
Decision of the Athletics Integrity Unit in the Case of Ms Varsha Tekam

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 Varsha Tekam ("the **Athlete**") is a 25-year-old long-distance Athlete from India.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. In this instance, the Athlete has committed a violation of Rule 2.3 ADR which provides that the following shall constitute an Anti-Doping Rule Violation:

"2.3 Evading, Refusing or Failing to submit to Sample collection by an Athlete

¹ <https://worldathletics.org/athletes/india/varsha-tekam-15022287>

An Athlete evading Sample collection; or refusing or failing to submit to Sample collection without compelling justification after notification by a duly authorised Person.”

5. The circumstances of the Athlete's Anti-Doping Rule Violation are set out in further detail below.
6. On 15 December 2024, Doping Control Personnel were authorized by the Athletics Integrity Unit (“AIU”) (on behalf of World Athletics) to test the Athlete In-Competition at the Bajaj Allianz Pune Half Marathon in Pune, India.
7. According to the Supplementary Report Form filed by Technical Delegate and the Lead Doping Control Officer (“Lead DCO”), the circumstances are, in summary, as follows:
 - 7.1. On 15 December 2024, the Athlete was selected for In-Competition Testing at the ‘*Bajaj Allianz Pune Half Marathori*’ road race, following her 3rd place finish in the women's race.
 - 7.2. The Athlete was verbally notified of her selection for Testing immediately after she had finished the race by a Doping Control Officer (“the DCO”).
 - 7.3. The Athlete was escorted by the DCO whilst she waited at the finishing area for the prize ceremony, during which time she sat down to eat breakfast. Whilst eating, the Athlete moved a couple of meters away to sit with and speak to another individual. The DCO kept the Athlete under observation during this period.
 - 7.4. Shortly afterwards, whilst still waiting at the finishing area for the prize ceremony, the Athlete told the DCO that she wanted to drink some water and moved to get some water from a water table located within the finishing area.
 - 7.5. Whilst the Athlete was collecting some water, she threw her breakfast box into a nearby bin and then moved into a crowd of people so that the DCO was no longer able to see the Athlete.
 - 7.6. The DCO immediately started looking for the Athlete to keep her under observation and tried to locate the Athlete in the crowd but was unsuccessful. The DCO then immediately informed the Lead DCO that the Athlete had disappeared into the crowd and the DCO and the Lead DCO subsequently informed the Race Director and the Technical Delegate that the Athlete had disappeared after having been notified of her selection for Testing.
 - 7.7. The DCO, the Race Director and the Technical Delegate subsequently tried to contact the Athlete directly by telephone, but the Athlete did not respond to any of their calls. Several announcements were also made through the public announcement system at the finishing area of the race to locate the Athlete, but they were unsuccessful.
 - 7.8. The Technical Delegate also contacted the hotel where the Athlete had stayed the previous evening, but the hotel confirmed that the Athlete had already checked out of her room earlier that day.
 - 7.9. No Sample was ultimately collected from the Athlete on 15 December 2024 after she was notified that she was required to provide a Sample.

8. Following receipt of the above information, the AIU conducted follow-up investigation, including further enquiries with the DCO and the Lead DCO. In summary the DCO and the Lead DCO confirmed the timeline, and the events as set out in their Supplementary Report and as described above; the Athlete was notified of her selection for Doping Control and informed that she was required to provide a Sample by the DCO. The DCO kept the Athlete under continuous observation until the moment that the Athlete disappeared into a crowd after she had indicated that she wanted to collect some water at the finishing area and could not be located thereafter.

Disciplinary proceedings

9. On 20 May 2025, the AIU issued the Athlete with a Notice of Allegation of Anti-Doping Rule Violation in relation to a potential violation of Rule 2.3 ADR and imposed a Provisional Suspension pending the determination of the matter in accordance with Rule 7.4.2 ADR.
10. The Athlete was also informed of her rights, inter alia, to provide an explanation for the alleged Anti-Doping Rule Violation 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.
11. On 3 June 2025, the AIU received an Admission of Anti-Doping Rule Violation and Acceptance of Consequences Form signed by the Athlete.

Consequences

12. This is the Athlete's first Anti-Doping Rule Violation.
13. Rule 10.3.1 ADR specifies that the period of Ineligibility for an Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.3 ADR shall be as follows (emphasis added):

“10.3.1 For violations of Rule 2.3 or Rule 2.5, the period of Ineligibility will be four (4) years except: (i) in the case of failing to submit to Sample collection, if the Athlete can establish that the commission of the anti-doping rule violation was not intentional, the period of Ineligibility will be two (2) years; (ii) in all other cases, if the Athlete or other Person can establish exceptional circumstances that justify a reduction of the period of Ineligibility, the period of Ineligibility will be in a range from two (2) years to four (4) years depending on the Athlete's or other Person's degree of Fault; or (iii) in a case involving a Protected Person or Recreational Athlete, the period of Ineligibility will be in a range between a maximum of two (2) years and, at a minimum, a reprimand and no period of Ineligibility, depending on the Protected Person or Recreational Athlete's degree of Fault.”

14. The period of Ineligibility is therefore four (4) years unless the Athlete demonstrates exceptional circumstances that justify a reduction in the period of Ineligibility.
15. The Athlete has not demonstrated that there are any exceptional circumstances present in relation to the Anti-Doping Rule Violation. Therefore, the mandatory period of Ineligibility is a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years.

16. However, Rule 10.8.1 ADR provides that an athlete potentially subject to an asserted period of Ineligibility of four (4) years 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.”

17. On 20 May 2025, the Athlete was notified of the Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.3 ADR and a period of Ineligibility of four (4) years.²
18. On 3 June 2025, the Athlete returned a signed Admission of Anti-Doping Rule Violation and Acceptance of Consequences Form confirming that she admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violation and accepted the asserted period of Ineligibility.
19. The Athlete shall therefore receive a one (1) year reduction in the asserted period of Ineligibility pursuant to Rule 10.8.1 ADR based on an early admission and acceptance of sanction.
20. On the basis that the Athlete has admitted an Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.3 ADR, in accordance with Rule 10.3.1 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:
- 20.1. a period of Ineligibility of three (3) years commencing on 20 May 2025 (the date of Provisional Suspension); and
- 20.2. disqualification of the Athlete's results on and since 15 December 2024, with all resulting Consequences, including the forfeiture of any titles, awards, medals, points, prizes and appearance money.
21. The Athlete has accepted the above Consequences for her Anti-Doping Rule Violation and has expressly waived her right to have those Consequences determined by the Disciplinary Tribunal at a hearing.

² This Notice of Allegation of Anti-Doping Rule Violations was issued to the Athlete in accordance with Article 5.3.2 of the ISRM, prior to a Notice of Charge issued in accordance with Article 7 of the ISRM. Considering the Athlete's signed admission and acceptance of Consequences on 3 June 2025, no Notice of Charge was ever issued.

Publication

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

Rights of Appeal

23. This decision constitutes the final decision of the AIU pursuant to Rule 8.5.6 ADR.
24. Further to Rule 13.2.3 ADR, WADA and the National Anti-Doping Agency of India ("**NADA**") 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.
25. If an appeal is filed against this decision by WADA or the NADA, the Athlete will be entitled to exercise her right of cross-appeal in accordance with Rule 13.2.4 ADR.

Monaco, 4 June 2025