

U.S. Star McFadden Competes for Russian Family in Sochi

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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KRASNAYA POLYANA — U.S. Paralympic star Tatiana McFadden said she was delighted to be able to compete in front of her Russian birth mother for the first time at the Sochi Games.

Born with severe spina bifida in St. Petersburg, then the Soviet city of Leningrad, McFadden was raised in an orphanage until being adopted by a former U.S. government official.

McFadden has become one of the greatest wheelchair racers in history with 10 Paralympic medals and, in time for her first Winter Games in Sochi, she arranged for her adoptive mother Deborah, her birth mother and the director of her old orphanage to see her compete.

"It's absolutely wonderful. I got to see them right before my race and so I think that gave me an extra energy, an extra boost, and I just raced for my family today," said McFadden, who finished fifth in the women's cross-country skiing 12-kilometer sitting event.

"When I was feeling tired, in pain and frustrated, I just had to almost close my eyes and just think about my family in the stands."

Having studied Russian only in U.S. high school, McFadden said she speaks to her Russian relatives in English, which, she said, they speak at a "really good" standard.

As for her performance on the track, McFadden said she was happy with fifth place, which continued a dramatic improvement since she took up competitive skiing less than two years ago.

"I was right there, and I was sitting in the top three for a long time," she said of the race. "I made a few errors, but I adjusted as quickly as I could and really tried my best."

"About a month ago, I was sitting in ninth in this event and so going from ninth to fifth — I'm top five in the world — is absolutely wonderful," McFadden said.

McFadden's focus now switches to the one-kilometer sprint on Wednesday and the five-kilometer race on March 16, the last day of the Sochi Paralympics.

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