

Russia Knocked Out of Olympic Hockey by Finns, 3-1

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 19, 2014



A goalmouth scramble during the match between Russian and Finland. (G. Sokolov / RIA Novosti)

SOCHI — Finland eliminated Russia from the Olympic men's hockey tournament with a 3-1 victory Wednesday, putting a stunning end to the Russians' enormous expectations at home.

Teemu Selanne scored an early goal and Tuukka Rask made 37 saves as Finland crushed the Russians' dreams of winning hockey gold in front of their own fans. Russian teams have won eight gold medals in hockey, but none in the last 22 years.

Selanne and Mikael Granlund each had a goal and an assist for the steady Finns, who overcame an early deficit and silenced the Bolshoi Ice Dome with two goals in the first period.

Despite its roster of high-priced offensive stars, Russia could not score in the final 52 minutes after Ilya Kovalchuk's early power-play goal.

Finland will face top-seeded Sweden in the semifinals on Friday.

Russia has failed to win a medal in three straight Olympics since 2002, and even home-ice advantage could not end the embarrassing drought.

A quarterfinal exit is excruciating for the proud Russian team, which pressed relentlessly and fruitlessly in the third period after falling behind by two goals.

After the final buzzer, several Russian players stood on the ice with their hands on their knees. Yevgeny Malkin, who failed to score a goal in the last four games, dropped to one knee before captain Pavel Datsyuk led the traditional post-game handshake line.

The Russians then gathered at center ice amid more jeers and whistles than cheers, mournfully raising their sticks to salute the fans before skating off the ice at an arena built to herald Russia's return to hockey dominance.

Alex Ovechkin, the reigning NHL MVP and one of the Sochi Games' most public faces, failed to score another goal for Russia after scoring on his first shot just 1:17 into Russia's opener against Slovenia. Malkin, the Russians' other former NHL MVP, also did not score a goal after the first four minutes of the opener.

Ovechkin, Malkin and Datsyuk all hailed Russia's home Olympics as the most important tournament of their careers, but they will likely have only bitter memories.

Russia did not play horribly in Sochi, winning three of its five games, but lost a painful eight-round shootout to the U.S. team before falling behind early and failing to catch up against Finland.

Semyon Varlamov allowed all three goals on 15 shots against the Finns before getting pulled for Sergei Bobrovsky during the second period.

Juhamatti Aaltonen scored the first goal for Finland, the most consistently successful Olympic team in the last two decades, winning medals in four of the past five Games.

Russian fans realized the importance and peril of this game, filling the Olympic park early in the afternoon with cheers, chants and Russian flags. The Bolshoi crowd began chanting "Ro-ss-ia!" even before pregame warm-ups, waving hundreds of flags and banners emblazoned with hometowns and slogans.

But Bolshoi became positively funeral-like as the match went on. Dozens of fans lingered in their seats long after the team left the ice, disconsolately folding their flags and staring at the ice. A few Finnish fans near center ice even went up to a group of Russian fans for a hug.

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