

# China Wins 2002 Beijing International Ekiden

BEIJING, February 17 (Xinhua) -- Opening ceremonies for the 2002 Beijing International Ekiden [Marathon relay] were held Saturday morning, with teams from 15 countries and over 1,600 total participants entered in the event.

Chinese runners claimed victory in Sunday's race, despite a head wind and a fast start by the upset-minded Ethiopians. The hosts overtook the Ethiopians during the ekiden's second leg and remained in the lead for the rest of the race, clocking in two hours 14 minutes 27 seconds.

Japan placed second in 2:18:05, followed by Ethiopia in 2:20:19, Russia in 2:22:22 and Romania in 2:22:23.

The United States' team, which included Deer Lodge's Nicole Hunt, finished sixth in 2:23:33 after vying for fourth with Russia and Romania. Team USA's time was its fourth fastest ever in this event, a fact that is more impressive in light of the race's windy conditions. Hunt ran her 5-kilometer fourth-leg in 16:30.

The Chinese team consisted of two veterans and four debutantes. They achieved the third best time in the event's history. The 1998 Chinese team, which included Olympic and world champions Wang Junxia and Qu Yunxia, set the world record at 2:11.41.

## 2002 Results:

1. China, 2:14:27
2. Japan, 2:18:05
3. Ethiopia, 2:20:19
4. Russia, 2:22:22
5. Romania, 2:22:33
6. United States, 2:23:33
7. Ukraine
8. Australia

## Team USA:

- 10K - Amy Yoder Begley, 24, Kendallville, IN
- 5K - Nicole Jefferson, 25, Albuquerque, NM
- 10K - Sarah Toland, 23, Boulder, CO
- 5K - Nicole Hunt, 31, Deer Lodge, MT
- 5K - Nadine Marks, 30, Lewisville, PA
- 7.19K - Kristin Harper, 29, Santa Monica, CA