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## U.S. Slider Zach Lund Banned From Games

By TIM REYNOLDS, AP Sports Writer

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(02-10) 11:26 PST CESANA, Italy (AP) --

A court agreed that Zach Lund is no drug cheat. Then it dashed the U.S. slider's Olympic dream anyway — and along with it, the turmoil-wracked skeleton team's best hope for gold.

Lund was banned from the Turin Olympics on Friday for taking a common hair-restoration pill with an ingredient that can be used to mask steroids.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport — while saying it believes Lund did not cheat — ruled he should serve a one-year suspension anyhow, retroactive to Nov. 10 and enforced immediately.

So instead of preparing to hurtle down an icy track face-first on a sled, Lund will spend a couple of nights in a Turin hotel, then head home to Utah early next week, before his teammates even compete.

"If you ask any champion, the road to the top is never easy," Lund said on a teleconference, his voice breaking while teammates readied for the Olympic opening ceremony.

"This is just another bump in the road," he said. "It's not going to keep me from my athletic goals and my life goals. One of them is being an Olympian. So I'll definitely be back."

Chris Soule, who was seventh at the Salt Lake Olympics four years ago, is expected to arrive sometime Saturday to replace Lund on the U.S. team, joining Eric Bernotas and Kevin Ellis.

"On a whole, his skeleton teammates and coaches are devastated by this decision," said Terry Kent, the USBSF sports director.

Now it would seem to be up to Bernotas — who won a World Cup event at Lake Placid earlier this season and was the top American in the final standings — to win a medal for U.S. skeleton. Lund has always listed the hair-restoration drug on his medical forms, and insists that's proof he wasn't hiding anything. But he said he didn't check the forms in 2005 when finasteride, an ingredient in his hair medication that he's since thrown away, was added to the banned list.

"Unfortunately, in 2005, he made a mistake," CAS wrote.

Lund told CAS he was misled by the Web site of the governing body of his sport, which lists finasteride both as a "prohibited substance" and a "specified substance."

"It was very confusing," said Lund's attorney, Howard Jacobs. "The international federation shouldn't be able to put things on their Web site that are misleading to athletes and leave them there without any consequences."

Last month, the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency decided Lund deserved only a public warning and should forfeit his second-place finish from the season's opening World Cup event in Calgary, where he tested positive in November.

But the World Anti-Doping Agency wanted a tougher sanction and appealed to CAS for a two-year ban. Lund will be able to compete again on Nov. 9, but will not have to forfeit any other results from this season aside from Calgary.

"Mr. Lund was not well served by the anti-doping organizations," CAS wrote. "The Panel concluded that Mr. Lund bears no significant fault or negligence."

WADA director general David Howman said the organization was "comfortable" with the one-year ban.

"The correct process was followed," Howman said. "CAS functioned in the way we have come to expect of them. ... Once the offense is established, then the onus goes on the athlete to convince the panel that there was no fault or no significant fault. The panel found no significant fault."

Lund narrowly missed making the Olympic team in 2002, and was enjoying his best season before learning of the positive test — the first, he said, he's failed despite his usage of hair-restoration drugs since 1999.

After packing his bags and leaving the athletes' village, Lund was to return his accreditation for the Olympics. He'll stay in a hotel provided by the U.S. Olympic Committee, but will not watch the skeleton races next week in person.

"I'm very sad and disappointed in the outcome," Lund said. "I feel like the anti-doping system really let me down as an athlete. As I sit here talking to you right now, I sit here as an Olympian and I believe no one can take that away from me."

Skeleton racers slide headfirst on a thin sled down the same track used for bobsled and luge, exceeding 70 mph. Lund, who was the World Cup leader at one point this season, was the Americans' best gold-medal chance.

"The current anti-doping rules lack any notion of common sense. ... He had a well-documented reason for the positive test," Jacobs said. "It had nothing to do with performance enhancement."

Meanwhile, the U.S. Bobsled and Skeleton Federation now finds itself dealing with more drama.

Last year's World Cup champion Noelle Pikus-Pace missed the first half of this season after breaking her leg in Calgary when an out-of-control U.S. bobsled smashed into her.

On Dec. 31, coach Tim Nardiello was suspended over sexual harassment allegations made by athletes; he was later reinstated but ultimately fired after ignoring orders to stay away from the American team during its final Olympic preparations in St. Moritz, Switzerland last week.

Lund's saga began Dec. 15 in Sigulda, Latvia, when he learned of the positive test. He was later barred from two races by the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation (FIBT) over the test, which the USBSF did not promptly report to the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Finasteride has been banned list since 2005. Two athletes, Argentine tennis player Mariano Hood and German soccer player Nemanja Vucicevic, were banned for taking the same drug last year.

"I was following the rules," Lund said. "And the rules let me down."

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AP Sports Writer Larry Lage in Turin contributed to this report.

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