

# IOC calls on British government to respect 'autonomy of sport'



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Olympic chiefs have urged the British government to respect the "autonomy of sport" after an attempt to lobby sponsors against a proposed pathway for Russian and Belarusian athletes to participate at next year's Paris Games.

Britain's Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer last week wrote a letter to 13 of the biggest Olympic sponsors, urging them to put pressure on the

International Olympic Committee (IOC) to abandon its proposal, Reuters reported.

"It is not up to governments to decide which athletes can participate in which international competitions. This would be the end of world sport as we know it today," the IOC said on Monday.

"We hope very much that the British government will respect the autonomy of sport... It must be the sole respon-

sibility of sports organisations to decide which athletes can take part in international competitions based exclusively on their sporting merit.

"In accordance with this, Olympic sponsors are not involved in this decision-making process."

The IOC issued sanctions against Russia and Belarus after last year's invasion of Ukraine but is reluctant to

exclude their athletes from the Olympics entirely for fear of a return to the boycotts of the Cold War era.

They set out a pathway in January for competitors from Russia and its ally Belarus to earn Olympic slots through Asian qualifying and to compete as neutral athletes in Paris.

Neutral athletes are not considered to be representing their nations and their suc-

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cesses are not accompanied by the flying of flags or playing of national anthems.

The British government issued a joint statement last month with 34 other nations reiterating a call on the IOC to issue a blanket ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes from its competitions. Ukraine has threatened to boycott the Paris Olympics if athletes from Russia and Belarus compete.

## Athletics great Dick Fosbury dies aged 76



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Dick Fosbury - the man who revolutionised the high jump in athletics - has died at the age of 76.

The American leapt backwards over the bar to win gold at the 1968 Mexico Olympics in a technique which became known as the 'Fosbury Flop' and is used by high jumpers today, BBC Sport reported. At the Games Fosbury set a then record of 2.24 metres using his method.

Writing on Instagram, Fosbury's agent Ray Schulte said his client "passed away peacefully in his sleep early Sunday morning after a short bout with a recurrence of lymphoma."

Fosbury began experimenting with the 'flop' at school and, encouraged by his coaches, he had all-but perfected it by the time he was in higher education. In the Olympic high jump final of 1968, the 6ft 5in athlete cleared 2.24m on his third attempt to win the gold.

"He changed an entire event forever with a technique that looked crazy at the time but the result made it the standard," said American four-time Olympic champion and BBC pundit Michael Johnson.

"Our sport lost a true legend and innovator with the passing of Dick Fosbury," said the USA Track and Field (USATF).

"He invented the 'Fosbury Flop', was a gold medalist at the 1968 Games, and remained an advocate for athletes his entire life. Fosbury's legacy will live on for generations to come."

## Ref corruption case is Spanish football's worst ever moment: La Liga chief

Spanish football is enduring its worst ever moment because of the refereeing corruption case involving Barcelona, La Liga president Javier Tebas said.

Last week Spanish prosecutors charged the Catalan club with corruption after payments of more than 7.3 million euros (\$7.8 million) to a company owned by a former refereeing chief were uncovered earlier this year, AFP reported.

Barcelona say they paid Jose Maria Enriquez Negreira, the former referee and ex-vice president of the refereeing committee of the Spanish football federation (CTA) between 1994 and 2018, for reports and advice related to refereeing.

"Yes, (it's the worst moment) that I remember," Tebas told Movistar channel Vamos.

"The problem that we have is the worst. There are payments recognised by Barcelona to the vice-president of the CTA, that's something ab-

normal. "It's understandable that tension is generated. The reputation of our football is at stake. I am ashamed. We have no explanation from Barcelona."

Barcelona president Joan Laporta spoke at an event on Monday and said he would defend his team against "attacks". Laporta appeared emotional during his speech and said it was not weakness, but instead showed his desire to take on his club's detractors.

"Don't think that I'm getting emotional out of weakness, I'm getting emotional because I really want to confront all the scoundrels who are tarnishing our badge," said Laporta.

"There are ferocious attacks to sully our club badge, which have nothing to do with reality. "And you can be sure that the board of directors that I have the honour of chairing will defend it with all our might."

Spanish newspaper El Pais reported Monday that former Barcelona coaches Luis En-

rique and Ernesto Valverde, would be called upon as witnesses in the court proceedings.

Reigning Spanish champions Real Madrid said Sunday they would appear as an "injured party" in the case once it moves forward.

As well as the club and Enriquez Negreira, two of the club's former presidents, Josep Maria Bartomeu and Sandro Rosell, are facing the same charge of corruption.

On a sporting level, Barcelona face no immediate danger because the governing bodies of Spanish, European and world football have five-year statute of limitations, Tebas has said.

On a criminal level, the accused could face up to four years in prison.

Sanctions against the club could range from "suspension of activity...to outright dissolution as a company," Alberto Palomar, professor of law at Carlos III University of Madrid told AFP.

## Giannis drops 46 in Bucks' comeback win; Rockets outlast Celtics



● Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo (34) goes up for a basket during an NBA victory over Kings in Golden 1 Center, Sacramento, CA, US, on March 13, 2023. ● NBA

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 46 points and 12 rebounds as the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Sacramento Kings 133-124 on Monday night.

Khris Middleton scored 31 points and Brook Lopez added 23 for the Bucks, who are on the verge of becoming the first team to clinch a playoff berth this season. They came in needing a win and a Miami loss, but the Heat beat Utah, AP reported.

Domantas Sabonis had 23 points, 17 rebounds and 15 assists for his 10th triple-double of the season for Sacramento. Sabonis has a franchise-record 54 dou-

ble-doubles, which leads the NBA.

De'Aaron Fox scored 35 points to lead the Kings, and Kevin Huerter had 17 of his 28 in the fourth quarter.

The Bucks scored six straight points on a 3-pointer by Lopez and three free throws by Middleton to take a 106-100 lead with under eight minutes remaining in the fourth quarter. Sacramento scored the next eight points and took a two-point lead on Huerter's 3 midway through the quarter.

Antetokounmpo made two free throws to cap a 7-0 run that put Milwaukee up 113-108 with five minutes to go,

and the Kings got no closer than two points the rest of the way. Another 7-0 burst push the lead to 127-116 with two minutes left.

"It's unfortunate," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "I think it was a great game. I was so impressed by Sacramento and the way they play. I'm not going to say anything about what did or didn't happen."

Elsewhere, Jalen Green scored 28 points and rookie Jabari Smith Jr. added 24 as the Houston Rockets withstood a late charge to beat the Boston Celtics 111-109.

The Rockets, who are

tied with Detroit for the NBA's fewest wins with 16, snapped a three-game skid despite allowing the Celtics' Jaylen Brown to score a season-high 43 points.

Boston, which is second in the Eastern Conference, trailed by 11 with about 4 1/2 minutes to go before using a late run to get within striking distance. Brown made two free throws to cut Houston's lead to one with less than a minute left.

Kenyon Martin Jr. missed a 3-point attempt after that but grabbed his own rebound. Green was fouled with 10 seconds to go and made both free throws.



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