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Putin Hopes for Russian Victory at Paralympics

By The Moscow Times

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President Vladimir Putin has called on Russians to show their support for the Russian national team at the Sochi Paralympic Games that kick off on Friday, and said that he hopes they will match their performances at the 2010 Vancouver Paralympics.

"We can hope for a victory. These guys are ready. It's all about luck and the passionate support of the fans," Putin said Thursday, Interfax reported.

Russian Paralympians placed first in an unofficial team event last year, "winning by a head over their closest competitors," Putin said, adding that they also took first place in the 2006 Winter Paralympics in Turin, Italy.

In Vancouver at the 2010 Winter Paralympics, the Russian team finished second in the gold medal count, although they brought home the most medals overall, he said.

Since Vancouver, Russia has doubled the size of its Paralympic team, which now has 64 athletes on its roster. They will also be competing in all six events, rather than three out of five events as was the case in Vancouver. The Sochi Paralympic games added a new event, parasnowboard, to complement the existing events — biathlon, downhill skiing, curling, cross-country skiing, and sledge hockey.

In total, there will be 72 sets of medals handed out at the Sochi Paralympic Games.

We will be live-tweeting the Paralympic opening ceremony on Friday night via our @MoscowTimes account. Join us and let us know your thoughts, we look forward to hearing from you.

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