

Russia cannot compete under own flag – WADA

Russia banned from Olympics, soccer WC for doctoring dope tests

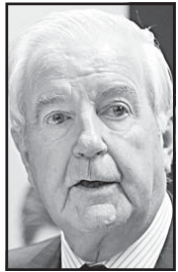
LAUSANNE/MOSCOW, Dec 9, (RTRS): Russia was banned from the world's top sporting events for four years on Monday, including the next summer and winter Olympics and the 2022 soccer World Cup, for tampering with doping tests.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) executive committee acted after concluding that Moscow had planted fake evidence and deleted files linked to positive doping tests in laboratory data that could have helped identify drug cheats.

The decision was a huge blow to the pride of a nation that has traditionally been a powerhouse in many sports but whose reputation has been tarnished by a series of doping scandals.

"For too long, Russian doping has detracted from clean sport," WADA President Craig Reedie said.

"The blatant breach by the Russian authorities of RUSADA's reinstatement conditions...demanded a robust response. That is exactly what has been delivered today," he said in a statement.



Reedie

The impact of the unanimous decision was felt immediately, with WADA confirming that the Russian national team could not take part in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar under the Russian flag and could only participate as neutrals.

"If they qualify, a team representing Russia cannot participate, but if there is a mechanism put in place, then they can apply to participate on a neutral basis, not as representatives of Russia," Jonathan Taylor, chair of WADA's compliance review committee, told a news conference.

It was not clear how that might work in practice. FIFA, soccer's world governing body, said it was in contact with WADA to clarify the extent of the decision.

The ban also means that Russian sportsmen and sportswomen will not be able to perform at the Olympics in Tokyo next year under their own flag and national anthem.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), which has come under attack for not taking a harder line on Russian doping, said it fully backed the ruling by the Swiss-based WADA.

"The representatives of the Olympic Movement today supported this unanimous decision in the WADA Executive Committee, which is in line with the statement made by the IOC Executive Board last week and endorsed by the Olympic Summit," the IOC said.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic organising committee said it would welcome all athletes as long as they were clean. It would also work with relevant organisations to fully implement anti-doping measures, Tokyo 2020 spokesman Masa Takaya said in a statement.

Russia has been embroiled in doping scandals since a 2015 report commissioned by WADA found evidence of mass doping in Russian athletics.

Its woes have only grown since, with many of its athletes sidelined from the past two Olympics and the country stripped of its flag altogether at last year's Pyeongchang Winter Games as punishment for state-sponsored doping cover-ups at the 2014 Sochi Games.

Monday's sanctions, which also include a four-year ban on Russia hosting major sporting events, were recommended by WADA's compliance review committee in response to the doctored laboratory data provided by Moscow earlier this year.

One of the conditions for the reinstatement of Russian anti-doping agency RUSADA, which was suspended in 2015 in the wake of the athletics doping scandal but reinstated last year, had been that Moscow provide an authentic copy of the laboratory data.

The sanctions effectively strip the agency of its accreditation.

The punishment leaves the door open for clean Russian athletes to compete at big international events without their flag or anthem for the next four years, something they did at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics.

"This protects the rights of Russian athletes by allowing re-entry for those able to demonstrate they are not implicated in any way (in doping)," Reedie told a news conference.

"The decision is designed to punish the guilty parties...it stands strong against those who cheated the system."

Some Russian officials have tried to cast WADA's behaviour as part of what they say is a broader Western attempt to hold back the country.

Igor Lebedev, a lawmaker and

AD scores 50, Lakers dominate Wolves

76ers improve to 12-0 at home

LOS ANGELES, Dec 9, (RTRS): Anthony Davis scored a season-high 50 points, sparking the Los Angeles Lakers to a 142-125 victory over the visiting Minnesota Timberwolves on Sunday night.

Davis connected on 20 of 29 shots from the floor and converted all 10 of his free throws in 39 minutes. It was his fourth career 50-plus scoring game. Davis also had seven rebounds, six assists and four steals.

LeBron James had 32 points and 13 assists for the Lakers, who won their fourth in a row and 14th in 15 games. Alex Caruso added 16 points, while Danny Green finished with 12.

BASKETBALL

Andrew Wiggins, who missed Friday's loss to the Oklahoma City Thunder with a left thumb sprain, and Karl-Anthony Towns led Minnesota with 19 points each. Josh Okogie added 18 points, while Robert Covington had 16 for the Timberwolves, who lost their fourth consecutive contest. Eight players scored in double figures for the Timberwolves.

Nets 105, Nuggets 102
Spencer Dinwiddie scored the go-ahead layup with 26.3 seconds left, and Brooklyn came up with defensive stops on Denver's final two possessions to win at home.

Dinwiddie led the Nets with 24 points and using a high screen set by Taurean Prince, he glided through the middle of the lane. He got by Gary Harris and gave the Nets a 103-102 lead just before Jerami Grant could provide help.

The Nuggets called their last timeout with the intention of getting the ball to Nikola Jokic, but the Nets immediately provided a double team with Prince and Jarrett Allen. The ball wound up in Will Barton's hand, but he missed an off-balance jumper in the paint.

76ers 110, Raptors 104
Tobias Harris scored 26 points, and host Philadelphia improved to 12-0 at home this season in a narrow win over Toronto.

Rookie Matisse Thybulle added five 3-pointers for a career-high 20 points, and Ben Simmons contributed 16 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists for the Sixers. James Ennis III and Al Horford had 11 points each, and Joel Embiid had 10 points, eight rebounds and six assists along with seven turnovers.

Kyle Lowry led the Raptors with 26 points, while OG Anunoby added 19 points and 10 rebounds. Pascal Siakam chipped in with 16 points for the Raptors, who dropped their third in a row for the first time this season. Marc Gasol went scoreless on 0-for-6 shooting.

LA Clippers 135, Wizards 119
Kawhi Leonard scored 34 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, Paul George added 27 points, and Los Angeles pushed past hosts Washington thanks to a dominant fourth quarter.

Leonard played an outstanding all-around game, shooting 12-of-



Minnesota Timberwolves' Josh Okogie (20) goes to the basket under pressure from Los Angeles Lakers' Danny Green (14) during the first half of an NBA basketball game on Dec 8 in Los Angeles. (AP)

18 from the floor and, in addition to his own scoring contributions, dishing five assists. George also distributed the ball well with six assists, matching Lou Williams and Washington's Chris Chiozza for the game-high total.

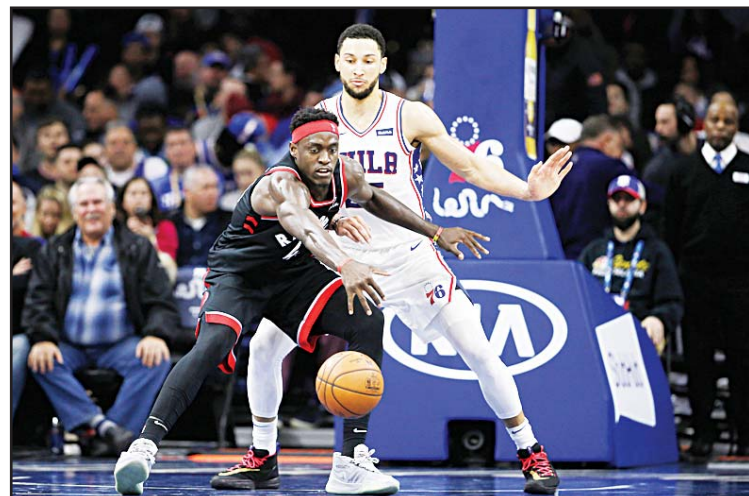
Davis Bertans led the Wizards with 25 points, while Troy Brown Jr added 22, both off the bench. Wizards leading scorer Bradley Beal, who came in averaging just below 29 points per game, finished with 20 points on 5-of-18 shooting.

Kings 110, Mavericks 106
Nemanja Bjelica matched a career high with 30 points, and Buddy Hield added 26 as Sacramento snapped a three-game losing skid with a victory at Dallas.

Bjelica made 13 of 18 attempts from the field to finish with 30 points. Hield went 10 of 15 from the floor for the Kings, who swept the three-game season series against the Mavericks in 2018-19 and have won five in a row in Dallas.

Dallas' Luka Doncic collected 27 points, eight assists and seven rebounds to mark the 19th consecutive contest in which he recorded at least 20, five and five in those categories. That snapped a tie with Michael Jordan (1988-89) for the longest such streak since the NBA-ABA merger, but Oscar Robertson holds the all-time record (29).

Thunder 108, Trail Blazers 96
Shai Gilgeous-Alexander recorded 21 points and nine rebounds, and Dennis Schroder also scored 21 points as Oklahoma City



Toronto Raptors' Pascal Siakam (left), chases a loose ball against Philadelphia 76ers' Ben Simmons during the second half of an NBA basketball game on Dec 8 in Philadelphia. (AP)

deputy speaker of Russia's lower house of parliament, said on Monday the move was a serious blow to Russian sport that required a tough response from Russian authorities, the RIA news agency reported.

If RUSADA appeals WADA's punishment, the case will be referred to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Some thought the sanctions did not go far enough.

Travis Tygart, head of the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) and long a vocal critic

of WADA's handling of the issue, blasted it for failing to impose a blanket ban.

"To allow Russia to escape a complete ban is yet another devastating blow to clean athletes," said Tygart in a statement. "WADA promised the world back in 2018 that if Russia failed yet again to live up to its agreements, it would use the toughest sanction under the rules."

"Yet, here we go again; WADA says one thing and does something entirely different."

NBA Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Dec 9, (RTRS): Results and standings from the NBA games on Sunday.

Brooklyn	105	Denver	102	LA Clippers	135	Washington	119
Atlanta	122	Charlotte	107	Sacramento	110	Dallas	108
Miami	110	Chicago (OT)	105	Oklahoma	108	Portland	98
Philadelphia	110	Toronto	104	LA Lakers	142	Minnesota	125

Eastern Conference				Western Conference			
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division			
W	L	PCT	GB	W	L	PCT	GB
Boston	16	5	.762	Denver	14	7	.667
Philadelphia	17	7	.708	Utah	13	10	.565
Toronto	15	7	.682	Oklahoma	10	12	.455
Brooklyn	13	10	.565	Minnesota	10	12	.455
New York	4	19	.174	Portland	9	15	.375
Central Division				Pacific Division			
W	L	PCT	GB	W	L	PCT	GB
Milwaukee	20	3	.870	LA Lakers	21	3	.875
Indiana	15	8	.652	LA Clippers	17	7	.708
Detroit	9	14	.391	Phoenix	10	12	.455
Chicago	8	16	.333	Sacramento	9	13	.409
Cleveland	5	17	.227	Golden State	5	19	.208
Southeast Division				Southwest Division			
W	L	PCT	GB	W	L	PCT	GB
Miami	17	6	.739	Dallas	16	7	.696
Orlando	11	11	.500	Houston	15	7	.682
Charlotte	9	16	.360	San Antonio	9	14	.391
Washington	7	15	.318	Memphis	6	16	.273
Atlanta	6	17	.261	New Orleans	6	17	.261

fended off hosts Portland.

Chris Paul added 20 points, and Nerlens Noel had 13 points and 12 rebounds as the Thunder won for the fifth time in the past seven games. Danilo Gallinari had 12 points for Oklahoma City.

Damian Lillard scored 26 points for the Blazers but was a woeful 8 of 24 from the field, including 2 of 12 from 3-point range. C.J. McCollum added 20 points, and Hassan Whiteside recorded 14 points, 10 rebounds and five blocked shots for Portland, which has lost three of its last four games.

Heat 110, Bulls 105, OT
Tyler Herro scored 27 points, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with 38.2 seconds remaining in overtime, and Bam Adebayo finished

with 21 points and 13 rebounds as Miami continued the best home start in franchise history at the expense of Chicago.

Miami improved to 10-0 at American Airlines Arena this season. The Heat trailed 92-89 with 2:32 to go but pulled ahead behind a strong showing from the free-throw line. Miami went 35-for-44 from the line, with Jimmy Butler contributing 17 of those makes en route to 23 points.

Herro swished five treys. Kendrick Nunn added 18 points for Miami, while Butler (seven) and Adebayo (six) paced the team in assists. Lauri Markkanen scored 22 points to lead six Bulls players in double figures. Zach LaVine had 18 points and Kris Dunn followed

with a season-high 16.

Hawks 122, Hornets 107
Trae Young scored 30 points, and Atlanta won for just the second time in its last 13 games by knocking off hosts Charlotte.

The Hawks had a huge second half, scoring 37 points in the third quarter to move to an 88-83 lead. Then Atlanta outscored Charlotte 19-8 to begin the fourth quarter. Young posted seven of those points.

Jabari Parker poured in 19 points and Vince Carter, coming off the bench, racked up 17 points as Atlanta received 57 points from its reserves. P.J. Washington and Miles Bridges scored 20 points apiece for the Hornets. Washington was 12 of 13 on free throws.

Juve loss opens title race as Lazio enter the fray

MILAN, Dec 9, (AP): A two-team battle for the Serie A title has suddenly become a three-team race.

Before last weekend, Inter Milan were trying to prevent Juventus from winning a record-extending ninth straight league title. But Lazio handed Juventus their first loss of the season to enter the fray.

Lazio recovered from an early goal from Cristiano Ronaldo to win 3-1 and move to within three points of second-place Juventus. The Rome club are five points behind Inter after the league leaders were held to a 0-0 draw by Roma.

"We were focused and perfect, and managed to beat a great team," Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi said after Saturday's match. "But we have been doing well for the past four years, qualifying for Europe and winning two trophies."

"The guys have been giving me similar nights for years, now we're going to enjoy it but keeping our feet on the ground because things can change quickly in soccer." Lazio have won the Serie A twice

in their history, the last time in 2000. They fifth at the same stage last season, 18 points behind Juventus.

The Bianconeri aren't exactly struggling this season, but they are far from their imperious best.

Juventus had yet to lose after 15 matches last season and had conceded only eight goals. It has already let in 15.

SOCCER

"We need to improve. This is obvious because we cannot concede so many goals," Juventus defender Leonardo Bonucci said. "We also need find the desire and determination not to suffer."

"Now that this false step has arrived, we will now take the good things done so far and start working again." Napoli's Champions League match against Genk on Tuesday could be key to Carlo Ancelotti's future at the club.

Napoli drew 1-1 at Udinese over the weekend to extend its winless

run to nine matches in all competitions. It only needs one point on Tuesday to progress to the knockout round in the Champions League and could even go through with a loss if Salzburg does not beat Liverpool.

But anything other than a win could leave Ancelotti's future even more uncertain, with Italian media reporting that Napoli owner Aurelio De Laurentiis was meeting with former AC Milan coach Gennaro Gattuso on Monday.

"A coach's suitcase should always be prepared, so therefore so is mine," Ancelotti said on Monday. "I think that in this situation, talk of a coaching change is completely normal. I've experienced it in the past and the idea of being fired doesn't worry me because I know that's soccer."

"I know that the squad hasn't performed according to everyone's expectations: mine, the club's and even the players' ... I can't pretend, the team is giving what it can and I'm responsible." Ancelotti is in his second season at Napoli.