

Russia faces sporting exile

World Anti Doping Panel recommends that the Eastern European nation be banned from global sports for four years

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RUSSIA'S FLOUTING of antidoping rules is so severe that the country should be barred from global sporting events, including the Olympics, for four years, according to a recommendation sent to the world's top antidoping regulator. The proposed punishment, made public on Monday, comes after Russia received serious penalties, and widespread scorn, for flagrantly circumventing rules designed to ensure fairness in sports.

If the recommendation, which was sent to the regulator, the World Anti-Doping Agency, by one of its key committees, is approved by the organization's board next month, Russian athletes and teams would be barred from next year's Tokyo Olympics and from major events like soccer's World Cup and the world championships for archery, wrestling and other sports.

Next month's board vote also will serve as a crucial test of the antidoping agency's ability to enforce its rules. The brazen nature of Russia's latest rules violations — which include allegations of manipulating a database to delete some test results and fabricate other data — contravened the spirit as well as the letter of global antidoping law.

The new allegations and proposed punishments were included in a report from a committee led by the British lawyer Jonathan Taylor and sent to members of the organization's board last week. A final ruling is expected on Dec. 9, when the World Anti-Doping Agency's board meets in Paris. While the agency is expected to support the recommendation, any decision would be subject to appeal at the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Among the proposed penalties: Forcing Russian athletes to compete at a second straight Olympic Games in neutral uniforms and collect any medals they win without the raising of the nation's flag or the playing of its anthem; barring Russian government officials and representatives from attending major events or from serving on the board of any organization that has signed the global antidoping code; and preventing Russia from bidding on new championships, and moving any the country was set to host during the four-year period.

The committee has spent several years investigating Russian compliance with global antidoping rules after the earlier scandal,



The proposed four-year ban would prevent Russia from taking part in Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Games. AP

THE RUSSIAN SAGA: THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE ROAD AHEAD

DATABASE MANIPULATION

- Three years ago, Russia were accused of running a sophisticated, state-sponsored doping programme, in which antidoping experts and members of the country's intelligence service surreptitiously replaced urine samples tainted by performance-enhancing drugs with clean urine at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.
- As part of the resolution of that case, Russia agreed to provide a set of testing results to doping regulators from its Moscow laboratory. Now, Russia has been accused of manipulating that database to cover up continued violations, that has the country facing a years-long sporting exile.

PROPOSED PENALTIES

- Forcing Russian athletes to compete at a second straight Olympic Games in neutral uniforms. If they win medals, the country's flag won't be raised and national anthem won't be played.
- Russian athletes be allowed to compete in major events only if they demonstrate that they are clean and meet a number of other strict conditions.
- Preventing Russia from bidding for new

- championships, and moving the tournaments the country was set to host during this period to other nations.
- Russia's flag may not be flown at any major event staged in the four-year period.
- Barring Russian government officials and representatives from attending major events or from serving on the board of any organization that has signed the global antidoping code.

WHAT NEXT

- On December 9, WADA's executive committee will meet to discuss these recommendations.
- If the ExCo accepts the recommendation, formal notice will be sent to Russian Anti-

- Doping Agency (RUSADA), who will have 21 days to accept the notice.
- If they do not, the matter will be referred to Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). If CAS upholds the recommendations, they will be binding and must be enforced.

which stemmed from revelations of a state-sponsored doping program that was remarkable for its scale and sophistication. The com-

mittee concluded that Russia had deliberately manipulated a database of test results to conceal failed drug tests by Russian athletes, and

that it had fabricated evidence in an attempt to shift blame for those changes to former Russian antidoping officials.

The proposed penalties would affect Russia most prominently at next summer's Tokyo Olympics, but the consequences would go well beyond the Games. The recommendation calls for Russian athletes tainted by doping questions to be barred from all international competitions for four years by governing bodies that are signatories to the WADA code. That group includes FIFA, soccer's governing body and the organizer of the World Cup, and organizations that oversee track and field, swimming, gymnastics, basketball and boxing.

Travis Tygart, the chief executive of the United States Antidoping Agency, praised the compliance committee for recognizing the "egregious conduct of Russia toward clean athletes." "Now," he added, "let's all hope the WADA executive committee uses the same resolve to ensure clean athletes are not again sold down the river and actually supports this unfortunate but necessary outcome."

Still, the prospect of hundreds of Russian athletes participating in Tokyo — even if they have been cleared to compete — is likely to be criticized by other athletes and national antidoping agencies. Some of them remain angry over what they see as insufficient punishment for Russia's running a huge doping program that called into question results at several Olympics and dozens of other competitions.

Case-by-case judgments on athletes would, however, conform with the views of the International Olympic Committee's president, Thomas Bach, who opposes anything resembling a blanket ban. "Our principle is that the guilty ones must be punished as hard as possible and the innocent ones must be protected," Bach said last week.

Under regulations adopted in 2018, WADA has complete authority to punish Russia, which was not the case when the scandal first emerged after the Sochi Olympics. At the time, individual sports federations were allowed to deal with Russia's cheating on their own. The results were mixed, though, with several federations failing to act decisively and the Olympic Committee welcoming Russia back into the fold almost immediately after the 2018 Winter Games in South Korea, even though it had yet to be cleared by antidoping regulators.

WADA finally reinstated Russia's antidoping agency last year but reserved the right to revoke that clearance and issue stronger punishments if Russia did not provide athletes' testing data from the Moscow laboratory at the heart of the earlier cheating scandal. **NYT**

Ancelotti's future in doubt as troubled Napoli take on Liverpool

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
MADRID, NOVEMBER 26

NAPOLI HEAD for Liverpool on Wednesday for a Champions League which could prove crucial to coach Carlo Ancelotti's future at the troubled Italian club. The three-time Champions League winning coach's second season at the Stadio San Paolo has proved to be a complicated one, after leading them to second in Serie A in his first year.

His team's fortunes have waned after the high of opening their Champions League campaign with a 2-0 win over reigning European champions Liverpool, with dressing room unrest amid friction between the players and club management. Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis ordered the team to be confined to a week-long training camp earlier this month after a 2-1 league defeat to rivals Roma saw them slip to seventh in Serie A.

But as Ancelotti voiced his disagreement with the lockdown, the players all returned home after a 1-1 draw against Salzburg three days later, which stalled their bid to reach the Champions League last 16.

Film mogul De Laurentiis threatened to sell the entire squad and take legal action against the players after the dressing room revolt. And the sanctions began to fall this week amid reports Monday the players would receive hefty fines for breaking the lockdown. *Gazzetta Dello Sport* reported that players' salaries for the month of November — apart from those out injured at the time — will be cut by a quarter. Brazilian Allan, who had an argument with Edoardo De Laurentiis, son of the Napoli president, will see his salary slashed by half, or 200,000 euros (\$220,000).

PLAYING TONIGHT

- Zenit vs Lyon
- Valencia vs Chelsea
- RB Leipzig vs Benfica
- Barcelona vs Borussia Dortmund
- Slavia Praha vs Inter Milan
- Lille vs Ajax
- Liverpool vs Napoli
- Genk vs Salzburg

Live on Sony Network, 11.30pm onwards