

IAAF Rules Out Serious Doping Offenders For Awards

The International Association of Athletics Federations has announced that this year's World Athlete of the Year award will not be open to athletes who have served serious doping suspension. This means athletes like [Justin Gatlin](#), who served bans twice, will not be eligible for this year's World Athlete of the Year awards.

The announcement read athletes who have been previously sanctioned with a serious [doping](#) offence shall not be eligible.

Last year, Gatlin's name was included in the list of nominees that prompted a boycott from a nominated athlete, Germany's Olympic discus champion Robert Harting. Harting, who also holds the world and European titles, said he did not want to get associated with two-time convicted drugs cheat Justin Gatlin. In 2001, Gatlin was banned after he tested positive for amphetamines but he appealed on the grounds that his failure to clear the test was because of a medication that he had been taking since his childhood to treat attention deficit disorder.

After Harting withdrew his name from the Athlete of the Year shortlist, the then IAAF vice-president Sebastian Coe admitted he had "big problems" with Gatlin's name being on the list. The IAAF was spared of further embarrassment after Gatlin failed to make the final three nominations and France's world pole vault record breaker [Renaud Lavillenie](#) winning the Male World Athlete of the Year award last year.

However, many fail to notice last year that Gatlin's US compatriot LaShawn Merritt, who was also among the 10 male nominations for the 2014 award.

It was insisted by the IAAF last year that it had no choice but to allow the nomination of Gatlin that was made by an international panel of athletics experts including representatives from all six continental IAAF areas. An IAAF spokesman had remarked Gatlin, as an eligible athlete who has had a great season is, logically, also eligible for consideration for the Athlete of the Year contest in the absence of any bylaw to prevent that happening.

Gatlin returned to the sport in 2010 after serving a doping ban of four year. This was after he previously served a ban of two years in 2001. Gatlin's four-year ban was reduced on appeal and he was unbeaten over 100 and 200 meters in 2014 to win the IAAF's Diamond Race trophy for the shorter sprint. Gatlin also finished the season with the fastest 100 and 200m times but was beaten by Jamaican athlete Usain Bolt in the 100m and 200m at the IAAF World Championships in Beijing.

The American sprinter was expected to make the shortlist of nine male nominations after running the five fastest 100m times of 2015 and having retained his IAAF Diamond Race Trophy.

Since this Award was first given in 1988, no athlete has won the title after serving a ban for a serious doping offence at the time of voting. Jamaica's world and Olympic 100m champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, who was the 2013 female World Athlete of the Year had a minor suspension after she was banned for a period of six months in 2010 after she returned a sample that contained the painkiller Oxycodone.