



GERFORD AI BEIJING WINTER OLYMPICS 2022 REPORT

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ABOUT US

Gerford AI is an Australian sportstech company, assisting emerging Olympic Sports globally with data analytics. Using Computer Vision, we have developed an efficient and focussed way to deliver for Emerging Sports, underpinned by our Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence capabilities. Table Tennis has been our flagship sport along with our growing portfolio of Winter Sports. 2022 sees expansion into deeper insights and analytics for volleyball, mogul skiing, and a handful of other Olympic sports.

A WINTER OLYMPICS FULL OF HOPE

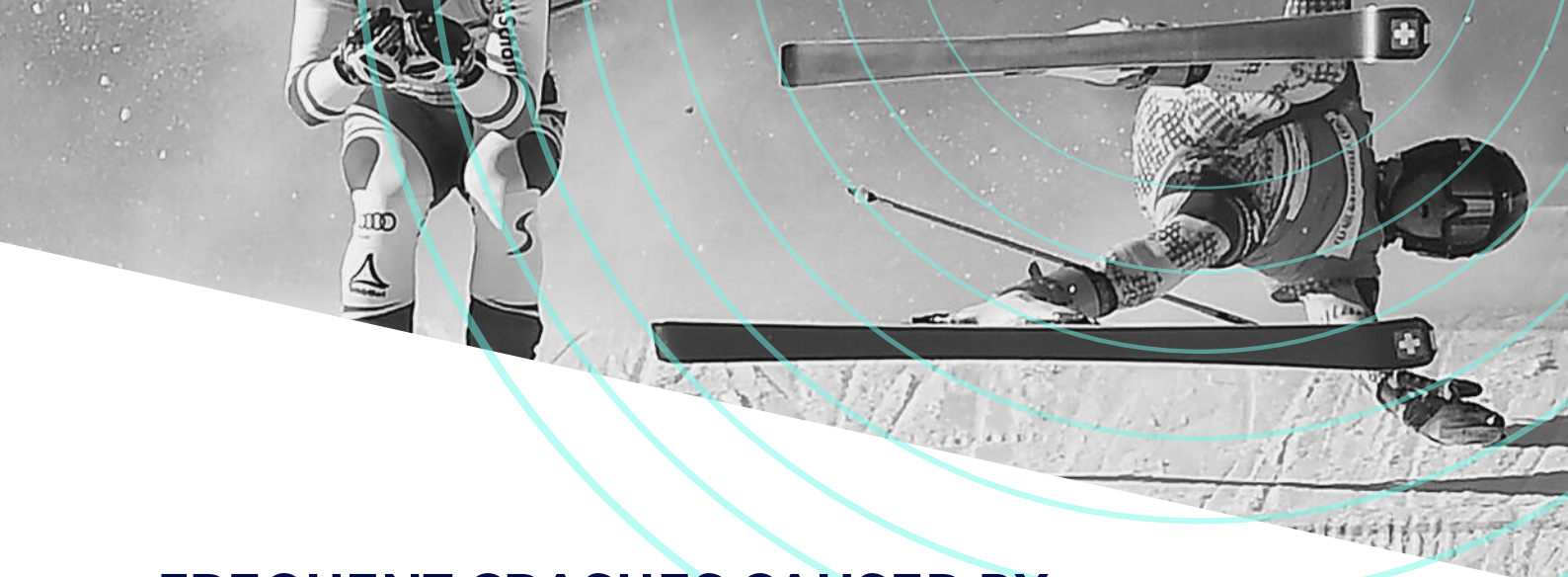
The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics featured a record 109 events across 15 disciplines with a whopping total of 2,871 athletes who represented 91 teams. Seven new medal events were added, including men's and women's big air freestyle, women's monobob, mixed team competitions in freestyle skiing aericals, ski jumping, snowboard cross, and the mixed relay in short track speed skating. Haiti and Saudi Arabia also made their Winter Olympic debuts.

Like the summer Olympics, which took place in Tokyo eight months ago, the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics was also affected by COVID-19, which hindered some countries from participating in the event and ensured there were restrictions with the attendance at the Games.

Norway ended up leading the medal tally board with the highest number of medals, winning 37 medals with a record-breaking number of 16 gold medals. Germany came second with 12 gold and 27 medals, with the host country China reporting its most successful Winter Olympics season with nine gold medals.

This report outlines the key trending topics and sports for the Beijing Winter Olympics 2022.





FREQUENT CRASHES CAUSED BY THE ARTIFICIAL SNOW COURSE

It came as a surprise to many athletes and fans worldwide when Beijing was chosen as the host for the Winter Olympics because of its lack of consistent snowfall. However, the IOC decided to allow 100% artificial snow for all events which was created using 49 gallons of water.

The snow machines generated a hard snow surface which greatly favoured downhill racers; however, it was the opposite for the alpine skiing racing events – which resulted in several crashes and accidents. U.S.A.'s Nina O'Brien, an Alpine ski racer, broke her left leg during her second run, requiring surgery. The crash did not sit well with many American fans as they took to social media to question the safety of the course.

Another victim was downhill skier Dominik Schwaiger who crashed going 130 km/h and was carried out on a stretcher. At the same time, Japanese snowboarder Rina Yoshika had her spine injured while practising for the slopestyle competition. Several other snowboarders also expressed their concerns and frustrations towards the conditions. American snowboarder Jamie Anderson described the surface as “bulletproof ice”.

Fans took to Twitter to express their frustrations and disappointments:



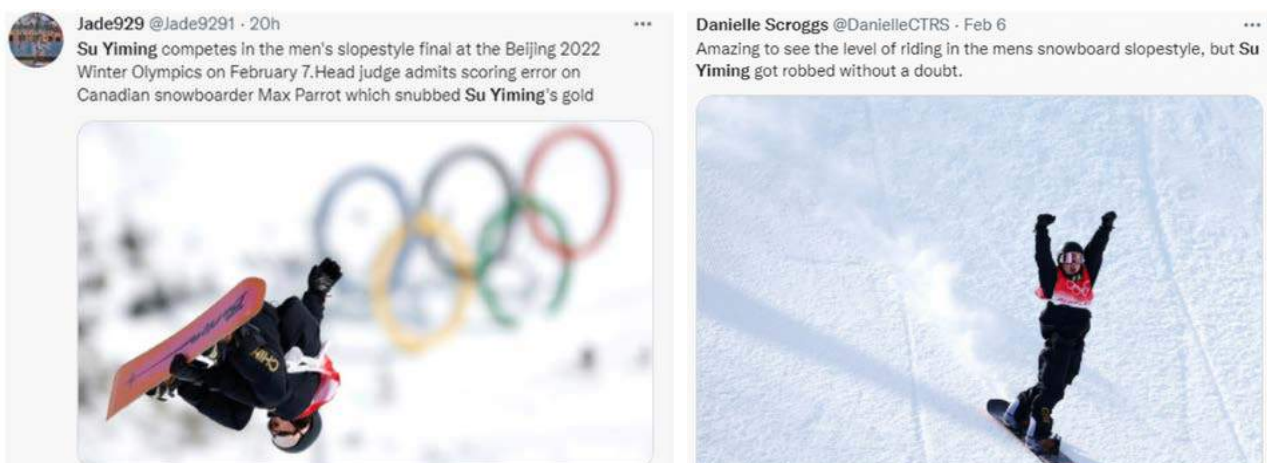
CHALLENGES IN OFFICIATING

Challenges with officiating were prevalent throughout the Winter Olympics. While questioning the calls of referees or judges is common in sport, it became a deeper issue during the Winter Olympics. Many fans and athletes took to social media to express that judges' decisions favoured certain athletes and countries.

One of the most discussed decisions was the gold medal awarded to Max Parrot in the men's slopestyle competition in snowboarding. To people watching the event on their screens, Canada's Max Parrot made an error during his gold-winning performance when he missed the board and grabbed his knee instead, resulting in an incomplete manoeuvre for which he should have lost points.

However, the judges on the ground waived this error and still scored Max Parrot 90.96, resulting in his gold medal win. This decision caused an uproar on social media as fans expressed their frustrations that fellow snowboarder and silver medalist Su Yiming was 'robbed' of his gold medal.

Many viewers continued to note issues with officiating accuracy throughout the Games, with some starting to believe some decisions were intentional. During the men's halfpipe snowboarding event, Twitter blew up after the judge gave a controversial score to Ayumu Hirano. Although Hirano claimed the gold medal afterwards, fans were outraged at the judge's decision that almost cost Ayumu Hirano his gold medal.





ATHLETES THAT MADE HEADLINES DURING THE WINTER OLYMPICS

Whether they made headlines for speaking their minds, the medals they won and their historic performances, or for the controversies they found themselves in, these five athletes made a splash at the Beijing Olympics.

KAMILA VALIEVA

Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva was undoubtedly the most mentioned athlete on social media during the Winter Olympics.

The 15-year-old figure skater first made headlines when the athlete claimed gold in the figure skating team event and became the first to register a jump with four spins in the air.

However, awe soon turned to backlash when she tested positive for the drug Trimetazidine. There was worldwide outrage from fans and the press when the IOC allowed Kamila Valieva to continue competing in the individual figure skating event even after the positive test.

To compound her problems, Kamila Valieva performed woefully in her final program as she fell severely on the ice and finished her routine with her eyes full of tears.

She was undoubtedly one of the most memorable stories during the Beijing Winter Olympics.





ERIN JACKSON

Erin Jackson's incredible story captured the hearts of fans worldwide. Her Olympic journey began when she failed to make the Olympic team due to a slip up at the qualifying trials. However, in an incredible show of mateship, her teammate gave up her spot for Jackson to compete.

The 29-year-old American athlete made perfect use of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity by becoming the first black woman in the world to win a medal for speed skating at the Winter Olympics, taking home the gold for the 500m race. Erin Jackson claimed this victory by skating just 0.08 seconds ahead of Japan's silver medalist.

The record doesn't just end there for Erin Jackson, as she is also the first black woman in the world to win gold for an individual event at the Winter Games.



MAX PARROT

In December 2018, Canada's Max Parrot was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. By the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics he was cancer-free, and (controversially) became a gold medalist in the men's snowboard slopestyle over China's Su Yuming and fellow teammate Mark McMorris. Parrot's gold was Canada's first gold medal at these Games.

The Canadian, who shared the podium with his teammate McMorris for the second straight Games, also snapped the United States' exclusive hold on Olympic slopestyle gold.





EILEEN GU

Eileen Gu, who claims US and Chinese heritage, but competed for Team China, wrote history by becoming the first Freeski athlete to claim three medals in a single Olympic Games. The 18-year-old also became the youngest gold medalist in freestyle skiing and the first woman to land a left turn in the sport's history.

Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, crashed the day Eileen Gu claimed the gold finish in the women's big air freestyle ski competition. Within an hour of Eileen Gu's victory, her performance had gained a whopping 300 million views on the platform before it finally crashed.

Eileen was a big topic of conversation in the United States for not competing for the U.S., even though she grew up in San Francisco. Owing to tensions between the U.S. and China and a diplomatic boycott, her decision to compete for China and her Chinese endorsement deals drew attention. Her name became one of the most trending topics on social media.



ELANA MEYERS TAYLOR

Olympic bobsledder Elana Meyers Taylor made history by becoming the most decorated Black athlete in the Winter Olympics.

Meyers Taylor, 37, won bronze at Beijing 2022, making her the most decorated female Olympic bobsledder. The title was previously held by Shani Davis who had four medals. This is the fourth Olympic Games for the athlete.

Meyers Taylor, who began bobsledding in 2007, also competed in the Vancouver 2010, Sochi 2014, and PyeongChang 2018 games. In total, she's won three silver and two bronze.

NBC Olympics
@NBCOlympics



Elana Meyers Taylor is now the most decorated woman to ever compete in Olympic bobsled.

This run by @eamslider24 guaranteed medals for her team and propelled her to #WinterOlympics history. 🏆👏





MOST TALKED ABOUT SPORTS AT THE OLYMPICS

Unlike the United States, where viewership figures for the Winter Olympics were lower than expected, the reverse was the case in Europe. Statistics provided by Discovery+ platforms recorded more than 156 million visits by European viewers - that's more than a billion streaming minutes consumed - about 19 times more than the previous Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. Europeans consumed more than twice the content of Americans, with average consumption exceeding 7 hours per person.

As expected, the host country China had the largest viewership figures overall, with close to half the Chinese population - 600 million people - viewing the 2022 Beijing Olympics on television. Also, the spectacular opening ceremony is presently the most-watched TV program in ten years, as close to 500 million people saw it.

What sport trended the most during the winter Olympics?

Although all sports in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics were watched by millions of fans worldwide, one sport stood out on social media as the most talked about and mentioned event.

From our analysis and tracking of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics on social media platforms, we found that **Figure Skating** was the sport that trended the most and got talked about massively by fans during the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

It was a controversial year for the sport, clouded by the heated debate surrounding Kamila Valieva and her drug test that made almost every fan following the Winter Olympics have something to say about figure skating on social media. American fans, who are passionate about the sport, kept the posts positive, commenting on the beautiful and inspiring performances and iconic athletes.

In China, figure skating trended on social platform Weibo when SuiWenjing and Han Cong finally earned Olympic gold, four years after experiencing disappointment at the previous winter Olympics when they missed the gold medal by a very thin margin. Chinese figure skating fans took to social media to praise the pair's flawless performance and a world-record score of 239.88 points.



SPORTS THAT MADE AN IMPACT



SNOWBOARD HALFPIPE

Chloe Kim writing history

Chloe Kim, the 21-year old American, made history in the halfpipe competition by becoming the first woman in the world to claim two Olympic snowboard gold medals.

Leading up to the Olympics, she had a poor run of practice sessions due to stress and other factors. Despite these early setbacks, Kim brought in the gold, winning the event with her first-run score of 94, nearly four points higher than the rest of the field.

Ayumu Hirano incredible performance

Like Chloe Kim, Japan's two-time Olympic silver medalist, - Ayumu Hirano wrote history in the snowboard halfpipe competition with a spectacular performance that included a triple cork.

However, this success was somewhat marred with controversy, as fans expressed their exasperation when the judge awarded a low score in the early stages of the competition to Ayumu Hirano despite his flawless performance.



MOGUL SKIING

Jakara Anthony ending a 12-year drought

Mogul Skiing was another sport that made headlines when Jakara Anthony ended Australia's 12-year winter Olympics gold medal drought by winning the women's mogul skiing event in Beijing.

Jakara bagging gold in the women's moguls was a well-celebrated victory among fans on social media when she scored 83.09 points in the six-woman super final.

The incredible success story of Walter Wallberg

Walter Wallberg, the 21-year-old Swedish athlete, claimed the gold award in the men's moguls after coming off three knee surgeries in two years and, in a big upset, dethroned the gold medal favourite and reigning king of the men's moguls Mikael Kingsbury.



SPORTS THAT MADE AN IMPACT



ALPINE SKIING (SLALOM & GIANT SLALOM)

American Mikaela Shiffrin finishing the Beijing Olympics without any medal was one of the most significant talking points during the Beijing Olympics. Although the 26-year-old American has won more World Cup slalom races – 47 – than any male or female skier, she failed to perform her best during the Alpine Skiing event.

Mikaela Shiffrin left in tears after crashing out into the afternoon slalom- departing Beijing with no individual medals after managing to complete two of her five races.

However, Shiffrin found immense support from fans and fellow athletes who empathised with her Olympic journey on social media.



BOBSLEIGH

Canada's bobsleigh team, led by Justin Kripps, prevented complete dominance by the German team at the Beijing Olympics.

Canada's bobsleigh team of Justin Kripps, Ryan Sommer, Cam Stones and Benjamin Coakwell earned bronze in three minutes 55.09 seconds, barely holding off fourth-place German Christoph Hafer.

However, Germany still grabbed the top two spots on the podium, with Francesco Friedrich winning gold (3:54.30) and Johannes Lochner scoring silver (3:54.67).





WHAT'S NEXT FOR WINTER SPORTS

The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics was dominated by female athletes in media coverage, fan engagement, headline stories and not to mention unprecedented medal wins. Looking at the top 10 women who won multiple medals in Beijing, a total of 35 medals were brought home with 18 of those medals being Gold!

Another significant point was around officiating, which now builds a louder case to discuss the introduction of technology in the officiating space. Many sports have introduced this already such as tennis, badminton, football and NBA. Could it be time for the winter sports to look at this?

In 2022 and beyond, data and analytics for winter sports will continue to grow. Technologies which enable efficient and accurate data to tell the story and inform the High Performance teams, Media & Broadcasters, Sportsbooks and of course the fans, will be in a great position for Milano Cortina 2026.

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