

Saturday, February 27, 2010

More

News, Quotes, Companies, Videos

SEARCH

OPINION JOURNAL

Welcome, **Timothy D. Naegele** Logout
My Account My Journal Help

U.S. Edition Today's Paper Video Columns Blogs Topics Journal Community

Home World U.S. Business Markets Tech Personal Finance Life & Style **Opinion** Careers Real Estate Small Business

Leisure & Arts Letters to the Editor Political Diary Columns

TOP STORIES IN
Opinion

4 of 10 **The Pride of Russia**

5 of 10 **Hawaiian Secession**

6 of 10 **Russ Roberts: Is the Dismal Science R...**

Da Gr

REVIEW & OUTLOOK | FEBRUARY 27, 2010

The Pride of Russia

An Olympic lesson for the Kremlin.

Article

Comments (17)

MORE IN OPINION »

Email Print Save This Facebook Twitter StumbleUpon + More Text -

President Dmitry Medvedev announced yesterday that he won't attend Sunday's closing ceremony in Vancouver to claim in person the Olympic flag for Russia, the host of the next winter games in Sochi in 2014. Politics, and a bit of sport, got in the way.

Mr. Medvedev had hoped to combine Sunday's pomp with a gold medal hockey match-up earlier in the day. Then the Russian men's squad, a pre-tournament favorite that features the game's dominant player in Alex Ovechkin, got bounced out of the medal round by Canada.

The defeat was a sour coda to a disappointing Olympic performance for a one-time winter games superpower. As of yesterday, Russia stood fifth among medal winners, with 13 total and only three gold. The speaker of the Duma has demanded an investigation and a senior Kremlin aide called the results "dismal." Mr. Medvedev knew well enough to avoid getting tainted with what's considered a national debacle.

Any fan with a healthy dose of sports patriotism can relate to the Russian pique. No one likes to lose. The Russians have been brought low by cronyism inside the Olympic committee and an inability to adapt to recent changes in winter sports. Come to think of it, those same handicaps bedevil Russia's economy and its authoritarian politics under the supreme leader, Vladimir Putin.

Though he criticized the judges who gave an American the men's figure skating gold last week, Mr. Putin yesterday waxed philosophic, saying, "Of course we expected more . . . but it's not a reason to lose heart, scatter our heads with ashes and beat ourselves to exhaustion with chains." Yet a lot of this ash-scattering reflects a Soviet legacy that Mr. Putin has done so much to preserve in sports and in other arenas of Russian life. A fragile national pride is now, as then, tied up in beating other countries in sports, or in the nuclear arms race. That's why losing stings more than in other places.

This thought runs against centuries of Russian tradition, but why not try to measure Russia's greatness by its ability to build a free and prosperous country, a good global citizen at peace with its neighbors? This kind of Russia might also fare better at the Olympics. The four leading medals winners in Vancouver are free-market democracies.

Printed in The Wall Street Journal, page A14

MORE IN OPINION

Email Printer Friendly Order Reprints

Article Tools Sponsored by **Constant Contact**

Share: Facebook Twitter StumbleUpon RSS Dribbble LinkedIn YouTube + More



CLICK HERE for Full Article Access – and get

TWO WEEKS FREE

UPGRADE NOW

WSJ.com subscribers enjoy:

- Deeper core business, industry, and market news
- Exclusive newsletters and alerts
- Save & share article functionality within the Journal Community

MARKETPLACE

Need a Job? Get a Resume

Search only \$100K+ jobs

Job Interview Coaching

FREE Virtual Career Fair

Free Resume Critique

200K+ Jobs

Jobs

GMAT 101

SmartBrief Job Search

Find a Great Job Now

Online Degrees

Keylogger Software

Rewarding Executive Careers

Insurance Leads

Debt Consolidation Online

Reduce your debt up to 50%. Easy to apply online.
FreedomPlus.com

debt consolidation

Lower Debt to 80% or less w/ Debt Harmony, A Trusted Source
www.DebtHarmony.com

Christian Debt Consultant

Be Debt Free in 6-36 Months. 40-65% Debt Reduction. BBB Online Member.
www.ChristianDebtConsultants.com

Search \$100K+ Jobs Now

Franchise Consultants Needed

Own an Energy Conservation Biz

Finance & Accounting Jobs

Advertise Locally on WSJ.com

Career Counseling

People Who Viewed This Also Viewed...

On WSJ.com

In My Network

Hawaiian Secession

Russ Roberts: Is the Dismal Science Really a Science?

Lionel Tiger: Of Monkeys and Medals

William Tucker: Obama's Nuclear Power Breakthrough

Ford's Renaissance Man

Video

Obama's Business Buyout
2:30

Latest ObamaCare Plan a Dud
1:36

Iran's Power Struggle
6:01

More in Opinion

Ford's Renaissance Man

The Decline of New York

Lionel Tiger: Of Monkeys and Medals

The Pride of Russia

Hawaiian Secession

Most Popular

Read

Emailed

Video

Commented

1. [Quake Ranks With Biggest in Century](#)
2. [Tsunami Reaches Hawaii](#)
3. [Danger of Daily Aspirin](#)
4. [Chile Suffers Massive Earthquake](#)
5. [Opinion: The Decline of New York](#)

Most Read Articles Feed

Latest Headlines

Mayor Embraces Shrinking Detroit

Paterson Won't Seek New Term

Democrats Push On With Health Care

Tighter Financial Conditions Test Recovery

Social Secretary Rogers to Resign

Utility Taps Bush Bigwigs

Dodd Proposes New Financial Bureau

Snowstorm Pounds Northeast

Add a Comment

JOURNAL COMMUNITY

We welcome your thoughtful comments. Please comply with our [Community rules](#). All comments will display your real name.

Text input area for comments.

Track replies to my comment

[Go to Comments tab](#)

CLEAR

POST

[CLICK HERE for Full Article Access](#) — and get

TWO WEEKS FREE

UPGRADE NOW

WSJ.com subscribers enjoy:

- Deeper core business, industry, and market news
- Exclusive newsletters and alerts
- Save & share article functionality within the Journal Community

Oregon Citizens Protest Planned Aryan Nations 'Compound'
Obama Makes Picks for Debt Panel

[More Headlines](#)

Editors' Picks



Tinsley Mortimer's Turbulent Year



Oil Majors Feel the Heat in Kazakhstan



Mayor Embraces Shrinking Detroit



Giving February the Cold Shoulder



Low Prices, Classic Vintages

[BACK TO TOP](#)

WSJ.com Account:

- [My Account](#)
- [Subscriber Billing Info](#)

Create an Account:

- [Register for Free](#)
- [Subscribe Now](#)

Help & Information Center:

- [Help](#)
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [New on WSJ.com](#)
- [Tour the new Journal](#)

About:

- [News Licensing](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Advertise Locally](#)
- [Conferences](#)
- [About Dow Jones](#)
- [Privacy Policy - Updated](#)
- [Subscriber Agreement & Terms of Use - Updated](#)
- [Copyright Policy](#)
- [Jobs at WSJ.com](#)

WSJ.com:

- [Site Map](#)
- [Home](#)
- [World](#)
- [U.S.](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Markets](#)
- [Market Data](#)
- [Tech](#)
- [Personal Finance](#)
- [Life & Style](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Small Business](#)
- [Corrections](#)

Tools & Formats:

- [Today's Paper](#)
- [Video Center](#)
- [Graphics](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Topics](#)
- [Guides](#)
- [Alerts](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Journal Community](#)
- [WSJ on Twitter](#)
- [WSJ on Facebook](#)
- [My Journal](#)

Digital Network

- [WSJ.com](#)
- [Marketwatch.com](#)
- [Barrons.com](#)
- [SmartMoney.com](#)
- [AllThingsD.com](#)
- [FINS.com](#)
- [FiLife.com](#)
- [BigCharts.com](#)
- [Virtual Stock Exchange](#)
- [WSJ U.S. Edition](#)
- [WSJ Asia Edition](#)
- [WSJ Europe Edition](#)
- [WSJ India Page](#)
- Foreign Language Editions:
 - [WSJ Chinese](#)
 - [WSJ Japanese](#)
 - [WSJ Portuguese](#)
 - [WSJ Spanish](#)