Athletics Integrity Unit

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Decision of the Athletics Integrity Unit in the Case of Ms Pooja Aatmaram

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 Pooja Aatmaram ("the **Athlete**") is a 29-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 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 constitue 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/pooja-15022265

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

5. The circumstances of the Athlete's Anti-Doping Rule Violation are set out in further detail below.

6. On 23 November 2025, Doping Control Personnel were authorized by the AIU (on behalf of World Athletics) to test the Athlete In-Competition at the 2025 Indian Oil WNC Navy Half Marathon in Mumbai, India (the "**Race**").

7. According to the Supplementary Report Form dated 23 November 2025, the circumstances are, in summary, as follows:

   7.1. On 23 November 2025, the Athlete was selected for In-Competition Testing at the Race following her 1st place finish.

   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**") and a Lead Doping Control Officer (the "**Lead DCO**").

   7.3. The Athlete failed to sign the Doping Control Form (the "**DCF**") at the time of notification. In lieu of any signature, a photograph of the Athlete displaying her bib number was taken by the Lead DCO to confirm that she had been verbally notified that she had been selected for Testing.

   7.4. Following the verbal notification, the Athlete was accompanied by a Chaperone from the finish line heading towards the Doping Control Station (the "**DCS**"). During this time the Athlete ran away from the Chaperone and into a crowd.

   7.5. The Chaperone tried to locate the Athlete and immediately reported that the Athlete had run away and disappeared into the crowd after verbal notification of her selection for Testing to the DCO, who subsequently informed the Race Director.

   7.6. The Race Director then attempted to contact the Athlete directly by telephone, but she did not respond to any of those calls. The Lead DCO also attempted to reach the Athlete by telephone, without success.

   7.7. No Sample was ultimately collected from the Athlete on 23 November 2025 after she was verbally notified that she was required to provide a Sample.

8. Following receipt of the above information, the AIU conducted follow-up investigations, including further enquiries with the Chaperone, the DCO and the Lead DCO. In summary, they each confirmed the events described in the Supplementary Report (as summarised above) and provided the following additional details:

   8.1. After the finish, while seated on the roadside, the Athlete appeared exhausted and sweating and asked for some water. The Athlete was unable to sign the DCF and verbally stated that she would sign it upon arrival at the DCS. The Athlete was informed that

water would be available at the DCS and stated that she would cooperate with Doping Control.

8.2. The Athlete then left the finish area accompanied by the Chaperone and took a 250 ml bottle of water from a stand located near the finish line before making her way towards the DCS.

8.3. The Athlete proceeded towards the DCS with the Chaperone, who repeatedly checked that she remained within their sight due to the crowded conditions. The Athlete appeared nervous and looked around.

8.4. Before reaching the DCS, the Athlete ran away from the Chaperone and in the opposite direction of the DCS. The Chaperone ran after her but lost sight of her in the crowd and, despite searching the area, was unable to locate the Athlete.

Disciplinary proceedings

9. On 3 February 2026, 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 (1)-year reduction in the period of Ineligibility pursuant to Rule 10.8.1 ADR.

11. On 9 February 2026, the Athlete wrote to the AIU and stated that she apologised and regretted refusing to submit to Sample collection on 23 November 2025.

12. On 17 February 2026, the AIU received an Admission of Anti-Doping Rule Violation and Acceptance of Consequences Form signed by the Athlete.

Consequences

13. This is the Athlete's first Anti-Doping Rule Violation.

14. Rule 10.3.1 ADR specifies that the period of Inegibility for an Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.3 ADR shall be as follows:

> *"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."

15. The period of Ineligibility is therefore four (4) years unless the Athlete demonstrates exceptional circumstances that justify a reduction in the period of Ineligibility.

16. 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.

17. 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."*

18. On 3 February 2026, 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]

19. On 17 February 2026, 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.

[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 17 February 2026, no Notice of Charge was ever issued.

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20. 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.

21. 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:

    21.1. a period of Ineligibility of three (3) years commencing on 3 February 2026 (the date of Provisional Suspension); and

    21.2. disqualification of the Athlete's results on and since 23 November 2025, with all resulting Consequences, including the forfeiture of any titles, awards, medals, points, prizes and appearance money.

22. 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.

Publication

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

Right of Appeal

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

25. 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.

26. 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, 20 February 2026