

## Press release

10 January 2018

---

### ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships 2018 – Dresden (GER) Preview

*Fontana aims for seventh overall title, while Knegt tries to overcome Hungarian brothers in Men's, as PyeongChang 2018 looms.*

The European Short Track Speed Skating Championships is the continent's top annual competition and, with just under a month to go before the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games get underway, it will represent a vital period of competitive fine-tuning for those with medal ambitions.

Now in its 22nd year, the event attracts Europe's top names, with over 130 athletes from 27 countries expected at the EnergieVerbund Arena in Dresden (GER) on January 12-14, 2018.

Great Britain's Elise Christie will not participate in the Championships as she continues to work on her recovery following the thigh injury she sustained during the Audi ISU World Cup in Budapest last September. The reigning World Champion is aiming for full recovery and top form in time for next month's Olympics.

Over the last decade in the Ladies' competition, Italian legend Arianna Fontana has been supreme. She has taken the overall European title on six occasions (2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2017).

More recently she has faced rivalry from Christie (who won gold in 2015 and 2016), but last year – on home ice in Turin – the 27-year-old took advantage of Christie's absence to take back the top spot. Fontana, recently named as Italy's flag-bearer for the opening ceremony at PyeongChang 2018, will be keen to back up her team's confidence in her star potential.

Fontana has been on the podium over several distances during this season's Audi ISU World Cup meetings – with silver medals in Budapest and Shanghai over 500m, and a Shanghai bronze over 1000m. Her Italian teammate, Martina Valcepina, has also impressed with her speed and strategy, winning bronze over 500m at the Audi ISU World Cup events in both Dordrecht and Seoul.

Others hoping to take advantage of Christie's absence will be the Netherlands' Suzanne Schulting (who got silver in the Audi ISU World Cup 1000m in Dordrecht) and Yara van Kerkhof (Audi ISU World Cup bronze, 1000m, Seoul).

In the Men's competition, Russia's Semion Elistratov has prevailed as European overall champion for the past two years, while the Netherlands' Sjinkie Knegt won in 2015. In 2014, meanwhile, Russia's Viktor An dominated the European Championships – shortly before doing the same thing at the Sochi

2014 Olympic Winter Games.

This season, it is Kneigt who is the athlete in form: the 28-year-old will see 2018 as his big chance to grab Olympic stardom, and has performed consistently all term, with an Audi ISU World Cup 1500m bronze in Budapest, a bronze (1500m), silver (500m) and gold (1000m) in Dordrecht, and a silver (1500m) in Shanghai.

His main rival this weekend in Germany? Hungary's brilliant brothers, Shaolin Sandor Liu and Shaoang Liu. Shaolin raced to gold at the Audi ISU World Cup in Budapest over 500m, and over 1000m in Seoul. The pair also stood on the podium in second (Shaolin) and third (Shaoang) place respectively in Seoul (500m) and Shanghai (1000m). Often found in each other's slipstream, if one doesn't beat you, the other might.

This will be the third time that the European Championships have been held in Dresden, having already been here in 2010 and 2014. Only Turin has hosted the event as many times. Situated in the Sportpark Ostragehege, the modern facility can accommodate over 4,000 fans.

It's famously good quality ice, here: in 2013, China's Wang Meng broke the 500m world record on this surface.

Find results and classifications [here](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using **#EuroShortTrack** and **#ShortTrackSkating** and watch the live stream on the [ISU Skating Channel](#).

The ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships will have a single distance and allround character for the second time in its 22-year history.

Friday will be dedicated to all Qualifying Rounds. Saturday the Ladies and Men 1500m Semi Finals and Finals will take place followed by the Ladies and Men 500m Semi Finals and Finals. At the end of the day, the Ladies and Men European Champions in the 1500m and 500m will be crowned. On Sunday the action will continue with the Ladies and Men 1000m Semi Finals and Finals. The 3000m Super Final will determine the overall European Champions and the Championships will end with the exciting Team Relay races, 3000m for Ladies and 5000m for Men.