

# Sochi Olympics Kicks Off With Slopestyle

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia's Alexey Sobolev during qualification for the men's slopestyle competition at the XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi. **Ramil Sitdikov**

ROSA KHUTOR — The first competition got under way at the Sochi Winter Games on Thursday as the sport of slopestyle made its much-anticipated Olympic debut.

A day before the opening ceremony in Sochi, British snowboarder Billy Morgan, a 24-year-old former circus acrobat, became the first athlete to compete, streaking over the slopestyle hill's rails and jumps at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park.

Thursday's slopestyle qualifying cuts the field of 28 men down to 12 for Saturday's final, which will be the first medal event of the Games.

It begins amid controversy over the course, which has been altered to lower the height of the jumps in light of complaints from athletes that it was unsafe.

Norwegian boarder Torstein Horgsmo's Olympic dream was ended when he broke his collarbone in training Monday, and U.S. star Shaun White withdrew from slopestyle Tuesday to focus on the halfpipe competition, citing the injury risk.

Slopestyle's Olympic debut includes men's and women's ski and snowboard events. Later Thursday, the women's slopestyle qualifying follows at the Extreme Park.

Russia was awarded the 2014 Winter Olympics seven years ago. Hosting the Games is seen a favored pet project for President Vladimir Putin and has cost a reported \$51 billion, including infrastructure costs. That would be an Olympic record, although Russian officials say only \$6.4 billion of competition-related costs should be considered.

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