

Russian City Loses Right To Host 2021 World Biathlon Contest

Russia suffered further embarrassment on Wednesday after losing the right to host a World Cup event and junior World Championships. The [International Biathlon Union](#) (IBU) announced the city of Tyumen has been stripped off the hosting rights for the 2021 Biathlon World Championships amid allegations of widespread and state-sponsored doping in Russia.

An IBU statement said the executive committee invites Russia to cede its right to host the 2021 world championships. The statement also reads that the IBU would strip the town of Tyumen of hosting rights itself if Russia failed to take the initiative.

In September last year, the city of Tyumen won the right to host the event ahead of Slovenia's Pokljuka and Nove Mesto in the Czech Republic. Officials from several national biathlon federations, including those of Canada, the United States, and Norway then went on to publicly criticize the choice of a Russian venue. The officials had then remarked that the selection of a Russian venue would send the wrong signal in the wake of a report by World Anti-Doping Agency investigator Richard McLaren that alleged widespread state-backed doping in Russia.

The International Biathlon Union will reattribute the hosting rights at its 2018 Congress.

Martin Fourcade, the world's top biathlete, and women's World Cup leader Laura Dahlmeier made strong calls for the IBU to step up its fight against state-sponsored tactics of Russia after only two of the 31 named athletes in the McLaren report were suspended. Charges against 22 of the Russian biathletes were dropped by the IBU for lack of evidence.

The president of the Russian federation, Alexander Kravtsov, remarked his federation was "ready to appeal the decision." Kravtsov added the Russian federation would not give up the hosting rights voluntarily.

In 2009, 20 national federations signed a petition that demanded tougher punishments for cases of systematic doping. A petition was signed last month by more than 150 biathletes and coaches. The petition urged the sport's governing body, the IBU, to impose higher fines of up to \$1 million, impose longer bans of up to eight years, and introduce the reduction of start places for national federations with athletes caught doping.

In response, the IBU said it would not tighten its anti-doping regulations on an immediate basis. The International Biathlon Union said longer bans on athletes caught doping cannot be imposed as anti-doping rules of the sport have to comply with the World Anti-Doping Agency's Code.

However, the IBU said it will establish a working group for preparing new rules for higher fines and reduced starting spots that could take effect at the start of the 2017-18 season.

The woes of Russia were not assisted by the recent statement of Russian deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Mutko. The world's [governing body of athletics](#) recently criticized Mutko for his role and issued statements. In his defense, Mutko said Russian coaches who do not understand how to work without [doping](#) should "retire." Russia will miss the World Championships that start on August 4 in London though some Russian athletes could compete in London under a neutral banner.