

Popular Political Sports Website Bought by Aspiring Russian Lawmaker

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Alexei Nechaev heads the newly formed New People party that will be running in this fall's State Duma elections. **Sergei Karpukhin / TASS**

The founder of a new party vying for a spot in Russia's parliament has acquired a sports website lauded as an independent media outlet unafraid of open political discussions, the site [announced](#) Friday.

Alexei Nechaev, the founder of a leading cosmetics company, is seeking to gain seats in the State Duma this fall as the head of the newly formed New People party.

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Sports.ru announced Friday that its shareholders, including popular YouTuber Yury Dud, have sold 100% of their shares to Nechaev's fund.

The outlet did not disclose the financial details of the deal.

Sports.ru readers expressed unease over the purchase on the website's comment section, with many predicting a [loss of political independence](#) similar to that seen at other Russian news outlets in recent years. Several users pointed to Nechaev's membership in the All-Russia People's Front (ONF), a political coalition created by President Vladimir Putin a decade ago, as a sign that he could curb Sports.ru's independence.

“Operationally, nothing will change in the company,” Sports.ru wrote, noting that it will retain its full team under the new ownership.

The website's chief executive Mark Ten said the acquisition will allow Sports.ru to buy broadcasting rights, produce original video content and develop a healthy lifestyle project.

“Our ambitions are not limited to expansion within the sports market. We aim to create a media holding [...] with the potential to unite people across communities,” Ten was quoted as saying.

Nechayev's fund said its latest acquisition is part of an ongoing campaign to diversify its assets.

“We love projects with a strong community, it always says a lot about the sustainability of the business,” the fund's managing partner Ilya Pushkin [told](#) the Russian edition of Forbes magazine.

Analysts have linked the appearance of New People and two other parties last year to a Kremlin strategy to [divide opposition support](#) amid record low ratings for the ruling pro-Putin party.

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