

UKRAINIAN WOMEN'S BIATHLON TEAM

SHOOTS FOR GOLD IN SOCHI

Taking Aim at First Ukrainian Winter Olympic Gold since Oksana Baiul in 1994

You have to look back a long ways to the last time Ukraine tasted Winter Olympic gold – Forrest Gump ruled the cinemas, Okean Elzy was just beginning to practice as a group in their garages, and Leonid Kravchuk was still President. It was also the year that a tearful 16-year-old Oksana Baiul skated to Ukraine's lone Olympic gold medal since independence. That could all change when the Ukrainian women's biathlon team straps on the skis and rifles in Sochi next month. Led by team captain and National Olympic Committee of Ukraine's Athlete of the Month for January, Olena Pidhrushna, Ukraine's women biathletes will be shooting for gold. The young team finished 6th in Team Relay in Vancouver four years ago, took silver in the same event at the World Championships last year, and have medalled in back-to-back world cup events this winter. For the lead-up to the XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi next month, Lviv Today introduces you to our best medal hopes – the Ukrainian Women's Biathlon Team:

OLENA PIDHRUSHNA

Team Captain and best hope for a Ukrainian medal in Sochi, Ternopil's own Pidhrushna is a threat in every event. At the Biathlon World Championships in the Czech Republic last year, the talented Pidhrushna took home a medal of each colour in sprint, relay, and pursuit. This season she has medalled at all four World Cup events, including gold as part of the Team Relay. She is the reigning world champion in the 7.5km sprint.

Event to watch: Women's 7.5km sprint, February 9th, 16:30.



VALJA SEMERENKO

One half of the Semerenko twins on the women's biathlon team, Valja already has three World Championship medals, including a silver and bronze at last year's event in the Czech Republic. She's won four medals on the World Cup circuit this year, including gold in both the relay and the pursuit. She is the reigning bronze medallist in the 15km individual race.

Event to watch: Women's 15km individual, February 14th, 16:00.



VITA SEMERENKO

The other half of the Semerenko twins, Vita is known as a quality sprinter. At the World Championships last year she took home bronze in the 7.5km sprint. She is also a key member of the 4x6km relay team that won silver at the World Championships and has medalled twice on the World Cup circuit this season, including gold in Austria.

Event to watch: Women's 4x6 team relay,
February 21st, 16:30.

JULIYA DZHYMA

Just because Juliya is the newest member to the women's relay team, doesn't mean she isn't a threat to medal in Sochi. In addition to the silver she won with the team at last year's World Championships and the two team World Cup medals from this season, Juliya won gold in the 10km pursuit in Austria in early December. She'll be hungry for more than just a medal in the team relay.

Event to watch: Women's 10km pursuit,
February 11th, 17:00.