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Billionaire Rotenberg's Son Ousted as Coach of St. Petersburg Hockey Club

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Roman Rotenberg. **Peter Kovalev / TASS**

The son of billionaire and Putin friend Boris Rotenberg is set to depart as head coach of one of Russia's most successful hockey clubs following a decision by the club's new board of directors, according to sports media.

Roman Rotenburg has presided over a team in decline since taking over SKA St. Petersburg in 2022, culminating in a seventh-place finish in the Western Conference this season and a first-round playoff loss to Dynamo Moscow. Previously, SKA had not lost in the first round of the playoffs since 2010.

Despite having the largest wage budget in the league and a glut of star talent, Rotenburg was unable to deliver the success expected of a team like SKA.

Sports Express reported that the club's new board was expected to slash wages and make other significant budget cuts.

His departure is expected sometime on Monday.

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Throughout his tenure, Rotenberg has been known for his colorful and sometimes provocative statements.

In June 2024, Rotenberg, whose father is a close confidante of the president, told the St. Petersburg Economic Forum that he was "constantly fighting" against "children of the system" in youth hockey, and that he was working to "create conditions to prevent them from being involved."

Rotenberg also once claimed to be facing pressure "from abroad" after his team's poor performances.

"There is already evidence that those comments that are written about SKA are not written from Russia at all," he told the press in September 2024.

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Fans of other teams in the league had also begun chanting: "SKA is a disgrace to Russian hockey."

Before hockey, Rotenberg worked for Gazprom entities like Gazprombank and Gazprom Export, where his father and uncle, Boris and Arkady Rotenberg, had billion-dollar contracts.

He became vice president of SKA in 2011, and then, unexpectedly, head coach in 2022.

Rotenberg's appointment as head coach sparked a storm of criticism from fans and commentators due to his complete lack of coaching and professional experience in hockey. His predecessor, Valery Bragin, had led the Russian junior team to seven World Championship medals.

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