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# Decision of the Athletics Integrity Unit in the Case of Mr Andrej Hladnik

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## 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. Mr Andrej Hladnik ("the **Athlete**") is a 35-year-old road runner from Croatia<sup>1</sup>.
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 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."*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://worldathletics.org/athletes/croatia/andrej-hladnik-14978809>

5. On 13 October 2024, the Athlete provided a urine Sample In-Competition at the 32nd Zagreb Marathon, held in Zagreb, Croatia, which was given code 1279371 (the “**Sample**”) pursuant to Testing conducted under the Testing Authority of World Athletics – AIU.
6. On 30 October 2024, the WADA-accredited laboratory in Seibersdorf, Austria (the “**Laboratory**”) reported an Adverse Analytical Finding in the Sample based on the presence of Ostarine (the “**Adverse Analytical Finding**”).
7. The AIU reviewed the Adverse Analytical Finding in accordance with Article 5 of the International Standard for Results Management (“**ISRM**”) and determined that:
  - 7.1. the Athlete did not have a Therapeutic Use Exemption (“**TUE**”) that had been granted (or that would be granted) for the Ostarine found in the Sample; and
  - 7.2. 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.
8. Therefore, on 8 November 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, and of the imposition of an immediate Provisional Suspension.
9. The Athlete was also informed of his 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 Violation and potentially benefit from a one-year reduction in the period of Ineligibility pursuant to Rule 10.8.1 ADR by 15 November 2024.
10. On 12 November 2024, the Athlete wrote to the AIU stating that he could not believe he had tested positive as he was “*only taking extra basic supplementation*” and enquired about the cost of the B Sample analysis.
11. On 13 November 2024, the AIU provided the Athlete with the cost of the B Sample analysis and asked him to confirm his request for the B Sample analysis by 15 November 2024, and if he would attend and/or be represented.
12. On 14 November 2024, the Athlete confirmed his request for the B Sample analysis.
13. On 15 November 2024, the Athlete enquired about having his supplements analysed by the Laboratory. On the same day, the AIU asked the Athlete to provide, as soon as possible, details regarding the supplements that he had used in the weeks prior to the Sample collection on 13 October 2024<sup>2</sup> and informed him that upon receipt of this information, the

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<sup>2</sup> in particular (i) photos of its packaging and label (including the ingredient list); (ii) photos of the remaining product (powder, pills,...), (iii) the quantity of the remaining product, (iv) how he declared the supplement on the doping control form, (v) why he bought this supplement, (vi) a detailed account of how he used the supplement (dates of first use, last use prior to the Zagreb Marathon, dosage, frequency, etc) and (vii) the name of the store/pharmacy/website where he bought the supplement and any receipt/proof of purchase he might have in his possession.

AIU would ask the Laboratory whether it was able to analyse supplements, and if so, to confirm the associated costs.

14. On 15 November 2024, the Athlete sent photos of six (6) supplements to the AIU and on 16 November 2024, the Athlete sent the following information regarding his ingestion of these supplements:

*“Ashwaganda- every evening*

*Glutamine-every morning*

*Collagen- three to four times a week*

*Magnesium- periodically*

*L-arginine- very rarely*

*Creatine- I only took creatine twice in the last 2 months I suspect that it could be accidentally contaminated with ostarine*

*Glutamine, Ashwaganda, Collagen and Magnesium was bought at a supplement store*

*Creatine -I got creatine for free from the seller in the store, three packages of 5 gr.  
- there is no account*

*L-arginine- received as a prize from the race- there is no account”*

15. On 19 November 2024, the Athlete added the following in relation to his use of supplements<sup>3</sup>:

*“creatin- two packs of 5g each for the last 2 months 2 weeks before the last marathon*

*...*

*“I bought these supplements because they help me recover after training, I've been using them for a long time now*

*I only took creatine twice and I have the biggest doubt that it could be contaminated with Ostarin, I got it for free from a seller in a supplement store, 3 packages of 5 grams each”*

16. On 26 November 2024, the AIU confirmed that the Laboratory was able to analyse supplements for Ostarine and provided the Athlete with the associated costs.

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<sup>3</sup> The Athlete also modified his account in relation to the use of the Collagen supplement, writing: *“collagen -every day”*.

17. On 27 November 2025, the Athlete wrote to the AIU that he would “*go first with checking the suspicious supplements and then, in the worst case, open sample B*” and made further enquiries in that regard.
18. On the same day, 27 November 2024, in response to queries from the Athlete, the AIU clarified that (i) he could have his supplement(s) analysed in Croatia if he could find a laboratory able to detect and quantify the substance Ostarine in supplements within a reasonable timeframe<sup>4</sup>; and (ii) he could first send the supplements that he considered “suspicious” for analysis (instead of sending all six supplements at once) if that was his preference.
19. On 29 November 2024, the AIU asked the Athlete to confirm by 4 December 2024 (i) where he would send his supplements for analysis and (ii) which supplement(s) he would send for analysis.
20. On 2 December 2024, the Athlete confirmed that he wanted his supplements to be analysed by the Laboratory.
21. On 3 December 2024, upon request of the AIU, the Athlete confirmed that he would first send the Creatine, L-arginine and Glutamine supplements to the Laboratory and, if they were negative, proceed with the analysis of the Glutamine.
22. On 4 December 2024, the Athlete wrote to the AIU to confirm the shipment of the above-supplements and payment of the corresponding costs. He also enquired about the concentration of Ostarine detected in the Sample.
23. On 5 December 2024, the AIU informed the Athlete that the estimated concentration of Ostarine detected in the A Sample was 0.12 ng/ml.
24. On 18 December 2024, in response to questions regarding the significance and implications of the low concentration of Ostarine in his A Sample, the AIU provided the Athlete with an overview of the applicable sanction regime in his case and explained inter alia that:
  - Ostarine is not a Threshold substance;
  - the presence of a low concentration of Ostarine in urine was no more likely to be the result of the ingestion of a small dose (including a contamination) than it was of a “normal” bigger dose; and
  - the estimated concentration was not ipso facto a basis for any reduction in sanction.

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<sup>4</sup> The AIU, however, informed that if one of the supplement was found to contain Ostarine by a private laboratory, he would be asked (i) to provide a detailed report from this laboratory (including the methodology used, laboratory accreditations, and all analytical data) and (ii) potentially to send the supplement alleged to be contaminated to a WADA-accredited laboratory (such as the Laboratory) for confirmation.

25. On 19 December 2024, the AIU informed the Athlete that the Laboratory had completed the analysis of his supplements (Glutamine, Creatine and L-arginine) and had not detected the presence of Ostarine<sup>5</sup>. He was asked to confirm by 26 December 2024 whether he wanted to analyse more supplements or proceed with the B Sample analysis.
26. On 20 December 2024, the Athlete indicated that he might send more supplements for analysis and if they were negative proceed with the B Sample analysis.
27. On 27 December 2024, the AIU asked the Athlete to confirm by 6 January 2025 the name(s) of any further supplements that he wished to be analysed by the Laboratory.
28. On 31 December 2024, the Athlete replied the following:

*“I decided to test the following supplements:*

*Magnesium Malate,*

*Ashwaganda, Vegan protein and Amacx isotonic as a third and fourth option, for backup*

*So first only magnesium and ashwagandha, later Protein and Isotonic, and I send everything in a package”.*

29. On 6 January 2025, the AIU provided the Athlete with instructions to send the supplements referred to in his 31 December 2024 e-mail to the Laboratory.
30. On 8 January 2025, the Athlete wrote to the AIU asking whether he could proceed with the analysis of his B Sample before sending any new supplements to the Laboratory.
31. On 9 January 2025, the AIU confirmed that he could proceed with the B Sample analysis and asked him to confirm his position in that regard by 13 January 2025.
32. On 10 January 2025, the AIU wrote to the Athlete noting that he had participated in the ‘Novogodišnja Utrka’ race held in Varaždin (Croatia) on 1 January 2025, in apparent breach of the prohibition on participation during his Provisional Suspension and gave him until 16 January 2025 to provide an explanation.
33. On the same day, 10 January 2025, the Athlete replied stating that:
  - 33.1. He had participated in the race in Varaždin because he *“did not know that [he] could not participate in any race other than the national championship”.*
  - 33.2. He had decided to proceed with the analysis of the B Sample.
34. On 13 January 2025, the AIU noted the Athlete’s response in relation to the apparent breach of the prohibition on participation during his Provisional Suspension, reminded him of his status under Rule 10.14.1(a) and confirmed that in accordance with Rule 10.13.2(a) : *“If the*

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<sup>5</sup> The Athlete was provided with the corresponding Laboratory report.

*Athlete or other Person does not respect a Provisional Suspension, they will receive no credit for any period of Provisional Suspension served.* In a separate email, the AIU sent the Athlete the invoice related to the B Sample analysis and asked him to confirm if he and/or a nominated representative would attend.

35. On 15 January 2025, the AIU informed the Athlete that the Laboratory could start the B Sample analysis on either 28 or 29 January 2025 and asked him to confirm his preferred date.
36. On 17 January 2025, the Athlete asked for the B Sample analysis to start on 28 January 2025 and provided proof of payment of the B Sample costs.
37. On 22 January 2025, the Athlete informed the AIU that he would neither attend nor be represented at the B Sample analysis.
38. On 28 January 2025, the B Sample was opened at the Laboratory in the presence of an independent observer in accordance with article 5.3.6.2.3 of the ISL.
39. On 30 January 2025, the AIU informed the Athlete that the B Sample analysis had confirmed the Adverse Analytical Finding in the A Sample and provided him with a copy of the corresponding Laboratory report. The Athlete was given until 5 February 2025 to confirm whether he wished to analyse more supplements (as previously stated was his intention in his email of 31 December 2024), and if so, confirm which ones.
40. On the same day, 30 January 2025, the Athlete enquired about the concentration of Ostarine detected in the B Sample and the appeal process.
41. On 31 January 2025, the AIU informed the Athlete that :
  - the estimated concentration of Ostarine in the B Sample was 0.12 ng/ml.
  - he had until 5 February 2025 to confirm whether he wished to analyse more supplements, and if so, confirm which ones. If he did not, the AIU confirmed that he would be provided with a final opportunity to provide an explanation for the Adverse Analytical Finding and that if he failed to provide a (sufficient) response, or if the AIU remained satisfied that he had committed Anti-Doping Rule Violation upon review of his explanation, then the AIU would proceed to issue him with a Notice of Charge, which would set out the next steps in the proceedings, including, *inter alia*, his right to request a hearing before the World Athletics Disciplinary Tribunal.
42. On 2 February 2025, the Athlete confirmed that he would provide his explanation.
43. On 5 February 2025, The Athlete sent an explanation to the AIU which stated *inter alia* that:
  - He was not a professional athlete. Running has been his passion, and he had always prided himself “*on being a fair and honest competitor*”.
  - He was fully aware that he was responsible for what he ingested, and had always been careful in that regard.

- upon receipt of the Notice of Allegation, he took immediate steps to investigate the origin of the Adverse Analytical Finding, including testing three (3) supplements at his own cost. However, he was unable to identify the source of Ostarine.
- He was “*aware that some manufacturers unlawfully include SARMS in their products, often without listing them on labels, or using misleading names.*”
- The concentration of Ostarine in the Sample was “*extremely low, indicating that the contamination was likely accidental, and not a result of intentional doping.*”
- He “*acknowledge[d] the possibility that contamination may have occurred through medications in the household*” as he lived with his “*mother, who is undergoing various medical treatments for multiple condition*”.
- “*As a recreational runner, [he] ha[d] no motivation to use performance-enhancing drugs, especially a substance like Ostarine*”.
- he knew that Testing would take place at the Zagreb Marathon and “*[i]t would be nonsensical for [him] to risk testing positive for a prohibited substance while competing, especially in such a public event.*”
- he had no intention to commit an Anti-Doping Rule Violation “*This situation was a result of unfortunate and unintended contamination.*”
- “*Considering the minimal concentration of Ostarine found, the lack of intent, and [his] full cooperation during the investigation, [he] kindly ask that [the AIU] consider a reduction in the length of the suspension.*”

44. On 14 February 2025, following a review of the Athlete’s explanation, the AIU confirmed that its position was that:

- the Athlete had committed an Anti-Doping Rule Violation;
- his explanation failed to establish the origin of Ostarine in the Sample or (therefore) that the Anti-Doping Rule Violation was intentional;
- the mandatory period of Ineligibility in his case (involving a Non specified Substance) was therefore a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years;
- he should receive no credit for the period of Provisional Suspension against any period of Ineligibility ultimately imposed due to his breach of the prohibition on participation during his period of Provisional Suspension on 1 January 2025 by participating in the ‘Novogodišnja Utrka’ race held in Varaždin (Croatia); and
- if he admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violation and accepted the mandatory Consequences (i.e., a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years) by 19 February 2025, the four (4)-year period of Ineligibility may be automatically reduced by one (1) year under Rule 10.8.1 ADR.

45. On the same day, 14 February 2025, the Athlete wrote to the AIU asking about the costs of the proceedings and on 16 February 2025, he asked whether he could still analyse further supplements.
46. On 20 February 2025, the AIU confirmed that he could still have supplements analysed and asked him to confirm by 25 February 2025 the name(s) of such supplement(s).<sup>6</sup>
47. On 25 February 2025, the Athlete wrote to the AIU and stated that although he wanted to analyse more supplements, he needed time to be able to pay for the analysis.
48. On 3 March 2025, the AIU noted the Athlete's position and asked him to confirm how long he needed to proceed with payment. The AIU also reminded him that, since he had breached the prohibition on participation during his Provisional Suspension on 1 January 2025, the period would not be credited against any period of Ineligibility ultimately imposed in his case.
49. On 6 March 2025, the Athlete requested a period of approximately one month to gather the funds to pay for further supplement analysis. On the same day, the AIU agreed to his request, but reiterated that since he would receive no credit for the period of Provisional Suspension against any period of Ineligibility, the further analysis of supplements would inevitably affect the start date of any period of Ineligibility ultimately imposed on him.
50. On 31 March 2025, the Athlete wrote to the AIU that he had saved up enough money to proceed with additional supplements analysis. On the same day, the AIU sent him instructions to proceed with the shipment of the supplements and payment of the corresponding invoice.<sup>7</sup>
51. On 17 April 2025, the Athlete confirmed shipment to the Laboratory of a protein supplement and payment of the corresponding invoice.
52. On 12 May 2025, the AIU informed the Athlete that the Laboratory had completed the requested analysis of the protein supplement which did not detect the presence of any Ostarine. The Athlete was asked to confirm by 16 May 2025 whether he wished to analyse any further supplements.
53. On the same day, 12 May 2025, the Athlete confirmed that he "*won't test anything further, [he] d[id]n't have any more supplements that [he] used*".
54. On 13 May 2025, the AIU wrote to confirm that its position set out on 14 February 2025 remained unchanged and gave the Athlete a final opportunity to provide any additional explanation for the Adverse Analytical Finding and any supporting evidence he wished to

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<sup>6</sup> Regarding his other inquiry, the AIU confirmed that it might seek financial consequences against the Athlete, including, without limitation, the full recovery of all costs associated with determining the Anti-Doping Rule Violation asserted against him including all costs associated with any hearing before the Tribunal.

<sup>7</sup> Between 8 and 15 April, the AIU and the Athlete exchanged regarding the supplement(s) to be shipped.



rely upon on by no later than 19 May 2025. He was also reminded that he could still accept a reduced sanction under Rule 10.8.1 ADR.

55. On 17 May 2025, the Athlete wrote to the AIU and stated, inter alia, that he would not admit the Anti-Doping Rule Violation and accept Consequences under Rule 10.8.1 ADR and asked for his circumstances to be taken into account to significantly reduce his sanction.
56. Therefore, on 22 May 2025, the AIU issued the Athlete with a Notice of Charge in accordance with Rule 8.5.1 ADR and Article 7.1 ISRM confirming that he was being charged with Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.1 ADR (“the **Charge**”) and invited him to confirm how he would like to proceed with the Charge.
57. Between 27 May and 3 June 2025, the Athlete reiterated that he did not know how the prohibited substance entered his body and that he did not commit any Anti-Doping Rule Violation intentionally.
58. On 6 June 2025, the AIU received an Admission of Anti-Doping Rule Violation and Acceptance of Consequences Form signed by the Athlete.

## Consequences

59. Rule 10.2 ADR specifies that the period of Ineligibility for an Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.1 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.*

*10.2.2 If Rule 10.2.1 does not apply, then (subject to Rule 10.2.4(a)) the period of Ineligibility will be two years.”*

60. Ostarine is a Prohibited Substance under the WADA 2024 Prohibited List under the category S1.2 Other Anabolic Agents. It is a Non-Specified Substance prohibited at all times.
61. The period of Ineligibility to be imposed is therefore a period of four (4) years, unless the Athlete demonstrates that the Anti-Doping Rule Violation was not intentional.
62. The Athlete has not demonstrated that the Anti-Doping Rule Violation was not intentional. Therefore, the mandatory period of Ineligibility is a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years.

63. However, Rule 10.8.1 ADR provides that an athlete potentially subject to an asserted period of Ineligibility of four (4) years or more may benefit from a one (1)-year reduction in the period of Ineligibility based on an early admission and acceptance of sanction

*“10.8.1 One year reduction for certain anti-doping rule violations based on early admission and acceptance of sanction.*

*Where the Integrity Unit notifies an Athlete or other Person of an anti-doping rule violation charge that carries an asserted period of Ineligibility of four (4) or more years (including any period of Ineligibility asserted under Rule 10.4), if the Athlete or other Person admits the violation and accepts the asserted period of Ineligibility no later than 20 days after receiving the Notice of Charge, the Athlete or other Person may receive a one (1) year reduction in the period of Ineligibility asserted by the Integrity Unit. Where the Athlete or other Person receives the one (1) year reduction in the asserted period of Ineligibility under this Rule 10.8.1, no further reduction in the asserted period of Ineligibility will be allowed under any other Rule.”*

64. The Notice of Charge was issued to the Athlete on 22 May 2025, and, on 6 June 2025, the Athlete returned a signed Admission of Anti-Doping Rule Violation and Acceptance of Consequences Form confirming that he admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violation and accepted the asserted period of Ineligibility.
65. On the basis that the Athlete has admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.1 ADR and accepted the Consequences specified by the AIU, in accordance with Rule 10.2.1 ADR and the application of Rule 10.8.1 ADR, the AIU confirms by this decision the following Consequences for a first Anti-Doping Rule Violation:
- 65.1. a period of Ineligibility of three (3) years commencing on 6 June 2025<sup>8</sup>; and
  - 65.2. disqualification of the Athlete's results on and since 13 October 2024, with all resulting Consequences, including the forfeiture of any titles, awards, medals, points, prizes and appearance money.
66. The Athlete has accepted the above Consequences for his Anti-Doping Rule Violation and has expressly waived his right to have those Consequences determined by the Disciplinary Tribunal at a hearing.

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<sup>8</sup> The Athlete shall receive no credit for the period of Provisional Suspension since 8 November 2024 based on his (admitted) breach of the prohibition on participation during the period of Provisional Suspension on 1 January 2025.

## Publication

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

## Rights of Appeal

68. This decision constitutes the final decision of the AIU pursuant to Rule 8.5.6 ADR.

69. Further to Rule 13.2.3 ADR, the Athlete, WADA and the Croatian Institute of Public Health ("CIPH") 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.

70. If an appeal is filed against this decision by WADA or the CIPH, the Athlete will be entitled to exercise his right of cross-appeal in accordance with Rule 13.2.4 ADR.

Monaco, 10 June 2025