

# INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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For immediate release

## **ISU European Speed Skating Championships– Minsk (BLR)**

### **Day 1**

Martina Sáblíková (CZE) anticipated on her fifth European Allround title with a convincing 500m and a track record in the 3000m on the first day of the European Speed Skating Championships in Minsk. Defending champion Ireen Wüst (NED) is second in the classification and Antoinette de Jong (NED) third.

In the men's tournament Denis Yuskov (RUS) threw away the chance to threaten a record extending eighth title for Sven Kramer (NED) in the 500m. Yuskov won the 500m, but failed to take a big lead in the ranking, because he stumbled at the start. Kramer set a new track record in the 5000m and leads the Men's classification sovereignly. Jan Blokhuijsen (NED) is second and Bart Swings (BEL) third.

### **Ladies**

#### **Njåtun wins 500m**

Antoinette de Jong (NED) was the first to skate a time below 40 seconds, when she finished in 39.76 in the third pair. Her time stood until Ida Njåtun (NOR) took the ice in the eighth pair. The 24-year-old Norwegian, who took bronze in last season's World Allround Championships, set 39.74 to win the opening distance.

Defending Champion Ireen Wüst (NED) faced long-time rival Sáblíková in the final pair. Both ladies are aiming to equal Anni Friesinger-Postma (GER) and Andrea Ehrig-Schöne (GDR) on five European Championship overall titles. Last year Wüst laid the foundation of her fourth title with a 500m win, but she ended up in third place this time around.

The Dutchwoman finished in 39.90, only 0.08 ahead of Sáblíková, who set the fourth time. Wüst was slightly disappointed and said: "The 500m doesn't tell very much about the other distances, but I just lack speed. It's a pity I missed the World Cups in Calgary and Salt Lake City, where you really gain speed."

#### **Sáblíková seizes power in 3000m**

Marije Joling was not satisfied after her sixth place (40.33) in the 500m and she took revenge with a track record in the sixth pair of the 3000m. Joling crushed the previous track record of 4:12.74 by junior Melissa Wijfje (NED) with 4:07.14. She defeated Njåtun (4:10.69) and also surpassed the Norwegian lady in the classification after two distances, where they are currently fourth and fifth.

Joling didn't have much time to celebrate however. Sáblíková seized power in the seventh pair. The Czech lady finished in 4:03.79 to win the distance and take a firm lead in the ranking after day one.

Wüst could not do much more than control the damage in the penultimate pair. She had to bow her head for both Sáblíková and Joling, when she finished in 4:07.32. She is second in the classification, 1.53 adrift in the 1500m on Sunday. Wüst admitted that beating Sáblíková for the

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overall title had become almost impossible. "Of course I'm disappointed", she said. "I'm glad I skate in one pair with Sáblíková in the 1500m and I'm going to give it all."

Antoinette de Jong didn't manage to defend her 500m advantage over Sáblíková in the final pair versus Olga Graf (RUS). She skated 4:09.00 to end up fourth in the distance and third in the classification after Day 1. Graf, who was fourth in the overall classification last year, disappointed with an eleventh place in the 500m, an eighth place in the 3000m and a ninth spot in the ranking after two distances.

## Men

### **Pyrrhic 500m victory for Yuskov**

After Sverre Lunde Pedersen (NOR) withdrew due to illness on Saturday morning Denis Yuskov (RUS) was called the main challenger for defending seven time champion Sven Kramer (NED). The Dutchman was the first of the favorites to take the ice in the fourth pair. He gave his rivals something to think about with 36.56. Before Yuskov started in the tenth pair, only Zbigniew Bródka (POL) with 36.46 in the fifth pair and Konrád Nagy (HUN) with 36.48 in the eighth pair were able to beat Kramer's time. Nagy was the last of three skaters improving a personal best time today and was the first Hungarian male skater on the podium since Kornél Pajor in 1949 (female skater Kriszti Egyed did the same in 2003).

Yuskov had a false start in his race versus Jan Szymanski (POL). When the two men eventually got away clean, Yuskov stumbled in the first meters of his race. The Russian recovered quickly to finish in the best time of the day: 36.23. His advantage over Kramer could have been bigger without his struggles at the start however.

### **String of track records**

The men's 5000m led to a string of track records. Sven Kramer turned out to be the strongest of all with 6:19.17 to take the lead. The Dutchman took his 18th individual distance victory at the European Allround Championships to surpass Clas Thunberg (FIN) for the tournament record. He is well underway to grab his eighth European Allround title, but he was not satisfied with his 5000m. "My position after day one is great, but I wanted to skate a better 5000m. I would have liked to start the second day with a bit of a bigger gap," he said.

Yuskov was the first to skate a track record on Saturday. After his 500m disappointment the Russian seemed to have lost his inspiration, but he still finished in 6:35.81 in the last pair before the ice cleaning break. Yuskov beat the 6:38.76, which Vitalij Mikhajlov (BLR) had skated in Minsk last November.

The real fireworks came after the ice cleaning break. Haralds Silovs (LAT) showed the possibilities for the favorites when he beat Yuskov's time with 6:33.83. The Latvian ended up sixth in the 5000m and in the classification after day one. Bart Swings (BEL) had set a disappointing ninth time in the 500m, but he hit back with a strong 6:24.91 in the 5000m to climb up to third place in the classification. He is 2.24 behind leader Sven Kramer in the 1500m. Swings aims to become the second skater from Belgium after Dutch-born Bart Veldkamp (BEL) in 2001 (silver) to claim a medal at the European Championships.

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Jan Blokhuijsen and Douwe de Vries faced each other after Swings' race. Blokhuijsen, who was fifth in the 500m, started fast and kept his pace to beat Swings by two seconds in 6:22.36. He took second place in the classification, 0.99 adrift in the 1500m. Blokhuijsen was proud to be Kramer's rival after the first day. When he was asked whether he could beat his compatriot for the overall title, he remained cautious. "When the head is good, the legs are good too. I will give it my all tomorrow. I had a good day today and I hope to be able to do the same thing tomorrow." Kramer's most frequent rival Håvard Bøkko (NOR) is fourth behind Blokhuijsen and Swings, still ahead of Yuskov in the ranking.

## ISU European Speed Skating Championships - Results Day 1

### 500m Ladies

1	Ida Njåtun	NOR	39.74
2	Antoinette de Jong	NED	39.76
3	Ireen Wüst	NED	39.90

### 3000m Ladies

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	4:03.79 TR
2	Marije Joling	NED	4:07.14 TR
3	Ireen Wüst	NED	4:07.32

### Classification Ladies

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	80.611 TR
2	Ireen Wüst	NED	81.120
3	Antoinette de Jong	NED	81.260

### 500m Ladies

1	Denis Yuskov	RUS	36.23
2	Zbigniew Bródka	POL	36.46
3	Konrád Nagy	HUN	36.48 P

### 5000m Ladies

1	Sven Kramer	NED	6:19.17 TR
2	Jan Blokhuijsen	NED	6:22.36 TR
3	Bart Swings	BEL	6:24.91 TR

### Classification Men

1	Sven Kramer	NED	74.477
2	Jan Blokhuijsen	NED	74.806
3	Bart Swings	BEL	75.221

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## **Additional information**

[ISU Speed Skating Media Guide](#)

Results: <http://www.isureresults.eu/>

Live Stream on [ISU Skating Channel](#) NB: geoblocking may be required in certain territories

Twitter: [@ISU\\_Speed](#)

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