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Norway cruises to Nordic combined gold



Fred Lundberg celebrates in style after Norway's Nordic combined win

Norway breezed to its first-ever Nordic combined Olympic team gold medal Friday with an overwhelming 78-second victory in the 4x5-kilometer cross country race.

Norway anchor Fred Boerre Lundberg skied with his country's flag during the last kilometer and crossed the finish line in a combined time of 54 minutes, 11.5 seconds.

Finland, the leader by a thin margin after Thursday's ski jumping event, won the silver while France took the bronze. It was the first-ever medals in this event for both countries.

Austria, which started the race four seconds behind Finland, sank to fourth overall after its leadoff skier Christoph Eugen crashed midway through his leg on the rain-washed Snow Harp course in Hakuba.

Japan's six-year-long gold medal grip in this event came to end after anchor Kenji Ogiwara crossed the line in fifth, just ahead of Germany.

The Norwegians, beginning the cross-country leg eight seconds behind pace-setter Finland, charged into the lead five kilometers into the race, thanks to strong skiing by Halldor Skard Jr., and never looked back.

With Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko in attendance, the partisan home crowd cheered wildly as leadoff skier Tsugiharu Ogiwara moved from fifth place to third at the 5-km mark.

But Japan's medal chances vanished in the third leg, when Gen Tomii was overhauled by the French and Austrian skiers. (Kyodo News)

This paper can also be seen on Shinano Mainichi Shimbun web.
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