

Sochi 2014: Russian Olympics begin

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The 2014 Olympic Games kicked off on Feb. 7 with a dazzling Opening Ceremony.

The show began with a video of a little girl asleep in her bed. Her dreams guided the audience through thousands of years of Russian history. She flew through the air and then beckoned to five giant snowflakes, which opened to form the shape of the five Olympic Rings. The fifth ring malfunctioned, and did not open.

The Sretensky Monastery Choir then took to the floor and sang the Russian national anthem.

Then came the parade of nations. Greece led the nations, who followed in alphabetical order according to the Russian alphabet. The Russian were the last to process in to much fanfare.

The rest of the ceremony paid tribute to Russia's history and culture, including music by Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky, with selections from "Swan Lake," and "The Nutcracker." The well-known Bolshoi Ballet Company performed a scene from Tolstoy's "War and Peace."

There were also tributes to Russia's well-known inventors and scientists including Dimitri Mendeleev, who solidified the periodic table of elements, and aviator Igor Sikorsky.

At the end of the three-hour ceremony, the Olympic cauldron was lit by hockey legend Vladislav Tretiak and figure skater Irina

Rodnina. Other torchbearers included tennis player Maria Sharapova, gymnast Alina Kabaeva, pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva and wrestler Aleksander Karelin.

There is some controversy surrounding several of the selected torchbearers. "Today Show" anchor Matt Lauer said about Kabaeva, "according to all reports, she's in a relationship with Russian president Vladimir Putin." Another contested choice was Rodnina, who tweeted a racist photo mocking President Barack Obama last September.

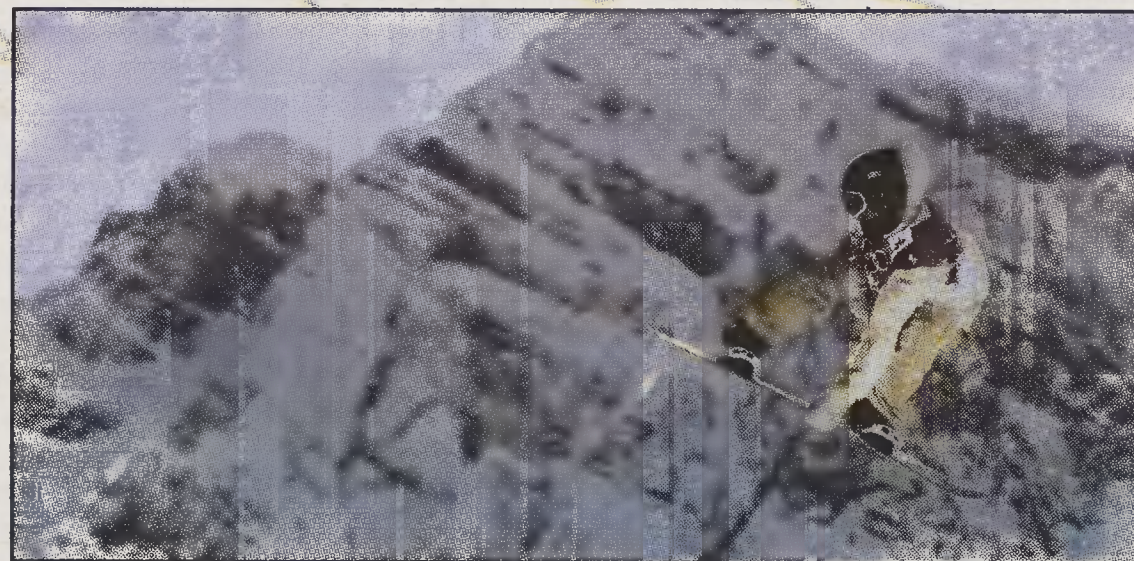
#SochiProblems

Since arriving in Sochi, many journalists and athletes have encountered bizarre and substandard living conditions, leading to the trending hashtag, "SochiProblems."

Many hotels are unfinished or in the process of being remodeled, sporting loose wires, falling plaster and contaminated water. One journalist encountered live wires in his shower. Several people tweeted their confusion over the bathroom situations, including toilets right next to one another and fire hoses above sinks.

American bobsledder Johnny Quinn's tweet featuring a picture of his demolished bathroom door that he had to punch through to escape went viral. The accompanying tweet said: "...With no phone to call for help, I used my bobsled push training to break out. #SochiJailBreak."

On Feb. 10 Quinn got stuck again, this time in an elevator with fellow bobsledders



Sage Kotsenburg won the first gold medal of the 2014 Games in the slopestyle snowboarding competition. PHOTO COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS

Nick Cunningham and David Cripps and tweeted a picture of himself trying to get out.

As reported by newsite Vocativ, a notice went out to Sochi volunteers at the beginning of February that said: "Due to an extreme shortage of pillows for athletes who unexpectedly arrived at Olympic Village in the mountains, there will be a transfer of pillows from all apartments to the storehouse on 2 February 2014." Pillow company MyPillow attempted to ship 3,000 pillows to Sochi, but the shipment could not make it past Olympic Headquarters in Colorado due to Russian custom restrictions.

Beyond the gripes about hotels, a plethora of tweets complain about the city itself. Construction is still going on all over the city, despite the fact that the Games have already started. Pictures have documented uncovered manholes, crumbling streets and broken elevators. Journalist Emily Walker tweeted a photo of a worker spray painting the grass. "The grass isn't greener on the other side, it's green where you...paint it. #SochiProblems @PHSCE."

US takes gold in slopestyle events

On Feb. 8, 20-year-old American snowboarder Sage Kotsenburg captured the first gold medal of the Sochi Games slopestyle with a trick he had never attempted before. One day later, 23-year-old American Jamie Anderson, a favorite in this event, took

gold in the women's slopestyle event

Not only was this the first event of the Olympics, it was also the debut of the slopestyle event in the Olympics.

Kotsenburg was not expected to medal. Before qualifying for the Olympics, he had not won a snowboarding competition since he was 11 years old.

"Coming here and winning, I can't even describe the feeling," he said.

Anderson is a far more experienced competitor. She is a four-time gold medalist at the X-Games and won her first medal at 15.

Anderson's entire family came to Sochi to support her. "To see my family today just brought tears to my eyes," Anderson said. "It was such a special moment I'll remember forever."

Slopestyle involves snowboarding down a hill and features a mix of rails and jumps. Kotsenburg earned his high score for a rarely performed trick called a 1620 Japan Air Mute Grab. He performed four and a half revolutions while grabbing the board at the front of his feet and pulling it behind him.

In the men's competition, Staale Sandbech of Norway took the silver while Mark McMorris of Canada won the bronze medal. McMorris was the favorite to win the competition before breaking a rib at the X-Games in January. In the women's event, Enni Rukajarvi of Finland took silver, and Jenny Jones won bronze, making her the first to win a medal on snow for the United Kingdom.



A trio of Russian horses known as the troika gallop across the sky in the Opening Ceremonies. PHOTO COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS