Britain Wins First Olympic Gold With Skeleton, Russia Comes Third

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 15, 2014

From left to right: Noelle Pikus-Pace (U.S.), Lizzy Yarnold (Britain), Elena Nikitina (Russia). **Vladimir Apstakovich**

Britain won its first gold medal of the Sochi Olympics on Friday as Lizzy Yarnold sped to gold in the women's skeleton by a commanding margin.

Yarnold's win continues a tradition of British dominance in the skeleton, an event in which the country has won at least one medal at every Winter Olympics in which it has competed.

Among the British athletes present to cheer Yarnold on at the Sanki Sliding Center was Amy Williams, who won gold in the same event in 2010.

The silver medal went to Noelle Pikus-Pace of the United States, a full 0.97 seconds behind Yarnold, which is a large gap in a precision-based sport like skeleton where wins are often decided by a tenth of a second or less. The result ends a season-long duel between Yarnold

and Pikus–Pace, who between them have won every World Cup event this season.

Elena Nikitina won bronze for Russia, 0.44 seconds further back. The explosively fast–starting Nikitina had been briefly second to Yarnold after Thursday's first run, but was consistently slower than her rivals on the turns over the course of the four–run contest. Turin 2006 silver medalist and reigning world champion Shelley Rudman came in16th place for Britain.

The skeleton competition was overshadowed Thursday when Australian officials protested that Russian athletes had been given exclusive access to training facilities at the Sanki Sliding Center, which in their view gave them an unfair advantage. The International Bobsled and Toboggan Federation turned down the protest on the grounds that it has no jurisdiction over the facilities.

Yarnold's win also came a day after a Russian track worker suffered two broken legs in an on–track collision with a test bobsled at the center. He is in a stable condition in hospital, the Sochi organizing committee has said.