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Olympian faces drug charges

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Charged ... Nathan Baggaley.
Photo: Dallas Kilponen

The sporting career of three-time world champion and Olympic silver medallist kayaker Nathan Baggaley is in tatters after he was charged with serious new drug offences.

If convicted, he could be banned from all competitive sport for life but that may be the least of his worries. The charges, read out in Southport Magistrates Court, carry jail terms.

Police allege Baggaley and another man, Kane Thomas Battese, drove a car to Byron Bay, in northern NSW, yesterday to collect a quantity of tablets.

Police intercepted a car last night at Mermaid Waters and conducted a search, in which they allegedly found almost 800 tablets and cash.

The two men have been charged with possession of a dangerous drug, possession of property from supplying, possession of property used in the commissioning of a crime and possession of tainted property.

The men will next appear in court in April and are yet to enter a plea.

Baggaley was given bail but, if he is convicted of any type of trafficking charge, he will be banned for life from the Olympic Games and from competing at any level in any sport under the World Anti Doping Agency drugs code.

Baggaley, a top-level surf lifesaver as well as a kayaker, has been fighting a sports drug case in order to prepare to compete at the Beijing Olympic Games.

The International Canoe Federation had imposed a two-year ban on him after he tested positive to two steroids - stanozolol and methandienone - in 2005 after ignoring a ruling from the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Baggaley had successfully argued before the CAS that he had mistakenly swigged the tainted orange juice belonging to his brother and the CAS imposed a 15-month ban.

But the international body insisted he be banned for the full two years, which expires in October this year.

Baggaley had been hoping to compete in a surf event at North Burleigh one day after his 15-month ban expired in mid-January as part of his preparations for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, but he was forced to sit on the sidelines.

Olympic kayaker Baggaley on drugs charge

Australian Olympic kayaker Nathan Baggaley's sporting career is in jeopardy after he was charged with drug offences.

The dual Olympic silver medallist and Beijing Games medal hope could face a life sporting ban if convicted of charges including possessing ecstasy, but may also face a jail term.

Baggaley, 31, and his co-accused Kane Thomas Battese, 19, both of Mermaid Waters on the Gold Coast, were granted bail in the Southport Magistrates Court.

Queensland police allege Baggaley and Battese drove a car to Byron Bay, in northern NSW, on Monday to collect a quantity of tablets.

Police intercepted a car on Monday night at Mermaid Waters and conducted a search, in which they allegedly found almost 800 ecstasy tablets, an unspecified white powder, cannabis and cash.

The two men have been charged with possession of a dangerous drug, possession of property from supplying, possession of property used in the commissioning of a crime and possession of tainted property.

They will next appear in court in April and are yet to enter a plea.

A conviction for any kind of drug trafficking charge would earn Baggaley a life ban under the World Anti Doping Agency drugs code.

Baggaley, a three-time world champion who won a kayaking silver medal in Athens, recently completed a 15-month Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) drug suspension, reduced from two years.

However an appeal to the CAS was still pending over one sporting body's demand that he serve the full two year ban.

Baggaley was banned from his sport after testing positive to stanozolol and methandienone in an out of competition test in September 2005, but told a hearing he unknowingly ingested the banned substances from a bottle of orange juice in his family's fridge.

Baggaley is a top-level surf lifesaver as well as a kayaker and had been hoping to compete in a surf event on the Gold Coast in mid-January after his 15-month ban expired. However he was forced to sit out the competition.

Speaking after Baggaley's arrest on drugs charges, fellow kayaker Clint Robinson said he was shocked by the news.

"The first emotion I had was extreme sadness for Nathan himself, because I've never known Nathan... to be like that," Robinson told ABC radio.

"He was just always one of those blokes who was damn hard to beat if I got on the water against him or with him, and a real hard trainer, and it was a very big shock to me."

Robinson admitted the charges could end Baggaley's career.

"Nathan certainly would have to have in his mind that he was planning to come back, hopefully in surf life saving this season and maybe canoeing in the Olympic year next year and was very dedicated to come back.

"But this sort of thing would pretty much well finish any chance he's got of representing his country again, if these charges are true."

Kate Heeley, chief executive of Australian Canoeing, said as the case was before court she could not comment but she added: "Of course it's very disappointing."

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