

Russians banned from competing in 2026 Olympics under country's name

By: Maya Fanelli

With the Winter Olympics in Milano-Cortina having started on February 6th, thirteen athletes from Russia, a nation banned from participation in the games, will be competing under the name of "Individual Neutral Athletes."

Athletes were forbidden from walking during the [Opening Ceremonies](#), and will not be allowed to come out for Closing Ceremonies. Nor will their flag be flown or their national anthem be played if they medal in any events.

For many athletes, representing their country on the Olympic stage is the ultimate reward for their hard work. But for the competitors from Russia, that may never happen.

Since 2017, Olympic level athletes from Russia have not been able to compete under their countries name or flag. This started when Russia was caught violating the [anti-doping regulations](#). In other words, they were caught using performance enhancing drugs, multiple times.

The Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) was also caught trying to sabotage the ongoing doping investigations by manipulating the computer data.

In 2019, the IOC (International Olympic Committee) officially banned Russia from hosting, bidding, or participating in any major sporting events, including the Olympics.

Any athletes who could prove they were not involved with any doping allegations were allowed to compete as neutral athletes, without the flag or anthem.

During this time, Russian government officials were also banned from attending any major sporting events, unless invited by the host country's head of state. This was under the [Government Officials Ban](#).

The [WADA](#) unanimously voted to penalize Russia for four years. But during an appeal, they lowered it to two years.

This ban has since then kept the hockey power house that Russia is, from succeeding in what they are best at.

The NHL's Nikita Kucherov (Tampa Bay Lightning) says ["its not true best-on-best without Russia."](#) Alex Ovechkin, of the Washington Capitals, says he's "disappointed he can't represent his country, something his sons are missing out on seeing him doing."

It is still very up in the air on when Russian athletes will be able to represent their country again because even though the WADA ban is up, they are continuously failing to pull out of war with Ukraine.

Their return to the 2028 summer games in Los Angeles, USA, all depends on factors that still remain "too uncertain."

In the meantime, Russian athletes will ["play prideful, but there is no doubt the Olympic ban is hurting."](#)