

Mushy Snow Still Cause of Concern for Sochi Athletes

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ROSA KHUTOR — The combination of soft mountain snow and a coastal Olympic park full of palm trees was a winner when Sochi was bidding for the Olympics, but the Black Sea sunshine is now posing problems for athletes and organizers.

Three days of temperatures well above freezing point in the mountains have turned snow to slush in places, playing havoc with competitions and possibly causing a spate of crashes for medal contenders.

One of the worst-hit events was Tuesday's men's cross-country ski sprint, where four of the six men in the final hit the deck on treacherous downhill turns. Elsewhere, the first Olympic ski slopestyle final was full of crashes for big names struggling to land on slushy snow.

The snowboard halfpipe event, one of the marquee events of the Games, only narrowly escaped a fiasco in Tuesday's final when extra staff were drafted in to firm up a pipe that

defending champion Shaun White had described as "just sand and mush" at the bottom. Even after coming fourth in the final, White had praise for the course staff who, he said, had transformed the pipe into something "night and day from where it was."

Not everyone is as critical of the conditions. "Hey, who doesn't like spring skiing?" was Canadian slopestyle skier Dara Howell's response after taking gold.

The International Olympic Committee is keen to play down the effects of the warm weather, highlighting the contrast to the 2010 Games in Vancouver, when soft snow led to Alpine events being postponed.

"We're getting a little bit premature here," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said Wednesday. "I was at some of the events yesterday, and it doesn't seem to me to be an issue. I gather snow is coming at the weekend and that temperatures will go down at the weekend, but not being a weather forecaster I can't be sure."

"If this is a problem, then let's have more of them. It seems quite good," he said.

While there may be concerns up in the mountains, at the coastal Olympic Park, where all the skating venues are air-conditioned arenas, the warm weather appeared be welcome with visitors walking around in T-shirts and sunglasses.

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