to fight as a pair and we are very proud of that," she told a press conference. "I will not answer any questions about politics. I am here to talk about tennis."

To be invited to Paris, "neutral individual athletes" who achieved good enough results to qualify had to pass a double-check. International sports federations and the IOC verified that the competitors did not actively support the war in Ukraine or have any links with their countries' armies.

Qualifying athletes were also not allowed to participate in the opening ceremony or compete under their national flags.

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