

Putin Defends Plushenko From Criticism Over Olympic Dropout

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Skating hero Yevgeny Plushenko has been facing a wave of criticism for his sudden dropout. **Maxim Bogodvid**

President Vladimir Putin on Friday had nothing but praise for Yevgeny Plushenko despite the figure skating star's withdrawal from the Olympics a day earlier.

Plushenko acquired a back injury in the warm-up before he was due to perform in the individual event Thursday and just four days after helping his country to gold in the new team event.

"He performed in the team event and showed his best result," Putin said. "He really does have a big problem with his health. He has had several operations."

The Russian Olympic skating delegation has faced a tide of criticism for having selected Plushenko, who is in his thirties and was already suffering back problems, over rising star

and 18-year-old Maxim Kovtun.

Had Plushenko pulled out immediately after the team event on Sunday, Russia would have been able to call in Kovtun as a replacement. But Plushenko insisted he was able to compete, leaving the host nation without a representative in the men's singles.

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