

Russia Reaches Sledge Hockey Final on First Attempt

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Team Russia players celebrating their win in the sledge hockey semifinal.

SOCHI — Russia stormed into the final of the Sochi Paralympic sledge hockey tournament Thursday with a confident 4-0 victory over heavyweight Norway.

Now assured of at least a silver medal in its first Paralympic appearance, the Russian team was in total control against five-time medalist Norway at a packed and raucous Shayba Arena in Sochi's Olympic Park, outshooting the Scandinavians 20-6.

In Saturday's final, Russia will face either Canada or reigning gold medalist, the U.S., which the Russians beat 2-1 in the preliminaries.

Norway will go into the bronze medal game Saturday morning aiming not to miss the Paralympic top three for the first time in sledge hockey's 20-year history at the Games.

Russia ended the first period with a 2-0 lead with goals from Dmitry Lisov, who shot topshelf

from the crease over prone Norwegian goaltender Kristian Buen, and Alexei Amosov.

Forward Konstantin Shikhov pulled the strings for Russia on the ice, claiming assists on both of the first-period goals as well as Nikolai Terentyev's goal early in the third period, which put the result beyond doubt.

In the last minute of the game, Yevgeny Petrov made it 4-0 with an empty net goal.

Goaltender Vladimir Kamantsev stopped all six Norwegian shots for his second tournament shutout. Kamantsev started the Paralympics as Russia's backup but became the starter after Mikhail Ivanov allowed three goals in the host nation's opening defeat to South Korea.

President Vladimir Putin has told Paralympic leaders that Russia was not "an instigator" of the Crimea crisis and thanked them for keeping politics out of the Winter Paralympics in Sochi.

Putin spoke to national Paralympic association officials Thursday in the midst of a Games that has been overshadowed by pro-Russian forces taking over Ukraine's nearby Crimea peninsula.

Putin did not name Ukraine but said he was referring to the "complicated circumstances which you all know about very well."

Putin said through a translator: "I would like to assure you that Russia did not initiate, it was not an instigator, of these difficult circumstances."

Several Western nations declined to send official delegations to the Paralympics opening ceremony last week, but Putin thanked the sports leaders for "staying out of politics." (AP)

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