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New CEO, outgoing chair address USOC abuse

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Incoming USOC CEO Sarah Hirshland: I think our future is bright



Associated Press

Sep 20, 2018



COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. -- What so many sex-abuse survivors on the U.S. Olympic team have been waiting to hear is that someone in power was listening.

On Thursday, incoming U.S. Olympic Committee CEO Sarah Hirshland choked back tears and let them know that, indeed, she is.



The most memorable moment from her first major appearance before the U.S. Olympic family came when the former United States Golf Association executive gasped for breath, held back a cry and closed her speech by saying, "I, for one, think our future is very bright."

It was, by any measure, the most important speech of the 43-year-old CEO's life. Over a sometimes-halting 15 minutes during which she warned the audience of 400 Olympians and Olympic administrators that she did, in fact, wear her heart on her sleeve, she tackled, head-on, the sex-abuse trauma that has roiled the USOC and the U.S. Olympic team as a whole.

EDITOR'S PICKS

[WADA reinstates Russia amid wave of protests](#)

The World Anti-Doping Agency's 12-member executive committee voted Thursday to reinstate Russia, ending the nearly three-year suspension of the country's drug-testing program.



"We want to ensure that our athletes shine," Hirshland said. "But today is a different day. A time to reflect and respect the brave survivors who have taught us all so much. A time for change and for action."

In many ways, the USOC's success has been defined over the decades almost solely by medals. During a speech in which he introduced Hirshland -- his last speech as chairman -- Larry Probst acknowledged that wasn't good enough.

"For all the triumphs and successes that we've achieved during the last decade, it is our collective failure to keep you safe that that will forever cause me deep and profound regret," Probst said, an unseen-before mea culpa from a man who has not worn his heart on his sleeve over 10 years as chairman.

To those long-absent words, Probst added some long-awaited support for American athletes on the anti-doping front. The Olympic world was roiled Thursday by the World Anti-Doping Agency's decision to reinstate Russia's suspended anti-doping agency.

"Suggesting that Russia has lived up to its obligations is disingenuous, and today's decision to reinstate RUSADA flies in the face of WADA's responsibility to clean athletes everywhere," said Probst, whose comment was met by applause.

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Hirshland stayed away from doping but spent ample time outlining her intent to rethink the concept of "athlete support."

"We have to think about that much more holistically, and get to the root of broad athlete support, not just performance support," Hirshland said.

She spelled out a couple of ways athletes' voices will be better heard, through the athletes' commission, the U.S. Olympians Committee and the USOC ombudsman's office.

"When we say 'athlete,' who are the athletes? What support do they need, who should be providing it and what is the form of that support?" said Susanne Lyons, who served as interim CEO and will take over the chair from Probst.

Hirshland's speech received favorable reviews from a few people in the room.

"It humanized her and made her relatable," said Max Siegel, the CEO of USA Track and Field. "She's got a tough job ahead of her. She demonstrated

openness, to not just listen, but to try to truly understand the challenges we face."

Wallace Spearmon, an Olympic track star who is now part of the athletes' commission, said Hirshland "seems like she's willing to do the work."

"At the end of the day, if someone had reached out to a big-name gymnast, had a relationship with them, that might have prevented a lot of problems," Spearmon said. "I just hope that communication is a big part of moving forward."

Hirshland also talked about where the money goes. In addition to being tone-deaf to athlete concerns, the USOC has been broadly criticized for spending too much on administration and not enough on athletes.

She said governing bodies of Olympic sports have committed to more funding for the U.S. Center for SafeSport, which was created to investigate sex-abuse cases in Olympic sports but has had trouble getting to speed because of funding and staffing issues.

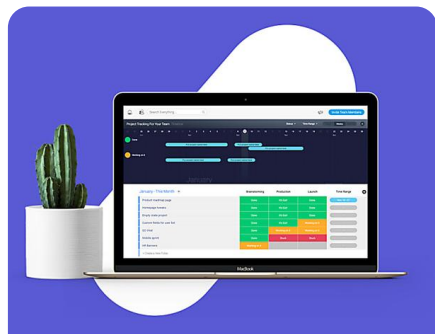
Mostly, though, this speech was about getting to know a woman who raised her hand for one of the toughest jobs in sports -- reknitting the fabric of a frayed USOC, and doing so without any true experience in the complex, political Olympic space.

"I get it. I'm new," she said. "Here's what I can say: I know I don't have all the answers. I don't even know all the questions to ask. Just know that I'm all ears, and I'm all-in."



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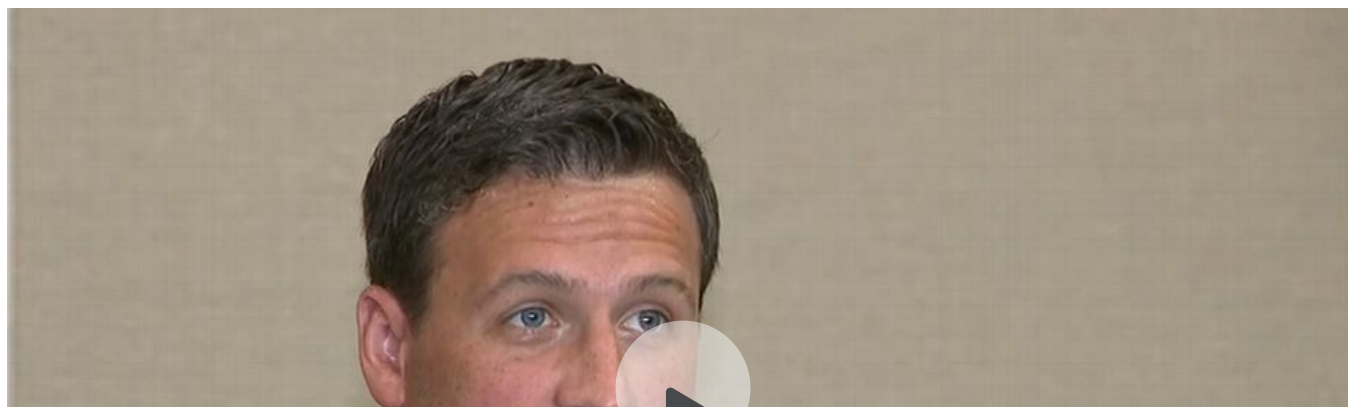
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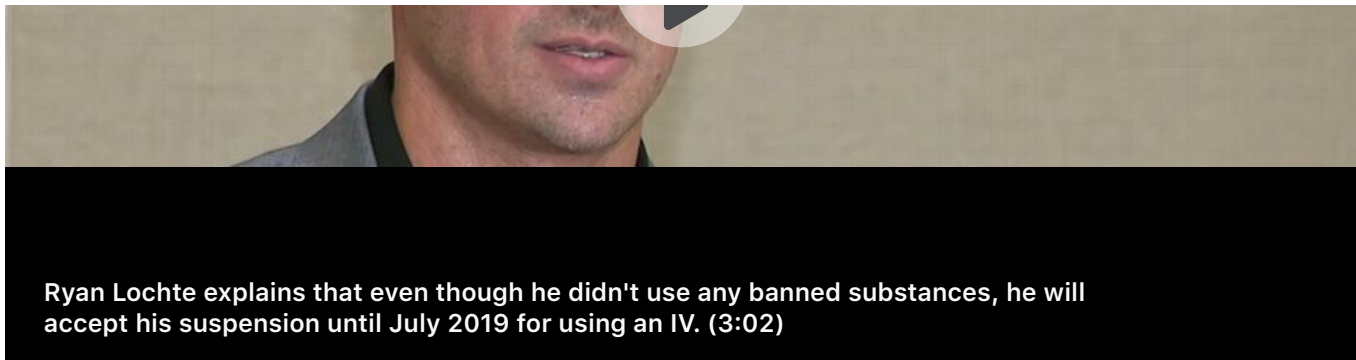


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Swimmer Ryan Lochte getting treatment for alcohol addiction





ESPN News Services

Oct 9, 2018



[Ryan Lochte](#) plans to receive treatment for an "alcohol addiction" that has been going on for "many years," his attorney Jeff Ostrow confirmed to ESPN on Monday.

As first reported by TMZ on Saturday, Lochte made the decision to "immediately" seek treatment after an incident last week at a Newport Beach hotel, when staff members called the police after the 34-year-old Olympic swimmer reportedly tried to kick in his room door. No arrests were made.

"Ryan has been battling alcohol addiction for many years and unfortunately it has become a destructive pattern for him," [Ostrow told TMZ](#). "He has acknowledged that he needs professional assistance to overcome his problem and will be getting help immediately. Ryan knows that conquering this disease now is a must for him to avoid making future poor decisions, to be the best husband and father he can be, and if he wants to achieve his goal to return to dominance in the pool in his fifth Olympics in Tokyo in 2020."

The longtime U.S. swimming star is in the midst of a 14-month ban that runs until July 2019, which forced the 12-time Olympic medalist to miss the national championships in July and made him ineligible for other top meets, including the Pan Pacific Championships and next year's world championships.

Lochte's ban was due to an intravenous injection he received in May -- a method typically not allowed under anti-doping rules. The ban, retroactive to May 24 and announced by USADA, is his second in less than two years after his 10-month suspension for his behavior during a drunken incident that created widespread scorn at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

U.S. anti-doping officials said Lochte was not taking a banned substance.

"I have never taken a prohibitive substance," Lochte said. "I have never attempted to gain any advantage by putting anything illegal in my body. I would never do that; this is very serious to me. ... Unfortunately, while the rule is a newer rule and is not widely known as others, I should know better."

Lochte's violation essentially came to light when he posted a photo of him getting the IV on his social media accounts. That triggered the USADA investigation, one that Lochte "fully cooperated" with, according to U.S. officials.

"Lochte received an intravenous infusion of permitted substances at an infusion clinic," the USADA announcement of the suspension said. Under most circumstances, athletes cannot receive IVs unless related to a hospitalization or when allowed under the terms of a USADA-approved exemption -- and Lochte fell into neither of those categories.

Nationals would have been Lochte's biggest competition since the 2016 Rio Games, where Lochte said he and three other U.S. Olympic swimmers there were robbed at gunpoint at a gas station, a story that quickly unraveled. Lochte was not only suspended 10 months for that incident, but also forfeited \$100,000 in Olympic medal bonus money and was banned from competing in last year's national and world championships.

Lochte has spent much of his career portraying a party-boy image, while his wildly successful exploits in the pool -- six Olympic golds, 36 world championship gold medals, no fewer than four world records -- were always overshadowed by 28-time Olympic medalist and 23-time Olympic champion

Michael Phelps.

After Rio, Lochte was dropped by at least four major sponsors including Speedo USA and Ralph Lauren, although he has added some endorsement deals since. He was also apparently targeted by two men wearing T-shirts bearing an anti-Lochte message who rushed the stage while he was competing on ABC's "Dancing with the Stars."

Lochte returned to competition last year, most notably winning the 200-meter individual medley at the U.S. Open. He also has become a father and a husband since Rio.

Lochte will turn 36 during the Tokyo Games. He won gold medals at the 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016 games, and if he were to find a way to win another in Tokyo he would become the oldest Olympic swimming champion.

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.



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