

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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For immediate release

ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships – Kolomna (RUS) Preview

The ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 2016 will be held at the Kometa Stadium in Kolomna from February 11 to 14. The tournament kicks off with the Men's 10,000m and the Ladies' 3000m on Thursday.

Qualifications for the Championships are based on the results of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating events that took place in November and December 2015. The maximum quota per country is three in the 500m, 1000m, 1500m ladies and men, 3000m ladies and 5000m men. In the 5000m ladies, 10,000m men and Mass Start the quota is reduced to two. In the Team Pursuit only one team per country can be entered.

Bloemen aims to break Dutch streak & Sáblíková aiming for more gold

Canadian world record holder Ted-Jan Bloemen could become the first non-Dutch winner of the longest distance after the Netherlands took all previous 16 titles in the 10,000m. Sven Kramer aims for gold a 10,000m gold medal, the race gets underway at 16:45 on Thursday. The Dutchman leads the all-time medal table in the World Single Distances Championships with 15 gold medals but he will face fierce competition.

The second of two distances on Thursday will be the Ladies 3000m, in which Martina Sáblíková (CZE) is the woman to beat after winning all five international 3000m races this season (4 World Cups and the race within the ISU European Speed Skating Championships).

Yuskov chasing Davis while Ladies battle it out in the 1000m

Friday's competition starts with the Ladies' 1000m at 17:10, followed by the Men's 1500m, the Ladies 5000m and the Men's Team Pursuit.

World record holder Brittany Bowe (USA) is favorite to win the Ladies 1000m, being the only skater to record a podium finish (4 gold and 2 silver) in all World Cup races so far. However at the last World Cup in Stavanger (NOR) she finished second behind Jorien ter Mors (NED). Heather Richardson-Bergsma (NED) disappointed with an 11th place in Stavanger, but she regained form winning a test race in Inzell last weekend.

In the Men's 1500m Denis Yuskov (RUS) can become the first male Speed Skater to win three consecutive 1500m world titles, he would equal Shani Davis (USA) who won the title three non-consecutive years, 2004, 2007 and 2009.

In the Ladies' 5000m Sáblíková is the one to watch once more, after winning all long distance races held so far this World Cup season. She has won a record seven successive 5000m world titles. The Czech long distance specialist holds the record for most (7) gold medals in a single event (either gender) at the World Single Distance Championships. She leads Anni Friesinger (six 1500m titles) and Sven Kramer (six 5000m titles and six Team Pursuit titles).

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Although Kramer could add a record extending seventh Team Pursuit title to his tally, he decided to skip this event in Kolomna. Jorrit Bergsma, Jan Blokhuijsen, Arjan Stroetinga en Douwe de Vries will defend the Dutch honor on Friday. Netherlands have won seven of eight available world titles in the men's team pursuit, including the last two. Netherlands only failed to secure gold in 2011 (Inzell), when they finished in third place behind Canada (2) and United States (1).

Fierce competition in Ladies' 500m

On Saturday the Men kick off with the 5000m at 15:00. The program continues with the first race of the Ladies 500m, the Men's 1000m and the second race of the Ladies 500m, to conclude with the Ladies Team Pursuit.

The Ladies 500m is one of the most competitive distances in the tournament. Two-time winner Lee Sang-Hwa (KOR) can equal Catriona Le May Doan (CAN) on three 500m world titles, but she'll have to deal with Zhang Hong (CHN). Both Lee and Zhang won four 500m World Cup races this season. Zhang's compatriot Yu Jing took two 500m wins, whereas reigning champion Richardson-Bergsma did not win a World Cup race in the shortest distance this season. Zhang can become the third Chinese female skater to win the 500m after Wang Manli (CHN) and Xue Ruihong (CHN). No country has more than two different winners in this event.

Before his climax 500m races on Sunday, Kulizhnikov will first aim for the 1000m title on Saturday. He won four of six 1000m World Cup races this season. In the standings Kulizhnikov is tied for the lead with Kjeld Nuis (NED). Shani Davis (USA) could win back-to-back 1000m world titles for the second time in his career, after 2007-2008. Davis can make his 24th and 25th race start at the World Single Distances Championships (all distances), becoming the leader in the men's all-time list (currently Bob de Jong, 24 race starts).

After winning three of the last four international Team Pursuit races defending champions Japan are the ones to watch in the Ladies Team Pursuit. They could join Netherlands (3) and Canada (3) as the only teams with multiple world titles in this event.

All eyes on Kulizhnikov

The final day starts with the first race in the Men's 500m, followed by the Ladies 1500m and the second race in the Men's 500m.

Reigning world champion Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS), who grew up in Kolomna near Moscow, has won seven of the ten World Cup races this season and leads the World Cup standings. He can become the fourth male speed skater to win back-to-back 500m world titles, after Shimizu (four in a row from 1998 until 2001), Jeremy Wotherspoon (CAN) (2003-2004) and Mo Tae-Bum (KOR) (2012-2013) and aims to become the second Speed Skater to win the Men's 500m world title on home ice after Hiroyasu Shimizu (JPN), who won gold in Nagano in 2000.

To wrap up the tournament first the Men and then the Ladies will race for the Mass Start medals on Sunday. Last year Irene Schouten (NED) won the inaugural Mass Start event at the World Single Distances Championships, finishing ahead of Ivanie Blondin (CAN) and Mariska Huisman (NED). Since the introduction of this event in November 2011, Schouten has won a record five World Cup

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Mass Start events. She is also the only female skater to have won multiple World Cup races (2) this season.

Arjan Stroetinga (NED) became the first ever men's world champion Mass Start by winning in Heerenveen last year. He will try to win a back-to-back title after taking two of four Mass Start World Cup gold medals this season. Fabio Francolini (ITA) could become the first Italian World Champion in a single distance. He reached the podium in three Mass Start World Cup races this season, most by any speed skater. Italy never won a men's title at the World Single Distances Championships.

Additional information

[ISU Speed Skating Media Guide](#)

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

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

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