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Description

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The 1994 Winter Olympics, officially known as the XVII Olympic Winter Games (Norwegian: De 17. olympiske vinterleker; Nynorsk: Dei 17. olympiske vinterleikane) and commonly known as Lillehammer '94, were an international winter multi-sport event held from 12 to 27 February 1994 in and around Lillehammer, Norway. Having lost the bid for the 1992 Winter Olympics to Albertville in France, Lillehammer was awarded the 1994 Winter Games on 15 September 1988, two days before the 1988 Summer Olympics opening ceremonies at the 94th IOC Session in Seoul, South Korea. Due to the calendar changes made in 1985, this was the only time that the Winter Olympics took place two years after the previous Winter Games, and the first to be held in a different year from the Summer Olympics. This was the second Olympic Games of any type hosted in Norway — the first being the 1952 Winter Olympics in Oslo — and the fourth Olympics overall to be held in a Nordic country, after the 1912 Summer Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden, and the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki, Finland. Lillehammer is the northernmost city ever to host the Olympic Games.

Although Lillehammer was the main host city, some events were held in neighboring cities and counties, and the speed skating events were held in Hamar, some ice hockey matches were played in Gjøvik, and the Alpine skiing events were held in Øyer and Ringebu areas. Sixty-seven National Olympic Committees and 1,737 athletes participated in six sports and sixty-one events. Fourteen countries made their Olympic debuts, of which nine were former Soviet republics. The Games also saw the introduction of stricter and more rigid qualifying rules, reducing the number of under-performing participants. Six new events were introduced into the Olympic programme: new distances in short-track speed skating and aerials, and speed skating events were held indoors. Almost two million people spectated at the Games, which were the first to have the Olympic Truce in effect. The Olympics were followed by the 1994 Winter Paralympics from 10 to 19 March.

Manuela Di Centa and Lyubov Yegorova dominated women's cross-country skiing, taking five and four medals for Italy and Russia respectively. A crowd of more than 100,000 saw Italy beat Norway by 0.4 seconds in the men's 4 × 10 km relay. Vreni Schneider won a complete set of medals for Switzerland in Alpine skiing, while Norway took a podium sweep in the men's combined competition. In ladies' singles figure skating, 16-year-old Ukrainian Oksana Baiul won gold, narrowly defeating Nancy Kerrigan, who won silver; this was the first Ukrainian medal at the Olympics in their first independent appearance. Johann Olav Koss won three speed skating golds for Norway, while 13-year-old Kim Yun-mi from South Korea became the youngest-ever Olympic gold medalist. Sweden defeated Canada in a dramatic penalty shootout in the ice hockey final. Russia topped the medal table, winning 11 gold medals, while Norway collected the highest number of medals overall, with 26.

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