

Russian-Born McFadden Wins First Winter Paralympics Medal

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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McFadden, left, celebrating her second-place finish next to gold-medal winner Marthinsen of Norway, right.

SOCHI — Making the transition from track to snow has been seamless for Tatyana McFadden.

Less than a year after taking on the new challenge, the Russian-born U.S. athlete collected a first Winter Paralympics medal on Wednesday to join the 10 won across the past three Summer Paralympics. And she's still only 24.

McFadden, who won three titles at the 2012 London Paralympics in wheelchair racing alone, claimed silver in the cross-country one-kilometer sprint sitting event at the Sochi Games.

"I could not go easy, I needed to go hard from the start," McFadden said. "I knew that they were coming and I could feel them down my neck. It was a good race."

McFadden, who finished just 0.1 seconds behind Mariann Marthinsen of Norway, was born

with spina bifida and moved to the U.S. at age 6 after being rescued from a St. Petersburg orphanage.

Back competing in the country of her birth, McFadden was cheered on by her Russian birth mother and her adoptive U.S. mother on Wednesday.

"They were here all day holding out for me in the snow," she said. "They gave me a lot of extra energy, and them being here pushed me forward in all my events."

McFadden only turned to winter sports after completing the first "grand slam" in wheelchair marathon racing last year with victories in Boston, Chicago, London and New York.

John Farra, who heads the U.S. Nordic skiing program, is amazed at how quickly McFadden has made the transition to snow.

"Taking someone from a summer sport, and putting them in a sit ski, and teaching them to ski effectively, and try to have them win a medal for you is a tough task in just one winter of skiing," Farra said. "I am psyched that it worked out, it was a really exciting race."

And she could still leave Sochi with a cross-country gold from the 5 kilometer or the 2.5 kilometer mixed relay.

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