

## Olympic Hopes Not Dead, Says Yelena Isinbayeva

Two-time Olympic gold medalist [Yelena Isinbayeva](#) has remarked she will not compete under the International Olympic Committee flag if athletes from Russia are banned from the 2016 Rio Games.

The Russian pole vaulter said the fact that 'clean' Russian track-and-field athletes have received the opportunity to take part in the 2016 Olympics under the flag of Russia if granted access by the world governing body of athletics is a victory for Russian sports. The athlete said on Match TV television on June 22 that the hope is still not dead yet and Russian athletes should fight for the right to participate in the Olympics in Rio and file lawsuits. Isinbayeva added she will have the right to participate if her lawsuit is granted and added that the most pleasant thing for her was that all athletes whose lawsuits will be granted will participate under the Russian flag.

Isinbayeva, who won Olympic gold in 2004 and 2008, said there have been suggestions that she should compete under the IOC flag but remarked this does not seem like a real possibility. The triple outdoor world champion said she backs the fight against drug cheats but remarked clean athletes should not suffer as a result. The 34-year-old said she totally understands that the IAAF needs to take strong action to eradicate doping but remarked she does not think it is fair to forbid her and other clean Russian athletes to compete - athletes who have repeatedly proved they are innocent of cheating.

The Russian said she has never failed a [doping test](#) - be it in London, China, the United States or any of the European countries where she vaulted over the course of nearly 20 years of competition, including throughout her four Olympic cycles. In an open letter published by the *New York Times*, Isinbayeva said she has devoted her life to her sport since coming out of retirement after the birth of her daughter two years ago and had sacrificed countless hours pushing her body for the chance to compete one last time at the Olympics. Yelena Isinbayeva added in the letter that her coach suffered a stroke, but even from his hospital bed he wrote training plans for her, never giving up his hope that she would win her third gold medal in Rio. Yelena added instead of focusing on that goal - which would further secure her place in sporting history - she has been struggling with the

uncertainty of whether she can even compete in Brazil and added it has been a physically exhausting and emotionally draining time.

A special session has been called upon by the International Olympic Committee on the issue of participation by Russian athletes in the [Rio Olympics](#). The cases as a result involving the Russian track-and-field athletes' participation in the Games will be reviewed individually. This would mean athletes who are permitted to participate by the athletics' governing body and qualify for the Olympics can take part in the competitions under the Russian flag.