

Russian Figure Skater Kamila Valieva Set for Comeback – But Not at Olympics

By [Maria Panina for AFP](#)

January 31, 2026



Kamila Valieva rehearsing for the "Sleeping Beauty" ice show. **Artyom Ivanov/TASS**

Russian figure skating prodigy Kamila Valieva returns to competitive sport on Saturday, hoping to roll back the years in a once promising career blighted by a doping scandal.

Aged just 15 years she propelled Russia to team gold at the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing, becoming the first female skater to land a quadruple jump in an Olympic competition.

But that medal and all her other titles from December 2021 onwards were stripped after it emerged she had failed a doping test before the Winter Olympics, a decision the Kremlin denounced as "politicized."

Praised as "talented" and "magnificent" by Russia's top skating coaches, she makes her long-awaited return at the Jumping Championships in Moscow after her four-year ban expired in December. But she will still miss out on the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics

starting next week.

"I am returning to the big ice," the skater from Kazan announced on Telegram earlier this month, her formerly brunette hair now streaked with blonde highlights.

"Of course, I'm very excited, but I'm even more looking forward to feeling the competitive thrill again."

Her social media has been awash with posts advertising her imminent return after her four-year suspension ended on Dec. 25, 2025.

"Valieva's back," her fans celebrated on social media, some saying they were "crying with happiness."

That day, the skater — whose Telegram channel has almost 150,000 subscribers — posted a photo of herself in a room bedecked with pink-and-white bouquets and a heart-shaped balloon with the words: "It's only just beginning."

Valieva tested positive for the banned heart medication trimetazidine following the Russian Figure Skating Championships in December 2021.

The medicine, commonly known as TMZ, is used to treat angina but is banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) as a performance-enhancing drug.

The case only came to light in February 2022 during the Beijing Olympics — a day after Russia's victory in the team event. Valieva told an arbitration panel she tested positive because of "contamination" from her grandfather's heart medicine.

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The scandal put intense pressure on Valieva during the Games.

A strong favourite to win the individual title, she placed fourth after an error-strewn free skate handed her Russian teammate Anna Shcherbakova gold.

The performance left her in tears, with her coach Eteri Tutberidze later telling her on live television: "Why did you let everything go like that?"

The then-head of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, said that other athletes then treated Valieva with "tremendous coldness."

Tutberidze also came under criticism, with Valieva later leaving the prestigious Navka skating academy in Moscow, before rejoining. She continues to train there to this day.

She is expected to compete for the individual title at the Russian Jump Championships, as well as a duo competition alongside Mark Kondratiuk, her partner in the Navka academy's production of "The Nutcracker."

Valieva has also kept herself busy with charity work, and in December hosted a popular

Russian song festival for the third consecutive year.

Alexander Zhulin, one of Russia's top figure skating coaches and an Olympic medallist, said he was "convinced that Valieva will be able to regain her magnificent form."

However he questioned whether she would have the "motivation" to perform at a time when the majority of Russian athletes are banned from international competition due to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine launched in February 2022.

Now aged 19, Valieva will have to wait until the 2030 Winter Games to make her Olympic return.

But pundits and fans have high hopes for her comeback, despite her having missed out on qualifiers for next month's Winter Games.

"Kamila Valieva is a strong, courageous, and talented girl," Russian coach Tatiana Tarasova said in a media interview.

"This will be our weapon against the whole world."

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