
Decision of the Athletics Integrity Unit in the Case of Ms Ebsite Tilahun Asres

Introduction

1. World Athletics has established the Athletics Integrity Unit ("**AIU**") whose role is to protect the integrity of the sport of Athletics, including fulfilling World Athletics' obligations as a Signatory to the World Anti-Doping Code (the "**Code**"). World Athletics has delegated implementation of the World Athletics Anti-Doping Rules ("**ADR**") to the AIU, including but not limited to the following activities in relation to International-Level Athletes: Testing, Investigations, Results Management, Hearings, Sanctions and Appeals.
2. Ms Ebsite Tilahun Asres ("the **Athlete**") is a 23-year-old road runner from Ethiopia.¹
3. This decision is issued by the AIU pursuant to Rule 8.5.6 ADR, which provides as follows:

"8.5.6 In the event that the Athlete or other Person either (i) admits the violation and accepts the proposed Consequences or (ii) is deemed to have admitted the violation and accepted the Consequences as per Rule 8.5.2(f), the Integrity Unit will promptly:

- (a) issue a decision confirming the commission of the violation(s) and the imposition of the specified Consequences (including, if applicable, a justification for why the maximum potential sanction was not imposed);*
- (b) Publicly Report that decision in accordance with Rule 14;*
- (c) send a copy of the decision to the Athlete or other Person and to any other party that has a right, further to Rule 13, to appeal the decision (and any such party may, within 15 days of receipt, request a copy of the full case file pertaining to the decision)."*

The Athlete's Commission of an Anti-Doping Rule Violation

4. Rule 2 ADR sets out that the following shall constitute an Anti-Doping Rule Violation:

"2.1 Presence of a Prohibited Substance or its Metabolites or Markers in an Athlete's Sample

[...]

¹ <https://worldathletics.org/athletes/ethiopia/ebsite-tilahun-15028616>

2.2 Use or Attempted Use by an Athlete of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method²

5. On 3 December 2023, the Athlete provided a urine Sample In-Competition in Nanning, China which was given code 6524120 (the “**Sample**”).
6. On 29 December 2023, the World Anti-Doping Agency (“**WADA**”) accredited laboratory in Beijing, China (the “**Laboratory**”) reported an Adverse Analytical Finding in the Sample for the presence of triamcinolone acetonide (the “**Adverse Analytical Finding**”) at an estimated concentration of 118ng/mL.
7. Triamcinolone acetonide is a Prohibited Substance under the WADA 2023 Prohibited List under the category S9 Glucocorticoids. It is a Specified Substance prohibited In-Competition².
8. The AIU reviewed the Adverse Analytical Finding in accordance with Article 5 of the International Standard for Results Management (“**ISRM**”) and determined that:
 - 8.1. the Athlete did not have a Therapeutic Use Exemption (“**TUE**”) that had been granted (or that would be granted) for the triamcinolone acetonide found in the Sample;
 - 8.2. there was no apparent departure from the International Standard for Testing and Investigations (“**ISTI**”) or from the International Standard for Laboratories (“**ISL**”) that could reasonably have caused the Adverse Analytical Finding; and
 - 8.3. it was not apparent that the Adverse Analytical Finding was caused by an ingestion of the relevant Prohibited Substance through a permitted route.
9. Therefore, on 9 January 2024, the AIU notified the Athlete of the Adverse Analytical Finding in accordance with Article 5.1.2.1 of the ISRM, including that the Adverse Analytical Finding may result in Anti-Doping Rule Violations pursuant to Rule 2.1 ADR and/or Rule 2.2 ADR. The Athlete was also informed of her rights, inter alia, to request the B Sample analysis, to request copies of the laboratory documentation supporting the Adverse Analytical Finding and to admit the Anti-Doping Rule Violations.
10. On 29 January 2024, the Athlete sent an e-mail to the AIU explaining that, three days prior to the marathon competition in China, she had experienced an acute asthma attack that prompted her to seek medical treatment. The Athlete explained that the “*camp clinic*” had referred her to an external facility where she was treated but was not aware of the medications given to her. The Athlete also enclosed several handwritten medical documents to support her explanation. Following review, the AIU noted that none of the documents contained any reference to treatment with triamcinolone acetonide.

² When administered by any injectable, oral [including oromucosal (e.g. buccal, gingival, sublingual)] or rectal route.

11. On 30 January 2024, the AIU asked the Athlete to provide typed versions of the handwritten medical documents because some of the contents of those documents were illegible/indecipherable.
12. On 1 February 2024, the Athlete submitted an additional (typed) medical document (a patient medical history signed by Dr Yohannes Mesfin) dated 23/05/2016 Ethiopian Calendar (“**EC**”) (i.e., 1 February 2024 Gregorian Calendar (“**GC**”)) to the AIU. This document indicated that the Athlete had received treatment including triamcinolone acetonide generally but did not provide any specific details: “*This is 24 years old female known Bronchial Asthma patient for the last 2 years on follow up at Armed Forces Comprehensive Specialized Hospital. She took Salbutamol spray 4-6 puff PO PRN, Beclamethasone 2 puff BID and triamcinolone acetonide*”.
13. The Athlete also submitted an additional explanation in which she asserted that she had explored “*traditional remedies*” to treat persistent asthma that she had experienced over the past two years and had “*opted for an injection-based treatment from a traditional healer*”. The Athlete explained that she had become concerned about “*potential undisclosed ingredients affecting [the] urine test results*” and that despite seeking clarification from the traditional healer about the contents of the injections “*he has been reluctant to disclose the ingredients*”.
14. Noting that the document submitted by the Athlete on 1 February 2024 referenced unspecified treatment with triamcinolone acetonide, the AIU sought assistance from the Ethiopian Anti-Doping Agency (“**ETH-ADA**”) with an investigation into the Athlete’s explanation and the medical documents that she had submitted.
15. In that context, on 7 March 2024, the AIU received a summary of the Athlete’s medical history from the Armed Forces Comprehensive Specialised Hospital which, *inter alia*, confirmed that the Athlete had been treated with an intramuscular injection of triamcinolone acetonide on 21/12/2015 (EC) i.e., 27 August 2023 (GC).
16. On 30 April 2024, the AIU received further information from the ETH-ADA corroborating the injection of triamcinolone acetonide that was administered to the Athlete on 27 August 2023 (GC).
17. The AIU consulted an independent scientific expert, Prof. Martial Saugy, in relation to the Athlete’s treatment with triamcinolone acetonide on 27 August 2023 and the estimated concentration of triamcinolone acetonide of 118ng/mL in the Sample.
18. Prof. Saugy confirmed that the estimated concentration in the Sample collected on 3 December 2023 was inconsistent with the injection that the Athlete received on 27 August 2023.
19. On 29 May 2024, the Athlete attended an interview with AIU representatives in relation to the Adverse Analytical Finding, her explanation and the medical documents that she had submitted. In summary, the Athlete provided details relating to her (ill) health in the period leading up to the competition in Nanning, China in December 2023.

20. The Athlete also explained that the traditional healer that she had referred to in her earlier explanation was a Mr Alemayehu Bacha who had been recommended to her husband by another (unnamed) Athlete.
21. The Athlete confirmed that she had visited Mr Alemayehu at the Rehoboth Clinic in October 2023 and that she had been examined and told that she had issues with her chest. The Athlete asserted that she was injected in the shoulder and in the nostril and that she paid 3,500 birr for the treatment. The Athlete also confirmed that she had submitted a MEDICAL CERTIFICATE from the Rehoboth Clinic dated 12 November 2023 as evidence of the treatment she received from Mr Alemayehu.
22. Following a review of the Athlete's explanation for the Adverse Analytical Finding, including the information provided in interview, the AIU remained satisfied that the Athlete had committed an Anti-Doping Rule Violation. Therefore, on 3 June 2024, the AIU issued the Athlete with a Notice of Charge in accordance with Rule 8.5.1 ADR and Article 7.1 ISRM notifying her that (i) she was being charged with an Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.1 ADR ("**the Charge**"), (ii) she was subject to a Provisional Suspension with immediate effect and (iii) that the Consequences that the AIU would seek included a period of Ineligibility of two (2) years (from 3 June 2024) and disqualification of her results since and including 3 December 2023.
23. On 6 June 2024 and 10 June 2024, the Athlete wrote to the AIU, stating, in summary, that she had determined that the last time she received any medical treatment (before the Sample was collected) was at the Rehoboth Clinic (in October 2023), but that she did not know what she had been treated with.
24. Following the Athlete's responses to the Notice of Charge, the AIU liaised further with the ETH-ADA with respect to obtaining further information from Mr Alemayehu and/or the Rehoboth Clinic regarding the Athlete's treatment in October 2023. ETH-ADA representatives subsequently visited the Rehoboth Clinic location on behalf of the AIU but found that it had been closed-down.
25. Notwithstanding that the Rehoboth Clinic was no longer open, ETH-ADA representatives located and sought further information directly from Mr Alemayehu in relation to the Athlete's claims about her treatment in October 2023. Mr Alemayehu confirmed that the Rehoboth Clinic was no longer open.
26. In addition, on 9 October 2024, the ETH-ADA provided the AIU with a document signed by Mr Alemayehu, dated 29 September 2024 (GC), in which Mr Alemayehu confirmed that the Athlete had attended the Rehoboth Clinic on 13 October 2023 and that he had treated her, following a diagnosis of "*Bronchitis Asthma*" by prescribing several medicines, (including an adrenaline injection), but which did not include triamcinolone acetonide.
27. Therefore, on 28 October 2024, the AIU wrote to the Athlete noting that its investigation had not discovered any evidence to indicate that the Athlete's treatment from Mr Alemayehu (the "*traditional healer*") had included treatment with triamcinolone acetonide.
28. The AIU invited the Athlete to confirm how she wished to proceed with the matter (from the options set out in the Notice of Charge) by no later than 1 November 2024 and confirmed that, if the Athlete failed to do so, then the AIU would be entitled to deem that she had

admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violation, accepted the proposed Consequences and waived her right to a hearing in accordance with Rule 8.5.2(f) ADR.

29. The Athlete responded to the AIU on 30 October 2024 reiterating that she had not knowingly used triamcinolone acetonide and emphasised that her intention was to treat and manage her asthma symptoms rather than to enhance her performance. The Athlete also indicated that she would not request a hearing to determine the matter.
30. Thereafter, the AIU and the Athlete exchanged correspondence relating to the AIU investigation, its findings, and how the matter was to be determined. On 31 October 2024, the Athlete wrote to the AIU noting that she remained committed to eliminating any form of misconduct in Athletics and to promoting clean Athletics. The Athlete also stressed that she did not consider herself *“to be among those who have acted against the rules”* and emphasized that she had *“cooperated fully with the investigation from the start”*.
31. In accordance with Rule 8.5.2(f) ADR, the Athlete is deemed to have waived her right to a hearing, admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violation and accepted the Consequences set out in the Notice of Charge. The AIU therefore issues this decision in accordance with Rule 8.5.6 ADR.

Consequences

32. This is the Athlete’s first Anti-Doping Rule Violation.
33. Rule 10.2 ADR specifies that the period of Ineligibility for an Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.1 ADR shall be as follows:

“10.2.1 Save where Rule 10.2.4 applies, the period of Ineligibility will be four years where:

- (a) The anti-doping rule violation does not involve a Specified Substance or a Specified Method, unless the Athlete or other Person can establish that the anti-doping rule violation was not intentional.*
- (b) The anti-doping rule violation involves a Specified Substance or a Specified Method and the Integrity Unit can establish that the anti-doping rule violation was intentional.”*

34. Triamcinolone acetonide is a Prohibited Substance under the WADA 2024 Prohibited List under the category S9: Glucocorticoids. It is a Specified Substance prohibited In-Competition.
35. The period of Ineligibility to be imposed is therefore a period of two (2) years, unless the AIU demonstrates that the Anti-Doping Rule Violation was intentional.
36. The AIU has no evidence that the Anti-Doping Rule Violation was intentional and the mandatory period of Ineligibility to be imposed is therefore a period of two (2) years.

37. On the basis that the Athlete is deemed to have admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.1 ADR, in accordance with Rule 10.2.1 ADR, the AIU confirms by this decision the following Consequences for a first Anti-Doping Rule Violation:

- 37.1. a period of Ineligibility of two (2) years commencing on 3 June 2024 (the date of Provisional Suspension); and
- 37.2. disqualification of the Athlete's results since 3 December 2023, with all resulting Consequences, including the forfeiture of any titles, awards, medals, points, prizes and appearance money.

Publication

38. In accordance with Rule 8.5.6(b) ADR, the AIU shall publicly report this decision on the AIU's website.

Rights of Appeal

39. This decision constitutes the final decision of the AIU pursuant to Rule 8.5.6 ADR.
40. Further to Rule 13.2.3 ADR, WADA and the ETH-ADA have a right of appeal against this decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland, in accordance with the procedure set out at Rule 13.6.1 ADR.
41. If an appeal is filed against this decision by WADA or the ETH-ADA, the Athlete will be entitled to exercise her right of cross-appeal in accordance with Rule 13.2.4 ADR.

Monaco, 8 November 2024