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IOC Clears 13 Russian Athletes to Compete as Neutrals at 2026 Winter Games

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Russian skier Daria Nepryaeva at the 2025 Ski World Cup in Davos, Switzerland. **AP / TASS**

The International Olympic Committee said Tuesday it has cleared 13 Russian athletes to compete at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan and Cortina as neutrals, marking a limited return for Russian competitors after years of suspension.

Athletes, teams and officials from Russia and Belarus were barred from the Olympics in 2022 after President Vladimir Putin ordered the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, thus violating the Olympic Truce, a tradition requiring warring states to suspend hostilities during the Olympic period.

The IOC said in September that Russian and Belarusian athletes could compete at the 2026 Winter Games under strict conditions, including competing as neutrals and passing background checks to confirm they do not support the war against Ukraine or have ties to the military.

The approved Russian athletes for the 2026 Winter Games are:

- **Alpine skiing:** Yulia Pleshkova, Simon Efimov
- **Cross-country skiing:** Saveliy Korostelev, Daria Nepriaeva
- **Figure skating:** Petr Gumennik, Adelia Petrosian
- **Luge:** Daria Olesik, Pavel Repilov
- **Short track:** Ivan Posashkov, Alyona Krylova
- **Ski mountaineering:** Nikita Filippov
- **Speed skating:** Ksenia Korzhova, Anastasia Semenova

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Athletes competing as neutrals are not permitted to use national flags, anthems or emblems, and their medals will not count toward Russia's overall tally. They are also barred from participating in the opening ceremony.

The Games in Milan and Cortina will be held on Feb. 6-22.

At the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics, Russian neutrals won only one medal — a silver in women's doubles tennis by Diana Shnaider and Mirra Andreeva.

Russia has pushed to regain broader access to international sport after a series of favorable rulings and policy shifts. In September, the International Paralympic Committee reinstated Russia and Belarus with full participation rights.

In November, the International Judo Federation allowed Russian athletes to compete under their national flag. And last month, the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled that the International Ski and Snowboard Federation's blanket ban on Russian athletes was discriminatory, opening a pathway for qualification for the 2026 Games.

The IOC has since recommended that international federations lift bans on Russian and Belarusian youth athletes.

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