

Lifeline for Banned Russian Athletes as IOC Overruled

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The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has ruled that the decision to ban Russian athletes with previous doping offenses from this summer's Olympic Games is “unenforceable.” The court supported Russia's condemnation of the ban as flawed and legally unjustifiable.

More than 100 members of Russia's Olympic Squad were excluded from competing under the ban from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which came into force after reports of widespread, state-backed doping across Russian sport. Competitors from other nations who have served doping offenses are still eligible to compete.

The IOC resisted calls from the World Anti-Doping Agency last month to ban Russia's entire Olympic team, and passed the responsibility of deciding athletes' eligibility to compete onto individual sporting federations.

CAS ruled in favor of four-time breaststroke world champion Yulia Efimova and two rowers, Anastasia Karabelshikova and Ivan Podshivalov. The court ruled that their bans punished

athletes twice for the same offense, and did not respect the "athletes' right of natural justice." CAS has now requested the international swimming and rowing federations decide on their eligibility for competition "without delay."

The Olympic Games Opening ceremony takes place in Rio De Janerio on Friday, with rowing and swimming events beginning on Saturday.

Some 271 Russian athletes out of an initial squad of 389 have been cleared to compete in Rio, but Thursday's CAS ruling throws a potential lifeline to dozens of other Russian sportspeople with previous doping offenses.

"We can do an appeal in 24 hours, so anything is possible," Matthieu Reeb, CAS Secretary General told journalists.

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