

Pole Vault Legend Bubka 'Shocked' by Doping Allegations in Russia

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Sergei Bubka

MONACO — Pole vault great Sergei Bubka says he is "shocked" by claims of widespread doping in Russian sports.

Bubka, who also heads the International Olympic Committee's Entourage Commission, told The Associated Press on Sunday that he expects the strongest possible sanctions if the IAAF ethics commission confirms the allegations of systematic cheating and corruption in the country's track and field.

The Ukrainian said he "did not sleep well" after watching German television channel ARD's documentary in which a former Russian Anti-Doping Agency official accused the agency of routinely covering up positive doping tests by leading athletes in a variety of sports. The official also claimed the head of the national anti-doping laboratory had sold banned substances and falsified tests.

"It is really embarrassing and hurting. It's hurting sport in general," Bubka said on the eve

of a two-day meeting of the IOC general assembly.

Russian Athletics Federation head Valentin Balakhnichev has called the doping accusations "a provocation aimed at undermining Russian sport."

The Entourage Commission was created in 2010 to assess the responsibility of coaches, trainers and people in an athlete's entourage in the event of doping accusations.

Bubka said the most shocking part of the documentary was the alleged scale of the scandal.

"It's a really big group and this is shocking. This is not the problem of one sport, but a general problem in sport," he said. "We need to know who is behind athletes, who guides them and who gives them doping."

The ARD film included testimony from Russian athletes, with former runner Yulia Stepanova saying that coaches had provided her with banned substances.

"[The ethics commission] has already started to investigate, we should now wait for the final results," Bubka said. "As I mentioned, for me it is clear that [the people] who proved guilty must receive a tough sanction. It's IAAF, it's a leading sport and we invest a lot of money in the fight against doping. We must be firm and determined to protect clean athletes."

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