

Russia Is Making Anti-Doping Progress

Russia, the host of [World Athletics championships](#), has rejected claims that it is soft on doping and added the exposure of a spate of high-profile cheats was because of a step forward in testing.

Russia is keen to showcase its fight against doping as it prepares to host the World Athletics championships in August in Moscow and then the [Winter Olympics](#) in February next year in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

In recent months, a number of Russian athletes including 2004 Olympic hammer champion Olga Kuzenkova have been banned for doping rule violations that has prompted calls in some quarters for Moscow to be stripped of its right to host the championships later this year. However, the chief of the Russian athletics federation said the country had dramatically changed its approach in the fight against doping.

Balakhnichev said the national anti-doping agency RUSADA was created three years ago to keep the use of drugs in sports under control and it went to change the situation radically as the Russian sports ministry upgraded the technical equipment of Moscow's anti-doping laboratory up to the highest modern standards and increased the level of its staff's skills. He added the concept has already started paying off as the laboratory is not only testing but also regularly working out new methods of analysis that are currently used worldwide.

In March this year, British long jumper Jade Johnson said Moscow did not deserve to hold the championships because of its record of doping scandals. UK Athletics head coach Peter Eriksson has also called for an investigation. However, Balakhnichev refuted the claims and said the British should look after their own house and remarked the British coaches and athletes should better watch closely what's going on closer to home and it is best for all to withdraw from issuing any labels.

The Russian athletics federation chief added a set of serious problems in world sport in general and Russian athletics in particular is exposed by the introduction of biological passports for athletes and went on to add that he believes the main reasons for doping are the high financial motivation of success in modern athletics and a severe lack of educational work with athletes. He also remarked that children's and youth sports schools were in charge of educational work with young athletes, together with the country's youth public organizations in Soviet times but we lost the moral standards that prevented the athletes from cheating after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The chief admitted that RUSADA dealt with doping only at elite sports level and ignore youth sports where banned substances were widespread and concluded that he believes we should keep the entire sports pyramid -- from children's sports up to the world class athletes -- in our country under complete control to win the battle against doping. The chief also said the easy accessibility of banned drugs in Russia via the Internet was also to blame for the increasing number of doping cases in the country and argued that Russia should adopt laws that would allow the criminal prosecution of doping cheats.