

Howman: 'Nobody Above the Rules' – AIU Bans Chepng'etich for 3 Years

23 OCTOBER 2025, MONACO: Women's marathon world record-holder, Ruth Chepng'etich, has been banned for three years by the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), after admitting to Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) regarding the presence and use of Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ).

The 31-year-old Kenyan, a former World marathon champion and a three-time winner of the Chicago Marathon, accepted the charges and sanction following a positive test for the banned diuretic from a sample on 14 March this year and a subsequent AIU investigation into the circumstances.

Whilst diuretics are known to be abused by athletes to mask the presence in urine of other Prohibited Substances, HCTZ has also been identified as a potential contaminant in pharmaceutical products. It has been ascribed by WADA a minimum reporting limit of 20ng/ml, below which a positive test should not be reported. An estimated concentration of 3800ng/mL of HCTZ was found in the positive urine sample of Chepng'etich.

When initially interviewed by AIU investigators, on 16 April 2025, Chepng'etich could not provide an explanation for the positive test. At this time, to rule out the possibility of contamination, evidence was collected from her including her detailed recollection of all the supplements and medications she had taken in the lead up to the positive test, and all available supplements and medications in her possession were immediately retained by the AIU for analysis. Chepng'etich's mobile phone was also copied for analysis.

At a subsequent interview, on 11 July 2025, Chepng'etich was confronted with evidence acquired from her mobile telephone indicating a reasonable suspicion that her positive test may have been intentional. She was also informed that all the supplements and medications that had been taken for analysis had been reported by a WADA-accredited laboratory as negative for HCTZ. Chepng'etich maintained her position at this second interview that she could not explain the positive test and that she had never doped.

On 31 July 2025, Chepng'etich changed her previous explanation. She wrote to the AIU to state that she now recalled that she had taken ill two days before the positive test and she had taken her housemaid's medication as treatment, without taking any steps to verify if it contained a prohibited substance. She stated that she had forgotten to disclose this incident to the AIU investigators. She sent a photo of the medication blister pack which clearly marked the medication as being 'Hydrochlorothiazide'.

While the AIU considered her new explanation to be hardly credible, for the purposes of the Anti-Doping Rules (ADR), it did not assist in mitigating the standard two-year sanction for a specified substance such as HCTZ. To the contrary, the ADR treats the type of recklessness described by Chepng'etich in taking her housemaid's medication as being indirect intent, for which an

increased four-year sanction applies. Therefore, on 22 August 2025, the AIU issued Chepngetich with a Notice of Charge seeking a four-year sanction. Chepngetich admitted the ADRVs and, since she accepted the proposed sanction within 20 days on 10 September 2025, she was granted an automatic one-year reduction of the four years due to the Early Admission and Acceptance of Sanction provision in ADR 10.8.1.

“The case regarding the positive test for HCTZ has been resolved, but the AIU will continue to investigate the suspicious material recovered from Chepngetich’s phone to determine if any other violations have occurred. In the meantime, all Chepngetich’s achievements and records pre-dating the 14 March 2025 sample stand,” said AIU Head Brett Clothier.

Meanwhile, AIU Chair David Howman noted this case underlines that “nobody is above the rules” and lauded the industry’s commitment to the integrity of the sport.

“While disappointing for those who put their trust in this athlete, this is how the system is supposed to work. The road-running industry should be commended for collectively funding anti-doping efforts capable of uncovering doping violations committed by elite athletes in their events. The level of testing and investigative activity carried out in this case was possible because of the funding provided to the World Athletics Label Road Race Programme by many races such as the Chicago Marathon, athlete representatives, athletes and four contributing shoe brands, adidas, ASICS, On and Nike.”

DECISION: RUTH CHEPNG’ETICH

ABOUT THE ATHLETICS INTEGRITY UNIT

Link: [HTTPS://WWW.ATHLETICSINTEGRITY.ORG](https://www.athleticsintegrity.org)

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.



ATHLETICS INTEGRITY UNIT

E: media@athleticsintegrity.org

Athletics Integrity Unit, 1st Floor, 6 Quai Antoine 1er, MC 98007 Monaco