

Bajrang Punia provisionally suspended for 'refusing to submit urine sample'; Wrestler gives his version

On the day a media report said that Olympic bronze medallist Bajrang Punia was provisionally suspended from participation in any competition for refusing to give a sample, the wrestler took to social media to give his defence.

In a post on X, Punia said that when the dope control officer came to collect his sample in March, he asked them to first provide an explanation over the use of expired kits for his out-of-competition test in December. Bajrang said he was ready to give his sample after they replied to his earlier complaint.

Bajrang's post on social media came after it was reported that the NADA had provisionally suspended him for not agreeing to submit a urine sample during the trials at the Sports Authority of India centre in Sonapat on March 10. The Tribune reported that Bajrang was "immediately provisionally suspended from participation in any competition or activity prior to the final decision reached at a hearing in this matter," according to the notice issued to the wrestler.

Though Bajrang lost the 65kg trials and Sujeeet Kalal will represent India at the World Qualifiers for the



Paris Olympics to be held from May 9, the provisional suspension could jeopardise the Tokyo Olympics bronze medal winner's prospects of another shot at the Summer Games. The winner of the Olympic quota will have to beat the winner of another national trials to book a Paris berth,

a Wrestling Federation of India official confirmed.

"I want to clarify the news about me being asked to take a dope test!!! I never refused to give my sample to NADA officials, I requested them to first answer me as to what action they took on the expired kit they brought to take my

sample (earlier) and then take my dope test. My lawyer Vidush Singhania will reply to this letter in time," Bajrang posted on X. The expired kits incident is from December when NADA officials had gone to collect samples from Bajrang, Bajrang had posted a video in which he

claimed that kits being used were beyond expiry date.

"This is a very important video for all of us to watch and ponder over. How can one trust the system if the process is not followed. How can one be sure that there is no manipulation in the entire process," Bajrang was heard saying in the video.

Bajrang's lawyer Vidush Singhania said: "We need to access the case file. We will be filing a reply to the NADA notice soon."

A clip posted by Olympic medal-winner Bajrang Punia on social media where he claims that the doping kits were expired. A clip posted by Olympic medal-winner Bajrang Punia on social media where he claims that the doping kits were expired. (Screengrabs via Bajrang Punia X)

WFI president Sanjay Singh said that the federation had not yet received a copy of the NADA notification that provisionally suspended Bajrang. Bajrang will have to appear before a disciplinary panel when the hearing begins, a process that could take weeks if not months to complete.

According to the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) Code, 'Refusing,

or failing without compelling justification, to submit to sample collection after notification as authorized in applicable anti-doping rules or otherwise evading sample collection is an anti-doping rule violation.'

At the trials in Sonapat, Bajrang had lost to Rohit 9-3 in the semifinal. Post the loss, he left the venue immediately and didn't return for the third-fourth placings bout.

Bajrang was one of the key members of the protests against former Wrestling Federation of India president and BJP MP Brig Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has been accused of sexual harassment by six women wrestlers.

Brij Bhushan has been found liable for prosecution for sexual harassment, molestation and stalking of women wrestlers in a Delhi Police chargesheet.

During the WFI elections in December Sanjay Singh, the six-time MP's close aide, had been elected to the post. The result saw Olympic medalist Sakshi Malik quit wrestling, while world championship medallist Vinesh Phogat returned her Khel Ratna and Arjuna award and Bajrang returned his Padma Shri.

Not Hardik Pandya Or Shubman Gill: India Batter, Ignored For T20 World Cup, Was Being Groomed As Next Captain



Former BCCI chief selector MSK Prasad revealed that Shreyas Iyer was being groomed to become a future Indian cricket team skipper. The batter, who was considered to be a big talent for the national side, missed out on a BCCI central contract after not playing domestic cricket despite not being on national duty. He did play some matches for Mumbai and also produced a couple of good knocks for Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL 2024 but the batter was once again ignored when the squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup 2024 was announced. However, Prasad revealed that selectors were earlier impressed with his leadership skills and considered him to be a top contender for India captaincy.

"Shreyas Iyer, unlike Hardik Pandya or Ravindra Jadeja has been groomed (as a captain). He has come through a system," Prasad said on RevSportz.

Prasad, who served as the BCCI chief selector between 2016 and 2020, revealed that Shreyas caught their eye while captaining the India A side.

"If you go back to the stats, in the last two years, when we were at the helm, Shreyas Iyer led the side (India A). I think out of the 10 series that India A played, we won 8. In the majority of those series, Shreyas led the side. He has been in and around as captain. He has been groomed for that particular slot," Prasad said.

"We felt that post Virat, post Rohit Sharma, you needed someone to lead the side that's when we started thinking about Shreyas Iyer or Rishabh Pant. But even ahead of Pant, was Iyer as a captain," he added.

Prasad also had his say about Shreyas' stint as the KKR captain. "He is slowly maturing into a very good leader. It's very important at the start of your captaincy career to have good team management. That's what he's getting from KKR. He is young, and they are going to invest in him. In the next two or three years, we will see Shreyas evolve into a wonderful captain."

Of Redemption And Dreams Coming True: Stories Of India's Olympics-Bound Relay Teams



Redemption, fulfilment of a father's dream, a big step in a nascent career and justification of choices made early in life -- Olympic qualification meant different things to the different members of the 4x400m Indian men's and women's relay teams who booked their Paris berths on Monday. Let's take a look on the eight runners -- four men and four women -- who finished second in their respective qualifying heats at the World Athletics Relay in Nassau, Bahamas to make the Olympic cut.

THE WOMEN'S TEAM: MR Poovamma: For Olympian Poovamma, it's a redemption of sorts after she faced the ignominy of a two-year ban for a doping offence in 2021 before getting a favourable decision

after the intervention of Kerala High Court.

The 33-year-old, a multiple medallist in the individual 400m and 4x400m relay race in the 2014 and 2018 Asian Games, returned to action during the Goa National Games last year after serving a two-year ban.

"Finally, I can return to action now. The ordeal is over, though it left me mentally distressed," she had told PTI then.

The Arjuna Awardee is one of the most decorated athletes in the country, having won a women's 4x400m relay gold and 400m individual silver in the 2013 Asian Championships.

She went on to win a gold and a bronze in the women's 4x400m relay and 400m individual event. The

Karnataka-born, who married another international athlete from Kerala, also won a gold each in the women's 4x400m and mixed 4x400m relay races in the 2018 Asian Games.

Rupal Chaudhary: She scripted history by becoming the first Indian athlete to win two medals -- silver in women's 4x400m relay and bronze in the individual 400m -- at the World U20 Athletics Championship in 2022 in Colombia.

The 19-year-old hails from a family of modest means. Her father is a small farmer in Shahpur Jainpur village in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut district.

As the closest stadium to her base -- Meerut -- does not have suitable synthetic tracks for training, she would endure a two-hour journey to Delhi for two days every week to train.

She became the second Indian to win a medal in the women's 400m after Hima Das' historic gold in the 2018 edition of the championships in Finland.

Jyothika Dandi Sri: Hyderabad-based Jyothika, who ran the second leg on Monday, took to sports to fulfil the dreams of her father who wanted his daughter to feature in the Olympics.

Indian Women's And Men's 4x400m Relay Teams Qualify For Paris Olympics



The Indian men's and women's 4x400m relay teams qualified for Paris Olympics after finishing second in their respective second-round heats at the World Athletics Relays here on Monday. In the women's competition, the quartet of Rupal Chaudhary, M R Poovamma, Jyothika Sri Dandi and Subha Venkatesan clocked 3 minutes and 29.35 seconds to finish second behind Jamaica (3:28.54) in heat number one to book a Paris Games ticket.

Later, the men's squad of Muhammed Anas Yahiyah, Muhammed Ajmal, Arokia Rajiv and Amoj Jacob finished with a collective timing of 3 minutes and 32.23 seconds to also finish second in their heat, behind USA (2:59.95).

The top two teams in each of the three heats in the second round were to qualify for the Olympics to be held from July 26 to August 11.

The Indian women's team had finished fifth in the first-round qualifying heat on Sunday with a time of 3 minutes and 29.74 seconds.

The men's team had failed to finish in the first-round qualifying heat after second leg runner Rajesh Ramesh pulled out midway due to cramps. With this, India now have 19 Paris-bound track and field athletes and the list includes defending javelin throw champion Neeraj Chopra among others.

The athletics events at the Games will begin on August 1.

McLaren's Lando Norris Wins Miami Grand Prix For Maiden F1 Race Triumph



McLaren's Lando Norris won the first Formula One race of his career with a shock victory over world champion Max Verstappen in the Miami Grand Prix on Sunday. Breathing life into an F1 season that risked becoming a one-man story again, Norris, in his 110th race for McLaren, beat Max Verstappen by over seven seconds with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc finishing third. Agence France-Presse Updated: May 06, 2024 09:10 AM IST Read Time: 3 min

McLaren's Lando Norris won the first Formula One race of his career with a shock victory over world champion Max Verstappen in the Miami Grand Prix on Sunday. Breathing life into an F1 season that risked becoming a one-man story again, Norris, in his 110th race for McLaren, beat Verstappen by over seven seconds with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc finishing third. Verstappen, who began on pole, had won four of the opening five races of the season and leads the world championship standings.

It looked like business as usual with the Dutchman, who had won the previous two Miami races, leading until lap 24 when he pitted and Norris's McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri took over the lead.

Australian Piastri himself went into the pits four laps later, allowing Norris to grab the lead and the British driver never looked back.

Crucially, Norris was able to pit during a safety car on lap 30, earning him a valuable time advantage which he never relinquished.

The safety car came after Kevin Magnussen clipped Logan Sargeant, sending the American Williams driver into the wall, bringing a yellow flag.

Norris, who had 15 podiums before his first win, took full advantage of the safety car and with Verstappen struggling to catch up, he secured his maiden victory.

It was the first time Verstappen has been beaten on track, when he finished the race, since Ferrari's

Carlos Sainz won in Singapore in September last year.

Norris was hoisted in the air by the McLaren mechanics as his long wait for a victory in the sport came to an end.

"About time huh?" said Norris, "I knew on Friday that we had the pace...today we managed to put it together. We had the perfect strategy, it all paid off," he added.

"He deserves it" "I guess a lot of people doubted me along the way. I've made a lot of mistakes over the last five years, my short career, but today we pulled it all together, so this is all for the team."

"I stuck with McLaren because I could believe in them and I did believe in them and today proved exactly that," he added.

Celta Vigo Earn Important La Liga Win In Relegation Battle, Granada Near Drop



Celta Vigo earned a dramatic 3-2 win over Villarreal to take a big step towards La Liga survival on Sunday, while Granada lost 3-0 at Sevilla to virtually confirm their relegation.

Anastasios Douvikas netted late on to snatch Celta victory at Balaidos against 10-man Villarreal, who had Santi Comesaña sent off after just 17 minutes for an ugly tackle. The Galicians are now eight points clear of the drop zone with four matches remaining, while Granada are 11 from safety after they were hammered by Sevilla.

The Andalucians seem doomed to join relegated Almeria in the second division next year, while Cadiz, 18th, still have a

chance of saving themselves.

The Yellow Submarine lost against champions Real Madrid on Saturday but Rayo Vallecano's 1-0 defeat at Almeria on Sunday gives Cadiz some hope -- they trail Mallorca by six points, and Rayo and Celta by eight.

Alaves dealt Valencia's hopes of reaching Europe next season a blow with a 1-0 victory at Mestalla leaving Ruben Baraja's side eighth.

Real Betis, seventh, won 2-0 at Osasuna to move five points clear of Valencia in the race for European football -- with Copa del Rey champions Athletic Bilbao already earning a Europa League spot, a top seven-finish will provide it.

Cesar Luis Menotti, architect of Argentina's 1978 World Cup triumph, dead at 85

Cesar Luis Menotti, who famously coached Argentina to their first World Cup triumph in 1978, an achievement described as one of the "country's greatest joys", has died at the age of 85, the country's football federation announced Sunday. "The Argentine Football Association regrets to report with great sadness the death of Cesar Luis Menotti, former world champion coach of Argentina," the AFA said in a statement.

The chain-smoking Menotti managed 11 clubs, some more than once, and two national teams in Argentina and Mexico in a coaching career that lasted 37 years.

But he will be best remembered for leading Argentina to the 1978 World Cup played on home soil at a time when the country was ruled by a repressive junta.

In the final, Argentina defeated the Netherlands 3-1 after extra-time with flamboyant man of the tournament Mario Kempes scoring twice against a



Dutch side shorn of Johan Cruyff, who had refused to play in the World Cup.

Menotti opted not to pick 17-year-old phenomenon Diego Maradona, who had made his international debut the year before.

Reacting to Menotti's death, Argentina President Javier Milei expressed on X his "deep pain at the departure of the leader of a team that has given one of the greatest joys to the country".

Menotti was also fondly remembered in Mexico

had backed him to eventually become "the most outstanding Mexican goal scorer".

Menotti got that right. Between 1993 and 1996, Hermosillo won three consecutive individual scoring titles and when he retired he was the second best scorer in Mexican football history with 294 goals.

"Cesar Luis Menotti, a football savant, philosopher, erudite, thoughtful, intelligent, pleasant, educated... passed away... I cannot finish listing his qualities," wrote journalist Jose Ramon Fernandez, who was a broadcast partner of the Argentine analyst at several World Cups.

"We had long talks, we shared World Cups, laughter, anecdotes." Spanish giants Barcelona, where Menotti coached between 1983 and 1984, winning the Copa del Rey and Spanish Super Cup, also extended their sympathy.

"FC Barcelona wants to express its condolences after the death of the club's former coach, Cesar Luis Menotti. Rest in peace."

Hermosillo, now a television commentator on Fox Sports, said Menotti

Malaysia Football Star Suffers Acid Attack Days After Assault On Teammate



A Malaysian national footballer suffered second-degree burns after he was splashed with acid in an attack at a shopping mall over the weekend, a sports official has said.

National team player Faisal Halim was burned on the neck, shoulder, hands and chest during the attack Sunday in Petaling Jaya district outside the capital Kuala Lumpur, according to Najwan Halimi, a sports official in Selangor state. Faisal, 26, is a winger at the Selangor Football Club.

"I strongly condemn this violence and urge the police to bring the perpetrator to justice," Najwan said in a statement late Sunday.

Selangor police chief Hussein Omar Khan was quoted by private television station Astro Awani as saying on Monday that a male suspect had been arrested, though he did not disclose a motive.

A photo that went viral online showed a visibly shocked Faisal in brown pants seated on a bench with burn marks on his body.

The attack came three days after another national player, Akhyar Rashid, was injured in a robbery outside his home in the eastern state of Terengganu. Akhyar, 25, was struck with an iron rod by two unidentified suspects and suffered injuries to his head and leg that required stitches, local media reported.

Local police chief Azli Noor said the suspects fled after taking Akhyar's money.

Football Association of Malaysia president Hamidin Mohamad Amin said he was "upset and sad" over both attacks.

"The people of Malaysia pray that Akhyar and Faisal recover quickly and get back to action," he said in a statement on Sunday.