

SIX-YEAR BAN FOR ‘ATHLETE-2’ DIVINE ODUDURU

12 OCTOBER 2023, MONACO: Divine Oduduru has been banned for six years by a three-member Disciplinary Tribunal for committing two Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) of Possession of Prohibited Substances and the Attempted Use of a Prohibited Substance or Method and ordered to pay World Athletics US\$3000 towards its expenses regarding the case.

The ban takes retroactive effect from 9 February 2023 - the date on which the Nigerian sprinter’s provisional suspension began - and runs until 8 February 2029, while all his results from July 12 2021 until the date of his provisional suspension have been disqualified.

The case arose out of the criminal investigation into Eric Lira who earlier this year became the first person to plead guilty under the US Rodchenkov Anti-Doping Act to providing performance enhancement drugs to Olympic athletes in advance of the Tokyo Olympic Games ([Southern District of New York | First Defendant Charged With Violating Anti-Doping Act Pleads Guilty In Manhattan Federal Court | United States Department of Justice](#)). The initial complaint issued by the US Department of Justice against Lira in January 2022 made reference to two athletes, “Athlete-1” and “Athlete-2”. By comparing information from Blessing Okagbare’s doping cases, which resulted in a cumulative 11-year ban for her last year, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) concluded that “Athlete-1” was Okagbare and, following an interview with her Nigerian teammate Oduduru, in May 2022, the AIU concluded that Oduduru was “Athlete-2”.

“We are very pleased with the outcome of this matter, given its particularly grievous nature, exposing the sinister collusion between athletes and other persons in deliberate plans to corrupt athletics at the highest level,” said Brett Clothier, Head of the AIU - World Athletics’ independent integrity arm which brought the charges against Oduduru.

“The AIU is fully committed to unearthing cheats and the extent of their networks. In our quest to protect the integrity of athletics, we often work closely with other investigative organisations. On this occasion, we are grateful for the assistance from the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) and United States Department of Justice whose legal reach provided vital evidence which helped in this matter as well as in our case against Blessing Okagbare last year.”

The panel found Oduduru guilty of Possession of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method under Rule 2.6 of the World Athletics Anti-Doping Rules (ADR) and of Attempted Use of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method (ADR 2.2), together treated as a single first violation. Oduduru received a mandatory four-year ban for the combined violation, with an additional two years for Aggravating Circumstances (ADR 10.4), after the panel determined there was justification for increasing the period of ineligibility, due to the athlete having multiple non-specified Prohibited Substances which he attempted to use in the lead-up to World Athletics' competitions and the Tokyo Olympic Games (summer 2021).

“To procure those substances, he engaged into a scheme with his teammate who in her turn was procuring those substances on his behalf from a person who was illegally bringing them to US in order to distribute among athletes with the aim to improve their sport performance, thus influencing unfairly the outcome of athletic competitions, including the major ones. The Panel considers this behaviour to be particularly serious,” read the decision.

While the panel did not uphold the AIU's charge against Oduduru of Use of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method, it was satisfied that he had engaged in conduct that constituted a substantial step in a course of conduct planned to culminate in the Use of a Prohibited Substance and therefore upheld the Attempted Use charge.

Oduduru, who turned 27 on 7 October, maintained his innocence despite overwhelming evidence against him. At the core of the AIU's case were Whatsapp messages between Okagbare and Lira, which revealed Okagbare soliciting Prohibited Substances on Oduduru's behalf, and photographic evidence of multiple Prohibited Substances discovered in Oduduru's Florida apartment.

The Prohibited Substances found in Oduduru's apartment were two boxes of Somatropin, “Xerendip” and “Humatrope”, which were identified as human growth hormone; a plastic ziplock bag labelled “IGF LR3” - an abbreviation for synthetic or “recombinant” Insulin Growth Factor - containing three vials, and two boxes of recombinant erythropoietin (EPO). According to testimony, one of the boxes of EPO was open and had only one of six vials remaining.

Also discovered in the apartment was an opened US Postal Service envelope containing “Xerendip” - addressed to Okagbare and with Lira labelled as the sender.

“The Panel finds it to be an extraordinary coincidence that all the Prohibited Substances found in the Athlete’s apartment were precisely those requested from Mr. Lira by Ms. Okagbare for her and “Divine”, specifying that she had to give (to Divine) his stuff too and for which she tested positive (EPO and hGH),” asserted the Panel.

Given the Prohibited Substances found in Oduduru’s apartment, when and where they were found, and the fact that he had exclusive control of the apartment, the panel concluded that Oduduru was in constructive possession of the Prohibited Substances.

See details here: <https://bit.ly/World-Athletics-v-Divine-Oduduru-Decision>

About the Athletics Integrity Unit

The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) is the independent body created by the World Athletics that manages all integrity issues - both doping and non-doping - for the sport of athletics. The remit of the AIU includes anti-doping, the pursuit of individuals engaged in age or competition results manipulation, investigating fraudulent behaviour with regards to transfers of allegiance, and detecting other misconduct including bribery and breaches of betting rules. It is the AIU's role to drive cheats out of our sport, and to do everything within its power to support honest athletes around the world who dedicate their lives to reaching their sporting goals through dedication and hard work.

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