

= Skeleton at the 2010 Winter Olympics ? Women 's =

The women 's skeleton event at the 2010 Winter Olympics took place at the Whistler Sliding Centre on 18 ? 19 February . The competition was won by British athlete Amy Williams , who set new course records for the track on her first and third runs . Williams , who had never before won a World Cup or World Championship event , became the first British athlete to win a solo Winter Olympic gold medal in 30 years . German sliders Kerstin Szymkowiak and Anja Huber won the silver and bronze medals respectively . Williams ' teammate Shelley Rudman , who had won the silver medal at the 2006 Winter Olympics , and Canadian Mellisa Hollingsworth , both of whom had been expected to be in medal contention , were disappointed .

Williams ' victory was not without controversy , as the United States and Canada filed complaints with the judges related to Williams ' helmet . However , judges ruled that ridges in her helmet did not violate International Bobsleigh and Tobogganing Federation (FIBT) rules , and rejected the complaints .

= = Logistics = =

= = = Track = = =

The Whistler Sliding Centre in Whistler , British Columbia was the site of women 's skeleton at the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver , Canada . The track was constructed between 2005 and 2008 , and became only the 15th competition @-@ level track in the world . It was certified for competition in sliding sports by the International Luge Federation (FIL) and the International Bobsleigh and Tobogganing Federation (FIBT) in March , 2008 in a process called homologation where hundreds of athletes ran the track . This was the first time many competitors at the 2010 Games were able to try the track and begin to develop strategies for it . Canadian athletes hoped that having it open two years before the Games , and having that amount of time to train on it , would give them an advantage in the Games . The Whistler Sliding Centre quickly gained a reputation as one of the fastest tracks in the world .

= = = Rules and description of competition = = =

Rules for the Olympic skeleton competitions were set by the FIBT and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) . They entrusted four to seven officials with making decisions regarding competition rules : one or two technical delegates , a jury president , two jury members , and two optional jury assistants . These decisions were implemented and enforced by a race director , to whom the overall responsibility for running the competition was given . Under the rules , competitors were guaranteed a minimum of six official training runs in the days prior to the competition . The competition itself consisted of four heats , with the starting order of athletes determined by their FIBT rankings prior to the start of the Games . Athletes began their runs on their sleds at a starting block , ran briefly while holding their sleds , and then laid on their stomachs on the sleds through the remainder of the course . Athletes were ranked by the speed of their times between their start and when they crossed the finish line at the bottom of the track .

= = Preview = =

Much of the speculation about potential medal winners before the Games focused on athletes from Great Britain , the United States , and Canada . Athletes from German @-@ speaking countries had traditionally been dominant in the sliding sports , luge and bobsleigh , but following the re @-@ introduction of skeleton , they had not been as strongly competitive in the new sport . Mellisa Hollingsworth of Canada , the defending Olympic bronze medalist , won the 2009 @-@ 10 Skeleton World Cup , and was considered a strong contender if not the favorite to win . British athlete Shelley

Rudman won the only British medal at the 2006 Winter Olympics with her silver in skeleton , and her bronze medal at the European Championships just prior to the Games kept her name in media previews of the Olympic event . Her countrywoman Amy Williams , however , finished outside of the medal places in both the World Cup , in which she placed fifth , and the European Championships , in which she placed sixth . American Noelle Pikus @-@ Pace had not been able to compete in the 2006 Games after a runaway bobsleigh had broken her leg .

A number of other athletes had the potential to win medals by virtue of previous strong finishes in international competition . Switzerland 's Maya Pedersen @-@ Bieri was the defending Olympic champion . The defending world champion was Germany 's Marion Trott , who also won the test event held at the venue . The last 2009 @-@ 10 Skeleton World Cup prior to the 2010 Games took place in Igls , Austria (southeast of Innsbruck) on 22 January 2010 and was won by Germany 's Anja Huber .

= = Standing records = =

While the IOC does not consider skeleton times eligible for Olympic records , the FIBT does maintain records for both the start and a complete run at each track it competes . These records were set during the test event for the 2010 Games on 5 February 2009 .

= = Qualifying athletes = =

On 20 January 2010 , the FIBT announced the teams which had qualified for the 2010 Games , the quotas being subsequently updated on 26 January 2010 . The athletes who qualified for the women 's event were :

= = Competition = =

The first run start order was released on the afternoon of 17 February 2010 . The first two runs took place on 18 February at 16 : 00 PST (Pacific Standard Time) and 17 : 00 PST . On 19 February , the final two runs took place at 15 : 45 PST and 16 : 45 PST . During the first run , Amy Williams broke the previous course record by nearly a full second , finishing first with a time of 53 @. @ 83 seconds and reaching a top speed of 143 @. @ 3 km / h (89 @. @ 0 mph) . She led the second run as well . German slider Kerstin Szymkowiak was in second place after two runs , nearly a third of a second behind Williams . Mellisa Hollingsworth , competing on home soil and called the favorite to win in a number of media accounts , was in third place , trailing Szymkowiak after two runs by 0 @. @ 09 seconds . Shelley Rudman trailed by nearly a full second , surprising many observers who had expected her to be in medal contention . Japanese athlete Nozomi Komuro was disqualified after the first heat because her sled did not have the required FIBT control sticker .

The United States , Canada and Germany , together with two unnamed teams , lodged a protest with officials following Williams ' successful first day of competition . The protest alleged that her helmet was illegal , as ridges in it might give her an unfair aerodynamic advantage . In accordance with competition rules , the jury of officials inspected the helmet , and rejected the protest . Their grounds for doing so were that the ridges in the helmet were not a separate piece affixed to the helmet , expressly banned by FIBT rules , but rather an integral part of the helmet , which made the helmet legal . A second protest , filed jointly by the US and Canada on the 19th , was also rejected .

The next day , in her third run , Williams again set a new course record , 53 @. @ 68 seconds , and won the final run as well to secure the gold medal . Williams became the first British sportsperson to win an individual Winter Olympic gold medal in thirty years . Prior to this win , Williams had never won a World Cup or World Championship event . German athletes , Kerstin Szymkowiak and Anja Huber , won the silver and bronze medals , the first Olympic medals for Germany in the sport . Williams ' teammate Shelley Rudman fought her way into the lead briefly after a fast final run , but was overtaken by a five other athletes and finished sixth . Canada 's Hollingsworth dropped from third place after the first two runs to fifth after the final run . American Noelle Pikus @-@ Pace , who

was in sixth place after the third run , finished fourth in the overall standings .

= = Results = =

TR - Track Record . Top finish in each run is in boldface .