

# INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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## **Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games** **Speed Skating Ladies' 1500m**

After yesterday's Men's 1500m race it was the turn of the Ladies to take to the ice and compete in the same distance at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games. With the change in weather and drop in temperature, it seemed ice conditions also changed.

Jorien ter Mors leads the Dutch clean sweep in a new Olympic record time of 1:53.51. The defending champion Ireen Wüst skated 1:54.09 and finished with the silver medal and Lotte van Beek (NED) took the bronze with 1:54.54. The fourth ranked skater Marrit Leenstra also from the Netherlands was two seconds behind, in 1:56.40

This is the third Dutch clean sweep at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games, a record for an NOC in any one sport at a single Winter Olympic Games. Ter Mors is the first female athlete to compete in both short track and long track speed skating at the Olympics, and after finishing 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in her specialized sport of short track, she takes the gold in her "second" sport. The Dutch have now taken 16 medals of the 24 handed out in speed skating.

The first medal contender to take to the ice was Olga Fatkulina (RUS), winner of silver in the ladies' 500m. As a real sprinter, she started fast, 25.27, and tried to keep the speed as long as possible. With 28.6 and 30.3 her laps were faster than everybody before her, and her final lap of 33.6 brought her to 1:57.88. This time withstood the times of Canadian skaters Kali Christ (1:58.63) and Christine Nesbitt (1:58.67), but in the 9<sup>th</sup> pair the 2002 Olympic record was broken. Jorien ter Mors after finishing in fourth in yesterday's short track 1500m competition, which required three races in one day, opened in 25.67, followed by a 28.0 lap, and at that point 0.2 below Fatkulina's time. The next lap went in 29.2, where she gained another second on the Russian, and she finished with a 30.5, to set a new Olympic record of 1:53.51, leaving a gap of 4.37. Kali Christ said: "It was working ice, which is fine for me. Then I saw Jorien's race, saw on the scoreboard that she was gaining and gaining. My jaw dropped."

After the break, Yekaterina Shikhova (RUS) skated and finished in 1:58.09 and slipped into third place. Karolina Erbanová (CZE) opened with a fast 24.95, but when two third of the race was over, she lost that advantage. The next skater was Marrit Leenstra, who opened 25.41, the third 300m time, then a 28.3 lap, getting faster than Fatkulina. With 29.8 and 32.8 she moved into second place with 1:56.40. Heather Richardson opened in 25.28 but did not glide on through the laps. The last lap looked like a struggle. 28.8, 30.8 and 32.6 brought her past Fatkulina to 1:57.60, temporarily rank third. But in the next pair, Ireen Wüst had a hard assignment ahead but having won the 3000m and silver in the 1000m she was the favourite. Wüst started a few hundredths faster than Ter Mors, but lost two tenths in the first lap and one tenth in the next. A 30.5 final lap was also not possible but did 30.8, and finished in 1:54.09.

With the Dutch now being 1-2-3, Julia Skokova tried for Russia but missed Leenstra's bronze time with 0.05. Her pair mate Katarzyna Bachleda-Curus (POL) finished right behind her with 1:57.18. In the final pair, Claudia Pechstein (GER) and Lotte van Beek (NED) skated. Van Beek opened in 25.49, Pechstein 27.03. Van Beek continued with a 28.3 lap and for Pechstein the lap times seemed training for her 5000m. Van Beek managed to go on strong with 29.7 and 30.8 finishing in 1:54.54, two seconds faster than her training partner Leenstra.

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Marrit Leenstra, fourth: "In my last lap I was tired and couldn't keep the speed and the pressure. At the last moment I had a little hope for bronze but there were two seconds between me and the bronze. For the Netherlands it is the best result we can have, which is really nice for my country, but it doesn't bring me anything. Nine medals was the hope for the Dutch Olympic Committee, we had not expected this much."

Lotte van Beek, bronze: "I knew what I had to skate for bronze, but it is sad that it was at the cost of my training partner. There are only three medals. I had not expected my time to get that good. It's a double feeling that we can't be all four on the podium, but I am really happy with my bronze medal."

Ireen Wüst, who has now a total of 6 medals in Olympic Winter Games and leads the Dutch all time medal count together with Rintje Ritsma: "It feels like losing gold, but I have lost to someone truly better than me. I have a lot of respect for Jorien. She skated the race of her life. It feels sour but I think I can still enjoy it. I thought that the winning time would be about 1:53.8, and she was 0.3 faster than that. My 1:54.0 was a fine time, but I was working too hard to reach fast lap times, it cost too much energy in the end. I didn't surpass myself, still got silver. It doesn't matter that she is mainly a short track skater. The moment she skates long track, she is a long track skater. With such a team, we owe it to our standard to win gold in the team pursuit as well."

Jorien ter Mors, gold: "I'm really surprised to win gold here. I was trying to go for a medal. It's only logical that Ireen is not happy, but she congratulated me. Physically it was not a great problem to skate three short track 1500m races one day and another long track 1500m race the next. I'm used to doing several races a day in several days so I could recover. After both races I was emotional. Yesterday as I wanted that medal so badly, and as I had a really hard year with the death of my father this summer, I was emotional after my gold medal, too. It is not incredible that a short track skater wins, I put in hours of hard work, have powerful legs, and I easily adjust to the clapskate. But I would readily exchange this medal for a short track medal. That is where my heart is."

The Speed Skating competition at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games will continue on Tuesday 18 with the Men's 10,000 m. Four withdrawals were announced today. The full Norwegian team pulled out first, followed by home favorite Ivan Skobrev (RUS). Havard Bokko, Sverre Lund Pedersen and 10,000m substitute Simen Spieler Nilsen (NOR) will aim for a medal in the team pursuit, which is held on Friday 21 and Saturday 22 February.

For more information, full entry lists and results please see: [www.sochi2014.com](http://www.sochi2014.com) and [www.isu.org](http://www.isu.org)

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