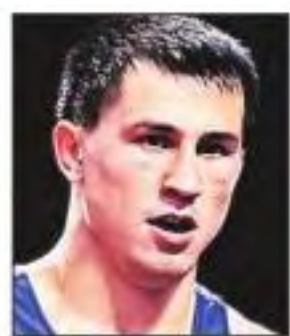


A COSTLY EXPULSION

Global sporting giants Russia's absence could leave the Olympics poorer. It could prevent some of the world's finest athletes from action as well. Here is a list of medal hopefuls at the 2020 Olympics who will not be allowed to compete under the Russian flag but may be allowed to compete as authorised neutral athletes (ANA) at the Tokyo Games.



European and World Champion, he is one of the most pedigreed wrestlers around.

**MARIYA LASITSKENE** (WOMEN'S HIGH JUMP): Ranked number one in the world, she won gold at the 2017 and 2019 World Championships and the 2019 European Indoor Championships.

**ANZHELIKA SIDOROVA** (WOMEN'S POLE VAULT): She had won gold at the 2019 World Championships in Doha as well as the 2019 European Indoor Championships.

**MIKHAIL AKIMENKO** (MEN'S HIGH JUMP): The ace jumper had claimed silver at the 2019 World Championships in Doha.

**NIKITA NAGORNYY** (Men's gymnastics): He had won three gold medals at the 2019 World Championships in Stuttgart, besides silver (team) at the 2016 Olympics. Supposedly one of the finest in the world. Also missing will be Artur Dalaloyan, who won gold (team) at the 2019 World Championships in Stuttgart.

**VLADIMIR MOROZOV** (MEN'S SWIMMING): The current world record holder in the 100m individual medley, clocked the fastest times of the season in 50m freestyle, 100m freestyle and 50m breaststroke.

**KLIMENT KOLESNIKOV** (MEN'S SWIMMING): One of the finest young talents around, he won six gold medals at 2018 Summer Youth Olympics, apart from silver and two bronze medals at 2019 World Championships.

**ANTON CHUPKOV** (MEN'S SWIMMING): One of the best in his format, he won the 200m breaststroke gold at the 2019 World Championship and the 200m breaststroke bronze at the 2016 Olympics. Also will be missing Evgeny Rylov, who won the 200m backstroke gold at the 2019 World Championships and women swimmer, the versatile Yulia Efimova, multiple silver-medal winner at the 2016 Olympics. Also missing will be the synchronized swimming team, which has captured all gold medals from 2000 to 2016.



number five in the world and was the runner-up at the 2019 US Open.

# WADA ups the ante, bans Russia

The four-year term, if the CAS upholds, would exclude the country from the 2020 Olympics, Winter Games and FIFA World Cup

TARIQ PANJA  
LAUSANNE, DECEMBER 9

GLOBAL ANTI-DOPING leaders agreed unanimously on Monday to banish Russia from international sports — including next summer's Olympic Games in Tokyo — for four years, the latest and severest punishment yet connected to a yearslong cheating scheme that has tarnished global sport.

The World Anti-Doping Agency's punishment means that Russia's flag, name and anthem will not be allowed at the Tokyo Games, though athletes not implicated in doping could compete under a neutral flag. The agency also barred Russian sports and government officials from the Games and prohibited the country from hosting international events.

The move, which comes four years after the first details of the scheme that peaked at the 2014 Sochi Olympics were made public, was hailed by WADA as a tough step, though some antidoping leaders questioned that. "For too long, Russian doping has detracted from clean sport," WADA president Craig Reedie said at a news conference. "Russia was afforded every opportunity to get its house in order and rejoin the global antidoping community for the good of its athletes and of the integrity of sport, but it chose instead to continue in its stance of deception and denial."

To some, including many athlete groups and national antidoping agencies, the punishment does not go far enough, because it leaves open the possibility that hundreds of Russian athletes can appear in Tokyo, just as they did at the Winter Olympics in South Korea last year.

The decision is unlikely to surprise many given the scale of Russia's attempt to conceal, obfuscate and frustrate attempts to unmask the beneficiaries of a state-powered doping program, remarkable for its sophistication and scope. Still, Russia is almost certain to contest the decision. It continues to steadfastly deny many of the allegations, even after several independent investigations that have revealed a welter of evidence against it.

Russian officials have 21 days to lodge an appeal with the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport after the announcement from the antidoping agency, which convened for a special meeting near the International Olympic Committee's headquarters in Lausanne. The Russian prime minister, Dmitri Medvedev, encouraged an appeal, saying that the antidoping agency's decision looked to him like a "continuation of anti-Russian hysteria."

WADA officials said the practicalities of Russia's ban still needed to be worked out with individual sports federations. For example, Russia would be allowed to compete in the qualification matches for the 2022 World Cup, though should it progress to the tournament the team would be allowed to participate only as a neutral, without any insignia that would identify the team as being Russian.

If Russia is unable to have the ruling overturned, the country's ouster from the world of international sport would stretch to events well beyond the Olympics, including soccer's World Cup. What has angered many is Russia's mendacity in the face of efforts to rehabilitate the country after whistle-blower evidence helped unravel a meticulously planned — and ultimately successful — scheme in which Russian 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. It is that database, which Russia was found to have manipulated, that is at the heart of a crisis that threatens its sporting future.

Taylor, who will be stepping down from his role at WADA at the end of the year, told The New York Times that he could understand why some people would think the penalties did not go far enough, but he insisted that the measures meted out amounted to a humiliation for the Russian authorities. "Don't tell me that



Russian officials have 21 days to lodge an appeal with the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport after the announcement from the anti-doping agency. AP

## Russia can play in 2022 WC qualifiers: WADA-linked official

*Lausanne:* An official linked to the World Anti-Doping Agency said on Monday Russia can participate in qualifying for the 2022 World Cup despite receiving a four-year ban from major global sporting events. WADA's executive committee placed the suspension on Russia earlier in the day after accusing Moscow of falsifying laboratory doping data handed over to investigators this year.

"Because the qualifiers don't decide the world champion, Russia can take part. The decision applies to the World Cup tournament because it decides the world champion," said Jonathan Taylor, chairman of WADA's Compliance Review

Committee. "FIFA would come with some new proposals," he added. World football's governing body said earlier on Monday it was seeking clarification about the extent of the suspension. Russia hosted the 2018 World Cup. FIFA has taken note of the decision taken by WADA Executive Committee today," a statement said.

"FIFA is in contact with WADA and ASOIF (Association of Summer Olympic International Federations) to clarify the extent of the decision in regards to football," it added.

Russia will be ruled out of the next Olympic cycle, and its government's offi-

cials will be barred from attending any major events, while the country will lose the right to host, or even bid, for tournaments. Under the sanctions, Russian athletes will still be allowed to compete at the Olympics next year and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics but only if they can demonstrate that they were not part of what WADA believes was a state-sponsored system of doping.

Russia's participation at Euro 2020, in which Saint Petersburg will host four matches, is not affected by the ban because it is not defined as a "major event" for anti-doping purposes.

REUTERS

**Russia was afforded every opportunity to get its house in order and rejoin the global anti-doping community, but it chose instead to continue in its stance of deception and denial."**

CRAIG REEDIE  
WADA PRESIDENT

doesn't affect them," he said. "There's national pride; what happens if this neutral team wins the World Cup and Putin's not there?"

But he offered a concession. "The Russian side, too, — by that I mean our sports community — still has significant problems with doping," he said. "This is undeniable."

### Russia's response: Deliberate elimination of rivals

One Russian talk show described the revelations as an attempt by Russia's rivals to eliminate a potential medal-winning opponent, while a documentary tried to lay the

blame on the whistle-blower, Grigory Rodchenkov, who helped mastermind the scheme from his position as the head of the Moscow laboratory.

The claims mirror those of Russian officials who were proved by WADA investigators to frame Rodchenkov and hide the identity of the true culprits. Russia's denials and manipulations of data continued well after WADA had gone public in September with confirmation that thousands of crucial Russian files had been deleted or manipulated, and that the data that was provided did not match a database on Russian athletes that it received in 2017.

Margarita Pakhnotskaya, the deputy head of Russia's antidoping agency, said that the ban should prompt action by officials in her country who have suggested that Russia was being unfairly targeted. "This is another reason for sports executives to think about whether we are moving in the right direction," the Interfax news agency quoted her as saying. "I'm hearing presidents of federations and experts proudly trumpet their activities — 'We have given all the answers, we're surrounded

only by enemies who are attacking our athletes.' This all shows that there has been no change in our antidoping culture."

In a follow-up meeting in October to help explain the discrepancies, Russia's sports minister provided WADA with fresh data, which when studied revealed yet more manipulation. Taylor used an expletive to describe Russia's efforts to frame Rodchenkov, which involved fabricating messages between the former laboratory director and his staff, to suggest they were plotting to extort Russian athletes by falsely accusing them of failing drugs tests. Details of that scheme and other manipulated evidence were brought to WADA's attention by the sports minister, Pavel Kolobkov. "I don't know if he is corrupt or incompetent," Taylor said of Kolobkov, a former fencer who was appointed to his post after revelations of Russia's vast doping scheme.

"After all of this, who can say whether there are any clean athletes in Russia if the crucial data is lost?" Rodchenkov said in a statement. "Russia dug its own grave and has ruined the chances for any clean Russian athlete to compete. If the files were deleted, how can any athlete credibly prove its innocence?" NYT

## EXPLAINED

### How Russia's ban could benefit India

IF THE ban remains unrevoked, it could benefit India in a couple of sports the two countries are likely to contest for medals at the Tokyo Games. In wrestling, for example, the path to podium one of India's biggest prospects Bajrang Punia could get relatively easier as reigning world champion Gadzhimurad Rashidov and Rio Olympics gold medalist Soslan Romanov won't compete unless cleared by United World Wrestling and subsequently by the International Olympic Committee.

Similarly, Ravi Kumar's medal chances in 57kg category will be boosted if Zaur Uguev — who won gold at the worlds this year — is not allowed to compete. The biggest loss, from a neutral point of view, will be if Abdulrashid Sadulev, considered one of the best fighters of this generation, won't be able to compete in 97kg; a category brimming with quality wrestlers from USA and Azerbaijan. In boxing, Manish Kaushik (likely candidate for lightweight category) can benefit if Ilia Popov won't be there. Mary Kom, too, can benefit from the absence of Liliya Aetbaeva. In shooting, the participation of Sergey Kaminskiy is in doubt.

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## DIVING DEEP

# Nasreen, the flea-market vendor's daughter who harnessed the wind

SHIVANI NAIK  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 9

INDIA'S SOUTH Asian Games (SAG) gold-winning kho-kho captain Nasreen says she learnt the art of eluding chasers while rising to challenges life threw at her.

Playing on hard mud surfaces, Nasreen's early coach would ask her to train with boys' teams, a daunting prospect given they were stronger and faster, and she was often left bruised. "Taang pakadke giraao do usko" (pull her down by the leg) would be the standard instruction. I got so good at running fast and diving out of their grasp, I became fearless against tough chasping packs," she recalls.

India's ace diver in kho-kho, who is said to escape chasers like a pashmina slides through a ring, got even better at diving when she moved from mud to the cushioned mat.

A bigger leap had been taken by the family from Shakurpur in Delhi earlier. Her father Mohammad Gafoor sells steel utensils on the streets on most days. He is at the Monday market in Jahangir Puri near Machi market, selling thick, bright winter clothing material, proudly donning the scarf Nasreen brought from Nepal's South Asian Games.

On some days, he earns a maximum margin of Rs 30 in the weekly markets, lugging his wares — bunches of stainless steel spoons and a pack of dozen water drinking glasses.



As soon as it became clear at school that Nasreen was exceptionally speedy on the kho-kho ground (she also participated in athletics and kabaddi), Gafoor knew he had to isolate her from ordinary woes that befall street sellers — from cops and municipality officials chasing away hawkers to unsteady income on lean days. "Khaane ki dikkat, police ke dande, karza,

udhaari, thelaa uthaake le jaaneka dar, yeh sab dimaag ke tension se door karna tha usko," he explains.

Nasreen recalls her father telling her that only her opponents were her enemies for the duration of the match. "Agar India khelegi to desh humaare liye sochega" (if you play for India, the country will think about us), Gafoor reck-



Mohammad Gafoor, Nasreen's father, flaunts a scarf her daughter brought from Nepal. Despite financial woes, he fully supported her. Premnath Pandey.

oned when the 21-year-old debuted a few years ago.

The father would also put his foot down against societal pressures holding her back. "We are Muslims. From childhood, we have been treated badly by all people, and nobody came to our help. When someone talked about purdah, I discussed with my wife and decided

that we'll not listen to anyone," he says. His daughter's dedication and stubbornness were infectious, he adds.

"Relatives had a problem with everything," Nasreen recalls. "Girls shouldn't play, they can't wear shorts, how did you let her go out for the Asian Championships for a week? How did you allow her to be at the national camp for a month in far-off Gujarat? My parents never got demotivated. They said 'let people keep talking, we trust you.'"

Nasreen was fourth among seven sisters and four brothers. Gafoor had come to Delhi from Araria district in Bihar, after being orphaned by age 14, and robbed of his ancestral property by relations. After Nasreen won gold at SAG, Gafoor says with pride: "Pehle woh Gafoor ki chhori thi. Ab main Nasreen ka papa karke jaana jaata hoon. (Earlier, she was Gafoor's daughter. Now I'm known as Nasreen's father.)"

In Nepal, Nasreen's team came up against a home team coached by Indians Munni Joon and Sheetal Chauhan. "They surprised us by showing our skills. We'll have to up our game," Nasreen says ahead of the inaugural franchise-based kho-kho league in February.

Now she brings home a monthly salary of Rs 26,000 from her Airport Authority of India job. Night markets meant renting out tables, lights and corners. "2000 in, 500 Rs out," Gafoor laughs.

Having played age-group nationals and

seniors simultaneously and shining at all levels, Nasreen started enjoying basic luxuries — like national holidays. "Earlier holidays meant markets closed for my father, and chances of no food on that day. As an athlete, I was always hungry, so we would dread holidays. Now I celebrate holidays like others," she says.

Kho-kho also fulfilled a dream she hadn't dared to dream as a municipal school girl in Class 3. "Properly London hoke aaye!" England plays kho-kho at the university level, so we went for an international series. I sat in a plane for the first time. My father laminated the entire newspaper page though my news was just two bars," Nasreen laughs.

The father-daughter duo also gathered courage to travel to Bihar and meet local officials to reclaim their snatched property earlier this year. Gafoor says Nasreen is India's gold-winning captain and speaks confidently "like an officer." As India captain, she likes forging team bonds and camaraderie, and solving language problems of players from across the country as she is quick to grasp different tongues. Nothing significant was achieved on the last visit to their native village, but Gafoor insists he was proud of how fearlessly his daughter put forward her point in front of highly-educated officials. "I've trained with men trying to drag me down by my feet in my sport. I can dive out of everyone's reach. I'm also confident of talking to anyone," says the second-year student.