The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Lipnitskaya Eyes Olympic Glory in Individual Figure Skating Event

By Jennifer Monaghan

February 19, 2014



Yulia Lipnitskaya also performed in the team figure skating competition, helping Russia to take gold.

Russian figure skating sensation Yulia Lipnitskaya will take to the ice on Wednesday evening as she looks to follow up victory in the team event with a figure skating medal in the individual competition.

Lipnitskaya, 15, gave two stunning performances during the opening weekend of the Olympics to help Russia's figure skating team claim the country's first gold medal of the Sochi Games.

Lipnitskaya returned to Moscow last week to train for the individual event but will face stiff competition on her return to Sochi, not least from defending champion Kim Yu-na.

South Korean Kim posted record scores in both the short program and the free skate program on her way to Olympic gold in Vancouver in 2010.

Her preparation for this year's Olympics has been less than ideal, however. Kim, 23, sprained

a metatarsal last September, and subsequently missed the entire international Grand Prix Figure Skating circuit through injury.

Nevertheless, experts and former skaters are billing the women's final as a battle between Lipnitskaya and Kim for gold.

"Who knows what Yu-na Kim is going to show up?" said former Winter Olympic silver medalist Paul Wylie, The New York Times reported.

"She could just take all the air out of the room, but I think she's going to struggle against a perfect performance from Lipnitskaya." Wylie said.

Competitors will perform twice during the women's individual event, with the short program on Wednesday and the free skate the next day. The scores from both programs will be aggregated, with gold going to the competitor who is awarded the highest total.

Lipnitskaya will be joined at the Iceberg Skating Palace by compatriot Adelina Sotnikova, who won a silver medal in the 2012 Youth Olympics.

The women's short program starts at 7 p.m. on Wednesday. The free skate program will take place from 7 p.m. on Thursday.

Original url:
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