



Press release

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Fontana 500m Golden dream become reality

An exciting and dramatic Ladies 500m race took place this evening in the sold out Gangneung Ice Arena. Arianna Fontana (ITA) finally won her first gold medal in her fourth Olympics. Yara van Kerkhof (NED) took silver, winning the first ever Ladies Short Track medal for the Netherlands. Kim Boutin (CAN) won the bronze medal in her maiden Olympics.

As the final approached the tension kept rising

The build up to the Ladies 500m Final was intense, as the skaters had to go through the quarter final and semi-final rounds.

The first heat of the Ladies' 500m quarter final included Fontana, Van Kerkhof, Marianne St Gelais (CAN) and Natalia Maliszewska (POL). There was one false start, then the race was stopped because of a fall in the first curve. The referees consulted the video replay and penalized St Gelais for impeding, the Short Track veteran from Canada commented later about her penalty: "If I knew (why) I would tell you. I had a good start. I haven't seen the image yet, I haven't seen the race yet. This is short track. Sometimes things go your way and sometimes they don't. However, that's done and I have to think about the other distances." The three remaining competitors went to the line for the third time. Fontana and van Kerkhof qualified for the semifinal.

The suspense continued in the second heat of the quarter final when Andrea Keszler (HUN) tripped just before the finish line making Kim Boutin (CAN) fall on the ice, who still managed to slide across the line and qualify for the semifinals.

Minjeong Choi (KOR) didn't have it easy in her heat either, a photo finish had to determine that she finished second by the skin of her teeth.

The semifinals were also action packed. 19-year-old Choi set a new Olympic Record in the 500m, again fueled by the cheering of the crowd, followed by Fontana who lead throughout most of the race. Both qualified for the Final A. Kexin Fan (CHN) was penalized for impeding. In the second semifinal, a photo finish had to determine the winner between Elise Christie (GBR) and van Kerkhof, who crossed the line just a few centimeters ahead of Christie. Both qualifying for the Final A. In a turn of events Chunyu Qu (CHN) fell and was penalized for impeding Kim Boutin who got advanced to the Final A.

Fontana queen of the 500m from beginning to end

The line-up for the final promised to be a showdown like no other. Choi, Fontana, Van Kerkhof, Christie and Boutin went to the start having made it through the rounds to the Final A.

Fontana dominated the race. She sat at the front and guarded her position all the way until the finish line, just 22 centimetres ahead of Choi. Fontana's medal adds gold to her Olympic medal color palette next to her silver from Sochi 2014 and four bronzes. The new Olympic champion said "I'm speechless, really. I crossed the line and I thought I was first and I looked at my coach and he (said), 'I don't know, but you did great. When I saw I was first, I was just yelling and started crying. I worked for four years and the last four months were really hard for me. I was really focused on getting here in the best shape ever.'"

Boutin stayed in second place most of the race with Choi close on her heels, followed by Christie and Van Kerkhof, who were looking for an opportunity to make a pass. Christie fell in Lap 4 and saw her chance of a medal evaporate. She later told the press "I moved into the bronze medal position, Choi was on the outside, there were three of us in a line and I've seen Choi and Kim bump so I thought: 'It's time to move now.' I still had a lap and a half to try and win, and winning did cross my mind. I moved into second and I got hit, and I couldn't hold the corner but we were going quite fast on these tiny blades and you can't always hold it."

In the last corner before the finish line, Choi decided to make her move placing herself in second position ahead of Boutin and crossing the line just behind Fontana. This action gave Van Kerkhof an opportunity to also pass in front of Boutin to finish in third. But in a dramatic turn of events, Choi's action did not pay off as she got a penalty for impeding Boutin. "I prepared my best and I thought that even though the result does not come out well, I did a competition that I will not regret. But I feel sorry for the fans of Korea. I did my best for the final and I was so happy that I could be in the final. I still have other competitions left, so I will focus and concentrate on those," Choi told the press

Following the penalty van Kerkhof obtained the silver medal becoming the first Dutchwoman to win an Olympic medal in short track: "I can't believe it. It's such a great day. I've dreamed of this for four years already, and my dream came true. It means everything to me. I worked so hard for this and I've been through a lot. It's really nice."

Boutin stared impatiently at the giant screen waiting for the final decision of the referee to see if she still had a chance at a medal "Just before (I left the ice) Marianne told me, 'You stay here'. So maybe she knew that something's going to happen. I didn't know because when I'm racing, I don't remember my race. So I'm like: 'What happened? Where am I?'" Her face lit up and she jumped for joy with team mate St Gelais when it was confirmed that she would get the bronze. Boutin won Canada's fourth Olympic medal in the short track ladies' 500m event - the second most behind China's eight.

Men 1000m qualifying heats

The Men also had to go through the 1000m qualifying heats today. The final will take place on Saturday February 17 and promises to be another highlight event of the Winter Olympic Games PyeongChang 2018.



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Upsets in the Men 5000m Relay semifinal

In the first semi-final Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Canada and China battled it out for two spots in the Final A. China and Canada lead most of the race, but Sjinkie Knegt attempted a bold move just as he exited the last curve before the finish line and got penalized for having impeded Samuel Girard (CAN), who crashed a few meters before the finish line. China finished the race in a new Olympic Record time but that was overshadowed by the drama that just unfolded behind them.

Hungary, Japan, Republic of Korea and USA were in the second semi-final. If Korea's job was to entertain and keep the crowd cheering, they certainly achieved that and in a new Olympic Record time that was previously broken by the Chinese just moments before. Hungary also qualified for the Final A which will take place on Thursday February 22.

For more information, schedules, full entries and results please refer to the [ISU website](#) and the [official website](#) of the Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang.