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Mike Hewitt / Getty Images file

Sponsors could keep Smashnova out of Games

Israeli star caught in middle of dispute between endorsers Speedo, Lotto

Anna Smashnova-Pistolesi, the world No. 17 and a winner of nine career WTA titles, is one of Israel's best medal hopes.



Updated: 3:00 p.m. ET Aug. 1, 2004

BERLIN - Israel's top tennis player Anna Smashnova-Pistolesi wants to compete at the Athens Olympics despite a sponsorship squabble over whose clothes she should wear.

"Being chosen to represent your country is special to every athlete," advertisement Smashnova-Pistolesi said in a statement released Sunday by her management company, ITMS Sports.

"I've worked very hard for this and I deserve this chance to both serve and make my country proud."

Smashnova-Pistolesi, the world No. 17 and a winner of nine career WTA titles, is one of her country's best medal hopes at the Games starting on Aug. 13.

However, the Israeli Olympic Committee has said there is a real possibility the player will not be at the Games if she does not accept wearing only the clothes of the team's sponsor.

Smashnova-Pistolesi's regular clothing sponsor, Lotto, says it will allow her to wear the clothes of Speedo, the Olympic team's supplier, for all events in Athens except her matches.

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Speedo, however, insists Smashnova-Pistolesi should wear its clothes at all times.

ITMS Sports said in Sunday's statement it was still pushing for a solution despite the fact that the two companies had stopped corresponding directly.

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