

ATTN: BEIJING ORGANIZING COMMITTEE FOR THE GAMES OF THE XXIV. OLYMPIAD

5th of February 2022

Dear Sirs,

I'm writing you to report/explain the situation that happened to our snowboard athlete Lea Jugovac (NOC CRO) last night. I'm her coach, and my name is Darko Bilen.

On the February 4th 2022, Lea and me, as part of the Croatian Olympic delegation, were the way to the Opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games from Zhangjiakou Olympic Village (ZVL). Around 8pm, just moments before we should have entered the Stadium and representing Croatia, we got a call from our NOC staff that last PCR test result from Lea Jugovac was positive. After the initial shock that she won't be able to participate in Opening ceremony, as well as in her tomorrow's competition in Snowboard Slopestyle, we got the information that the test results were borderline positive so that she'll have to do another test in order to confirm whether she's positive, negative or remain in this borderline area and can get a status of close contact but still be able to participate in tomorrow's competition.

First of all, she was pulled out of the Ceremony/Parade and had to wait for approximately 45 minutes next to the entrance to the stadium in order for someone to come and take her to do the PCR test. Member of IOC staff, Anya Volgina, was waiting with her and was really polite, helpful and kind so we thank her once more. I stayed there as well to see what are the next steps. When she was escorted to the quarantine room inside of the stadium I left and went back to the ZVL with early departures bus. We thought that the process will be quick after they did new PCR test and took all the data, photo of accreditation, contact numbers etc. But then they had to organize transport for her because as a presumed positive case she couldn't have shared the buses and train with other participants. And then the whole waiting started. She spent more than 2 hours in the quarantine room, by the end of that time the lady from IOC - Anya had to leave as well because all the buses with the staff and athletes were already departing back to the Villages so Lea remained there alone with the Chinese staff who did the testing. She was informed that they will bring her to the railway station, and not organize a car transport like they said at the beginning, but the ambulance will have to bring her there because they were accredited to leave the stadium area as well to pass road blocks that led to the railway station. However, she had to wait until all the people from the Opening ceremony went out and leave the stadium! (but at the beginning she was standing at the entrance few meters away from all the countries/NOC's that were entering the stadium and moving them away if someone would have approached her, but at that moment she couldn't have just passed somewhere to get into the ambulance car sooner???). After some time, the Chinese person finally said she can go and escorted her, and she has thought that she'll be back in the ZVL soon, as midnight was fastly approaching. But they were leaving the stadium area for almost 1 hour because the ambulance was stopped at all time (probably some security protocols or traffic due to the other buses leaving as well; she couldn't really see well). And then after they got out of the stadium area on the 'normal' road the ambulance turned on the lights and started driving like crazy, overpassing other cars and buses recklessly, doing sharp turns etc., so she even fell out of the seat few times. And then when they came on the railway station, she sat there waiting for at least another half an hour, so that kind of driving was not only not necessary but it was highly risky and reckless, like they were rushing if it was question of life and death. Finally, they escorted her to a train, where one part was specifically designated just for her. Upon arrival car has been waiting for her at the station.

When she got to the ZVL no one waited for her so she just went to her room not really knowing what to do because she was frozen, tired, and nervous because in the morning she should be competing and still didn't know her test results, plus if she were to be close contact how could we even arrange car for early in the morning. By the time she got to the room, warmed herself a bit and went to sleep it was already past 3. Before 6 in the morning I woke her up to inform her of test result that came negative at last, and that she should technically be able to start, but it was evident that she was so tired due to the whole situation that lasted for hours (standing in the cold, then being in quarantine room, then in the back of the ambulance - also without heating, then train, then car...)

What I really don't understand is how could this whole situation be handled so badly - why couldn't they send her back to the ZVL sooner, get her tested sooner, and get the results faster.

One more time many thanks to IOC staff, but please report this issue to whoever is in charge from Beijing Organizing Committee for Covid-19 cases, so the similar situation won't happen again.

Sincerely yours,

Darko Bilen
Snowboard Team Leader
NOC CROATIA