
Decision of the Athletics Integrity Unit in the Case of Ms Tiruye Mesfin

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 Tiruye Mesfin ("the **Athlete**") is a 23-year-old road runner from Ethiopia¹.
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)."*

Factual background

4. Between 2 December 2022 and 28 November 2025, seventeen (17) valid blood samples were collected from the Athlete in the context of the World Athletics Athlete Biological Passport ("**ABP**") programme².

¹ <https://worldathletics.org/athletes/ethiopia/tiruye-mesfin-15001325>

² The ABP consists of an electronic record that compiles and collates a specific athlete's test results and other data over time and is unique to that particular athlete. The haematological module of the ABP records

5. The blood samples were analysed by World Anti-Doping Agency (“**WADA**”) accredited laboratories and the results uploaded into the Anti-Doping Administration and Management System (“**ADAMS**”) to constitute the Athlete’s longitudinal profile of haematological values with BPID QHOZAVFT (the “**Passport**”).
6. The Passport generated an Atypical Passport Finding (“**ATPF**”) in ADAMS³ and was therefore submitted by the Athlete Passport Management Unit (“**APMU**”) ⁴ for a two-step review on an anonymous basis, first by a single independent Expert⁵ and then for a further review by two other independent Experts (an Expert Panel)⁶ in accordance with Article C.2.2 and Article C.3 of Annex C of the ISRM.
7. Upon review⁷, the Expert Panel identified the abnormalities in the Passport and confirmed their unanimous opinion of “*Likely Doping*”⁸ as set out in their Joint Expert Panel Opinion dated 20 March 2026 (the “**First Joint Opinion**”).
8. In the First Joint Opinion, the Expert Panel noted, in particular, that “*the data of the athlete bears as main abnormal feature a “stimulation/ suppression” pattern in samples 13 to 16, taken between the end of June and the end of August 2025. [...] the pattern observed in*

the values, in an athlete’s blood samples, of haematological parameters that are known to be sensitive to changes in red blood cell production. The values collected and recorded include haemoglobin concentration (“**HGB**” or “**HB**”) and the percentage of immature red blood cells viz. reticulocytes (“**RET%**”). The ratio of the HGB and the RET% values is also used to calculate a further value, known as the “OFF-score”, which is sensitive to changes in erythropoiesis.

WADA describes the “fundamental principle” of the ABP as being “*to monitor selected variables (‘biomarkers of doping’) over time that indirectly reveal the effect of doping, as opposed to the traditional direct detection of doping by analytical doping controls*” (cf [WADA website on the Athlete Biological Passport](#)).

³ The marker values from the blood samples collected in the ABP programme are input into a statistical model, known as the “Adaptive Model”. The Adaptive Model uses an algorithm that takes into account both (i) the variability of such values within the population generally (i.e. blood values reported in a large population of non-doping athletes) and (ii) factors affecting the variability of the athlete’s individual values (including gender, ethnic origin, age, type of sport, and instrument-related technology).

The selected biological markers are monitored over a period of time, and a longitudinal profile is created that establishes an athlete’s upper and lower limits within which the athlete’s values would be expected to be found, assuming normal physiological conditions (i.e. the athlete is healthy and has not been doping).

The upper and lower limits are calculated (as per the WADA ABP Operating Guidelines) with a “specificity” of 99%. The Adaptive Model also calculates the probability of abnormality of the sequence of values in the ABP profile.

⁴ The APMU is a unit composed of a Person or Persons that is responsible for the timely management of the ABP in ADAMS on behalf of the Passport Custodian (i.e., the AIU).

⁵ As defined in the International Standard for Testing and Investigations (“**ISTI**”).

⁶ As defined in the International Standard for Results Management (“**ISRM**”).

⁷ See Articles C.3 and C.4 of the ISRM.

⁸ Under Article C.2.2.5.1 ISRM: “*For a “Likely doping” opinion, the Expert shall come to the conclusion that the likelihood that the Passport is the result of the Use of a Prohibited Substance or Prohibited Method outweighs the likelihood that the Passport is the result of a normal physiological or pathological condition.*”

samples 13-16 is highly likely caused by a supraphysiological increase in red cell mass, such as observed after the use and discontinuation of ESA or a recent blood transfusion.” They therefore concluded that “it is highly likely that a prohibited substance or prohibited method has been used and that it is highly unlikely that the passport is the result of any other cause.”.

9. In these circumstances, the APMU declared an Adverse Passport Finding (“**APF**”) against the Athlete in ADAMS and notified the AIU accordingly.
10. Following review of the ABP Documentation Package and the First Joint Opinion in accordance with Article C.5.2 ISRM, on 30 April 2026, the Athlete was notified of the APF by representatives of the AIU and attended an interview (the “**Interview**”)⁹. AIU representatives provided the Athlete with a copy of the Notice of Adverse Passport Finding (“**AIU Notice**”), together with its enclosures,¹⁰ by e-mail.
11. Following the Interview, the Athlete was invited to submit to the AIU (i) copies of medical documents she had referred to during the Interview by no later than 8 May 2026 and (ii) her full written explanation for the abnormalities detected in her Passport by no later than 15 May 2026.
12. On 8 May 2026, the Athlete provided photos of several medical documents and medications.
13. On 11 May 2026, the AIU requested clarification in relation to the medical documentation provided.
14. On 13 May 2026, the Athlete requested an extension to respond to provide her written explanation. The AIU agreed to extend the deadline until 12 June 2026.
15. On 12 June 2026, the Athlete submitted her full written explanation for the abnormalities in her Passport to the AIU, which was sent to the APMU¹¹ for forwarding to the Expert Panel for review in accordance with Article C.6.1 ISRM.
16. On 28 July 2026, following a review of the Athlete’s explanation in accordance with Article C.6.1 ISRM, the Expert Panel reasserted its unanimous opinion of “*Likely doping*” that it had previously set out in the First Joint Opinion; in other words, notwithstanding the Athlete’s explanation, all members of the Expert Panel remained of the opinion that that the likelihood that the Passport is the result of the Use of a Prohibited Substance or Prohibited Method outweighed the likelihood that the Passport is the result of a normal physiological or pathological condition (“the **Second Joint Opinion**”).

⁹ The Interview was conducted remotely by AIU representatives, in the presence of the Athlete’s appointed legal representative.

¹⁰ The Athlete was provided, as enclosures to the AIU Notice, with (i) copies of the relevant Doping Control Forms, (ii) the ABP Documentation Package dated 25 February 2026, (iii) relevant Certificates of Analysis and Laboratory Documentation Packages, and (iv) the First Joint Opinion.

¹¹ For the sake of completeness, the Expert panel was provided with (i) the transcript of the Interview, (ii) the Athlete’s replies to the AIU questions following the Interview and (iii) her written explanation dated 12 June 2026 with its appendix.

17. Therefore, on 10 August 2026, the AIU issued the Athlete with a Notice of Charge in accordance with Rule 8.5.1 ADR and Article 7.1 ISRM, which confirmed that she was being charged with an Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.2 ADR (“the **Charge**”), imposed a Provisional Suspension with immediate effect and invited her to confirm how she would like to proceed with the Charge by no later than 24 August 2026.
18. On 24 August 2026, the AIU received an Admission of Anti-Doping Rule Violation and Acceptance of Consequences Form signed by the Athlete.

The Anti-Doping Rule Violation

19. This is the Athlete’s first Anti-Doping Rule Violation.
20. Rule 2 ADR sets out that the following shall constitute an Anti-Doping Rule Violation:

“2.2 Use or Attempted Use by an Athlete of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method

2.2.1 It is the Athlete’s personal duty to ensure that no Prohibited Substance enters their body and that no Prohibited Method is Used. Accordingly, it is not necessary to demonstrate intent, Fault, Negligence or knowing Use on the Athlete’s part in order to establish an anti-doping rule violation for Use of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method.

[Comment to Rule 2.2: It has always been the case that Use or Attempted Use of a Prohibited Substance or Prohibited Method may be established by any reliable means. As noted in the Comment to Rule 3.2, unlike the proof required to establish an anti-doping rule violation under Rule 2.1, Use or Attempted Use may also be established by other reliable means such as admissions by the Athlete, witness statements, documentary evidence, conclusions drawn from longitudinal profiling, including data collected as part of the Athlete Biological Passport, or other analytical information that does not otherwise satisfy all the requirements to establish the presence of a Prohibited Substance under Rule 2.1. For example, Use may be established based upon reliable analytical data from the analysis of an A Sample (without confirmation from an analysis of a B Sample) or from the analysis of a B Sample alone where the Anti-Doping Organisation provides a satisfactory explanation for the lack of confirmation in the other Sample.]

2.2.2 The success or failure of the Use of a Prohibited Substance or Prohibited Method is not material. It is sufficient that the Prohibited Substance or Prohibited Method was Used or Attempted to be Used for an anti-doping rule violation to be committed.

[...]”

21. Rule 2.2.1 of the ADR provides that it is each athlete's personal duty to ensure that no prohibited substance or prohibited method is used. Athletes are strictly responsible for any prohibited substance or method used and it is not necessary that intent, Fault, negligence or knowing Use on the Athlete's part be demonstrated to establish an anti-doping rule violation.
22. An Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.2 ADR may, according to Rule 3.2 ADR, be established by "*any reliable means [...]*". According to the comment of Article 3.2 of the 2021 WADA Code, this includes "*conclusions drawn from the profile of a series of the Athlete's blood or urine Samples, such as data from the Athlete Biological Passport*"¹². Furthermore, it is well established that the ABP is a "reliable means" of establishing Anti-Doping Rule Violations¹³.
23. Based on the joint expert opinions of the Expert Panel, and considering that the Athlete has failed to explain the haematological abnormalities in the Passport, World Athletics' position is that the Passport constitutes clear evidence that the Athlete has committed an Anti-Doping Rule Violation in breach of Rule 2.2 ADR based on the abnormalities in the Passport, specifically, in Samples 13, 14, 15 and 16.
24. Consequently, the AIU is comfortably satisfied that the Athlete has committed an Anti-Doping Rule Violation in accordance with Rule 2.2 ADR.

Consequences

25. Rule 10.2 ADR specifies that the period of Ineligibility for an Anti-Doping Rule Violation under Rule 2.2 shall be as follows:

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

¹² This comment is included as well as the 2021 ADR (and subsequent ADR).

¹³ It is well settled in cases heard by CAS that the ABP model is a reliable means of establishing blood doping, i.e., the use of a Prohibited Substance or Prohibited Method. See for example paragraph 13 of *Kokkinariou*: "*Systems which make use of these longitudinal profiles have evolved to become widespread and highly effective means of detecting EPO doping*". Furthermore, in the case of *CAS 2014/A/3614 & 3561 IAAF & WADA v/ RFEA & Ms. Marta Dominguez ("Dominguez")*, the Panel stated that it was "*convinced that the ABP Model is a reliable and a valid mean of establishing an ADRV*." The Panel also noted that "*numerous peer-reviewed applications have confirmed the ABP's reliability*" (see paras. 278 and 279). Even more recently, the reliability of the ABP has been confirmed by the CAS in the following cases *inter alia*: *IAAF v/ ARAF & Sharmina CAS 2016/O/4464*; *IAAF v/ ARAF & Ugarova CAS 2016/O/4463*; *IAAF v/ ARAF & Chernova CAS 2016/O/4469*; *IAAF v/ ARAF & Savinova-Farnosova CAS 2016/O/4481*; *IAAF v/ RUSAF & Kirdyapkina CAS 2017/O/5398* & *El Mahjoub Dazza v/ World Athletics CAS 2020/A/7377*. See also *CAS 2018/O/5822 IAAF v. RUSAF & Mariya Ponomareva*, paragraph 86 "*In a preliminary finding, the Sole Arbitrator accepts that the ABP is a reliable and accepted means of evidence to assist in establishing an anti-doping rule violation and feels comforted in this conclusion by CAS jurisprudence (see CAS 2010/A/2174, para. 9.8)*". The Disciplinary Tribunal of World Athletics has also consistently upheld the principle that the ABP is reliable. See notably: *IAAF v/ Sergey Bakulin*, decision dated 14 August 2019; *IAAF v/ Sarah Chepchirchir*, decision dated 28 November 2019; *World Athletics v/ Hassan Chani*, decision dated 10 September 2020; *World Athletics v/ Daniel Kinyua Wanjiru*, decision dated 8 October 2020.

- (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.”

26. There are three widely known substances or methods used for blood doping, namely: (i) administering recombinant human erythropoietin (“**EPO**”) ¹⁴; (ii) synthetic oxygen carriers ¹⁵; and (iii) blood transfusions ¹⁶.
27. EPO is a Prohibited Substance, which is included in class “*S2. Peptide hormones, growth factors, related substances, and mimetics*” of the 2025 WADA Prohibited List. Synthetic oxygen carriers and blood transfusions are Prohibited Methods under class “*M1. Manipulation of Blood and Blood Components*” of the 2025 WADA Prohibited List. The referenced Substance and Method are categorized as non-Specified and are prohibited at all times.
28. The period of Ineligibility shall therefore be four (4) years in circumstances where the Anti-Doping Rule Violation is intentional and constitutes an athlete’s first violation of the Rules.
29. The Athlete has failed to meet her burden to establish that her Anti-Doping Rule Violation was not intentional and shall therefore be subject to the mandatory period of Ineligibility of four (4) years. ¹⁷
30. 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.

¹⁴ EPO is administered by injection to trigger erythropoiesis, the stimulation of the production of red blood cells;

¹⁵ i.e. infusing blood substitutes such as a haemoglobin-based oxygen carrier (“**HBOC**”) or perfluorocarbons to increase haemoglobin above normal levels.

¹⁶ i.e. infusing a matching donor’s or the athlete’s own (previously extracted) red blood cells to increase the haemoglobin value above normal levels.

¹⁷ In any event, it is the AIU’s position, supported by jurisprudence, that any form of blood manipulation is necessarily intentional. In paragraph 94 of CAS 2020/A/7377 El Mahjoub Dazza v/ World Athletics, the Panel concluded that since “*the use of erythropoietic stimulant (rEPO) or a blood transfusion can exclusively be done by injections, the ADRV at hand has, in the Panel’s view, to be considered as having been committed intentionally*”.

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.”

31. A Notice of Charge was issued to the Athlete on 10 August 2026. On 24 August 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.
32. The Athlete shall therefore receive a one (1) year reduction in the asserted period of Ineligibility pursuant to Rule 10.8.1 based on an early admission and acceptance of sanction.

Decision

33. On the basis that the Athlete has admitted the Anti-Doping Rule Violation pursuant to Rule 2.2 ADR and accepted the Consequences specified by the AIU in the Charge, 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:
 - 33.1. a period of Ineligibility of three (3) years commencing on 10 August 2026 (the date of Provisional Suspension¹⁸); and
 - 33.2. disqualification of the Athlete's results on and since 25 June 2025¹⁹, with all resulting Consequences, including the forfeiture of any titles, awards, medals, points, prizes and appearance money.
34. 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

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

¹⁸ Pursuant to Rule 10.13.2(a) ADR

¹⁹ This corresponds to the first evidence of an Anti-Doping Rule Violation in the Passport (i.e, Sample 13, collected on 25 June 2025).

Rights of Appeal

36. This decision constitutes the final decision of the AIU pursuant to Rule 8.5.6 ADR.
37. Further to Rule 13.2.3 ADR, the Athlete, WADA and the Ethiopian Anti-Doping Authority 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.
38. If an appeal is filed against this decision by WADA or the Ethiopian Anti-Doping Authority, the Athlete will be entitled to exercise her right of cross-appeal in accordance with Rule 13.2.4 ADR.

Monaco, 2 September 2026