

Grim Talk Turns to Gold at Olympics

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 09, 2014



Visitors lining up to have their photos taken in front of the Olympic rings in the Olympic Plaza in Sochi on Sunday. **Darron Cummings**

All the gloom and grim talk leading to the Sochi Olympics at last gave way to more uplifting things.

IOC President Thomas Bach had said it is "time that it finally starts." And so it did Saturday — the first competition since the cauldron was lit.

In all, 98 gold medals will be awarded over the next 16 days, and five were settled on Day 2.

Norwegian biathlete Ole Einar Bjoerndalen became the oldest individual gold medalist at the Winter Olympics, winning the 10-kilometer sprint — his seventh career gold. Cross-country skier Marit Bjoergen, also from Norway, captured the women's 15-kilometer skiathlon for her fourth Olympic title. And U.S. snowboarder Sage Kotsenburg, his blonde hair flapping from his helmet, won the first gold medal of the games by taking men's slopestyle.

Biathlon: At age 40, Bjoerndalen became the oldest Winter Olympic gold medalist in an individual sport, bringing him within one gold of the all-time mark of eight held by Norwegian cross-country skiing great Bjorn Daehlie. He was followed by Dominik Landertinger of Austria and Jaroslav Soukup of Czech Republic.

"I am in super form," Bjoerndalen said. "I prepared well for this and I am feeling strong."

Cross-Country Skiing: Bjoergen's gold was tempered by grief. The brother of teammate Astrid Uhrenholdt Jacobsen died "suddenly and unexpectedly" a day earlier, according to Norwegian Olympic officials. Bjoergen, joined by teammates, sobbed in an embrace after the race.

"We really did a good race for him today," Bjoergen said.

Bjoergen held off silver medalist Charlotte Kalla in the final straightaway to win in 38 minutes, 33.6 seconds, successfully defending her title from Vancouver. Norway's Heidi Weng won the bronze.

"One gold was my goal, so now I can relax a little bit," Bjoergen said.

Snowboarding: Kotsenburg won the first gold of the games. The 20-year-old from Idaho mastered a perilous course in Krasnaya Polyana in slopestyle's Olympic debut. He was king of a 12-man field and a slope that features a large nesting doll — a course Shaun White wanted no part of.

Kotsenburg wowed the judges with a daring, spinning maneuver in which he rotated four times. Staale Sandbech of Norway won the silver medal and Mark McMorris of Canada took the bronze.

"I can't even describe the feeling," Kotsenburg said. "It is so cool."

Speedskating: Sven Kramer of the Netherlands set an Olympic record and defended his speedskating title in the men's 5,000 meter event before his country's king, queen and prime minister.

Kramer has been bedeviled at the Olympics, notably in Vancouver when his coach pointed him to the wrong lane in the 10,000. But on this day he surged around the oval, winning in 6 minutes, 10.76 seconds and leading a Dutch sweep in which he was followed by Jan Blokhuijsen and Jorrit Bergsma.

"That Sven was able to deliver despite such pressure, it leaves me speechless," King Willem-Alexander said.

Alpine: Bode Miller of the U.S. and Aksel Lund Svindal of Norway emerged as favorites on a treacherous downhill course. Miller and Svindal finished 1-2 in the final downhill training run. Asked of his objectives Saturday, Miller said: "Um, not kill myself was primary."

Hockey: The U.S. won the opener of the Olympic women's hockey tournament, defeating Finland 3-1 behind Hilary Knight's goal 53 seconds into the game and Jesse Vetter's 14 saves. The U.S. can reach the semifinals by beating Switzerland on Monday. Canada beat Switzerland 5-0.

Figure Skating: If the Russians keep performing as they have in the new team figure skating competition, they are sure to dominate throughout these Sochi Games. Yulia Lipnitskaya, at 15, had the look of an Olympic champion Saturday night, dazzling the home crowd with a near-perfect routine in the women's short program. Ksenia Stolbova and Fedor Klimov earned cheers as they routed the field in the free skate.

With only the men's and women's free skate and the free dance left to contest in Sunday's finale, Russia has 47 points and a six point lead over Canada. World champions Meryl Davis and Charlie White quick-stepped their way to victory in the team short dance, lifting the U.S. into the medal chase. The U.S. is third with 34 points.

Moguls: Justine and Chloe Dufour-Lapointe joined a few other sisters to win gold and silver in the same Olympic event. They did it in women's moguls, where their oldest sister Maxime made it into the finals and finished 12th. French skiers Mariee and Christine Goitschel and Austrian lugers Doris and Angelika Neuner are on the short list of sisters to also go 1-2 in an Olympic event.

"A dream. A long time, we have dreamed this," said their father, Yves. "It doesn't get any better than this. It does not."

Bobsled: Sprint star Lauryn Williams was selected to push the U.S. sled driven by Elana Meyers. She has a chance at becoming only the second person to win gold at the Summer and Winter Games.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/02/09/grim-talk-turns-to-gold-at-olympics-a31883>