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## 1998 Nagano Olympic Winter Games Day 2

# Russian Danilova wins 1st gold of Nagano Olympics



Japan's Fumiko Aoki spurring out from the starting gate.

**R**ussia's Olga Danilova claimed the first gold medal of the Nagano Winter Olympics with a narrow victory Sunday over compatriot Larissa Lazutina in the women's 15-kilometer classical cross country ski race.

Danilova, who has spent most of her years in the shadow of her teammates, completed the hilly, serpentine Snow Harp course in a provisional time of 46 minutes, 55.4 seconds, edging Lazutina by 5.6 seconds.

Anita Moen-Guidon, dropped off Norway's relay squad at last year's world Nordic ski championships, turned frustration into joy by winning the bronze in 47:52.6.

Lazutina held a razor-thin lead over Danilova in the 69-woman field according to split times at the 12.4-km point, but Danilova powered her way through the final kilometers to claim victory as light snow dusted the course located in the "Japan Alps" resort of Hakuba.

Italy's Olympic champion Stefania Belmondo finished eighth while Russia's Elena Vaelbe, the winner of five gold medals in last year's Nordic world championships, was far short of gaining her first Olympic gold, placing 17th.

Sumiko Yokoyama crossed the line in 50:55.3 to finish 25th, top among the Japanese women. Veteran Fumiko Aoki, who placed fifth in a pair of World Cup races at this same track last year, was 38th. (Kyodo News)

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