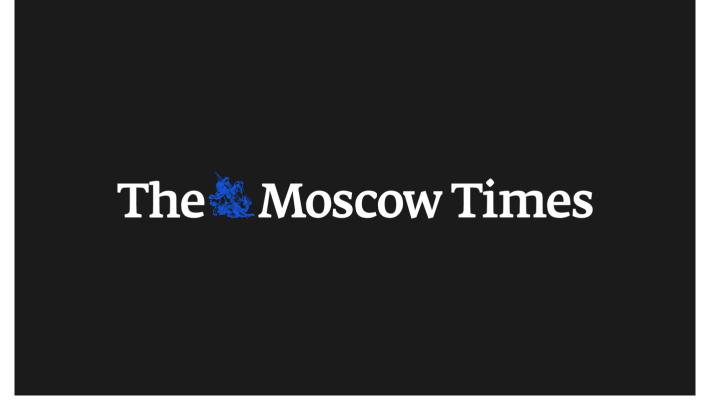# Olympic Torchbearer Dies After Carrying Flame in Sochi Relay

By [The Moscow Times](#)

December 16, 2013

A torchbearer died of a heart attack after carrying the Olympic flame as part of the torch relay leading up to the Sochi 2014 Winter Games in February, an official said Monday.

Vadim Gorbenko, 73, a sports school director and Greco-Roman wrestling coach, felt ill after walking 150 meters with the torch in his home city of Kurgan in western Siberia, said Roman Osin, spokesman for the Sochi 2014 torch relay.

"He returned to the gathering place and was photographed, then he said he was not feeling well and was taken to a hospital, but the doctors were unable to save him," Osin, who travels with the relay, said by telephone.

"We express our deepest condolences to his loved ones."

Osin said Gorbenko, who had trained top Russian wrestlers and won state honors, had

suffered two heart attacks in the past. He was conscious when he was taken to the hospital and had spoken to his son at his bedside before his death.

Russia's four-month, 65,000-kilometer torch relay has traveled through rare territory. Cosmonauts took an unlit torch on a spacewalk last month, and the Olympic flame has been to the North Pole and Lake Baikal on a journey that will end at the opening ceremony in Sochi on Feb. 7.

But the relay but has also been clouded by mishaps. The flame has gone out numerous times since President Vladimir Putin handed it off in Red Square on Oct. 6, and last month a torchbearer's jacket caught fire as he carried the flame though another Siberian city.

Putin appears eager to improve Russia's image and build his own legacy by hosting the country's first post-Soviet Olympics, but he has faced criticism over legislation seen in the West as anti-gay, and some world leaders are staying away from the Games.

The 14,000 torchbearers in the Sochi 2014 relay are not asked to sign releases but are warned that it involves some physical exertion and their health is their own responsibility, Osin said.

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