

Russia's Sotnikova Dazzles on Her Way to Figure-Skating Gold

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 21, 2014



Russia's Adelina Sotnikova wins the Sochi Olympic gold medal.

SOCHI — Russia's Adelina Sotnikova put in a sensational free skate to snatch the Sochi Olympic gold medal away from Kim Yuna and deny the South Korean back-to-back titles.

Sotnikova, 17, had trailed Kim by less than a point after a dazzling short program on Wednesday and overtook the 23-year-old two-time world champion during Thursday's free skate to win with a total score of 224.59 points.

It is a first women's singles gold medal ever for Russia and a third figure skating gold for the host nation in Sochi after it won the team event and the pairs title went to Tatiana Volosozhar and Maxim Trankov. It also shifts the focus from Evgeny Plushenko's controversial injury withdrawal from the men's individual competition.

"I smashed my season's best. In fact, I smashed my highest score for my whole career, and I

did it at the Olympics. I did not think I could skate like I did today," Sotnikova said before learning she had become an Olympic champion.

"The atmosphere was wonderful. I felt something amazing coming from the crowd. I could hear shouts and screams the whole time of 'keep going Adelina', and 'you can do it'. I just could not skate badly."

Kim put in a superb free skate but fell short, having to settle for silver with 219.11. The bronze went to Carolina Kostner of Italy, who posted 216.73.

With the surprise victory, Sotnikova dramatically steals the show from her 15-year-old compatriot Yulia Liptinskaya, who had dominated the build-up to the individual event after crushing allcomers in the team event earlier in the Games.

Lipnitskaya fell in Wednesday's short program and again on Thursday to disappear as a medal challenger, eventually finishing fifth with 200.57.

"I am disappointed that I fell again. I think I was not concentrating on the salchow," she said "I'm upset because this is the second time I had problems with my jumps. I was nervous and mentally tired."

Kim, meanwhile, missed the chance to become the third female skater to take back-to-back Olympic golds since Katerina Witt in 1988, a feat that would have been all the more impressive by the fact that she hadn't competed in a top-level event since winning the world championships in March.

The winning free skate by Sotnikova was set to a classical violin piece and saw just one obvious mistake, a stumble after exiting a jump.

Performing to the tango "Adios Nonino," Kim rattled off five triple jumps, two of them in elegant cascades, but fell three points short of the 149 she needed for gold.

Five-time European champion Kostner, meanwhile, the veteran of the field at 27 years of age, exuded confidence and charm to her "Bolero" routine — the same music that took British pair Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean to ice-dance gold in 1984. She takes home a first Olympic medal.

Further down, Vancouver silver medalist and two-time world champion Mao Asada put in a sublime free program that ended with the 23-year-old bursting into tears: She had blown her chances of a medal by falling hard in the short program but scored the third-best free skate of the night to finish sixth overall.

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