

Press release

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Unfinished business for Sven Kramer

The 10,000m gold is the last major omission in Sven Kramer's (NED) trophy cabinet. It's the event he should have won twice, but never did. The 31-year-old Dutchman is on a mission at PyeongChang 2018, but it is not going to be a walk in the park on Thursday night. Kramer's main enemy might be the pressure he put on himself, and he cannot afford too many mistakes with world record holder Ted-Jan Bloemen (CAN) and 2014 Olympic Champion Jorrit Bergsma (NED) ready to step up.

Kramer missed out on Olympic 10,000m gold in Vancouver when his coach Gerard Kemkers (NED) pointed him into the wrong lane at the crossing. Kramer followed his coach's sign and got disqualified. Four years later in Sochi he took silver behind compatriot Bergsma.

Asked whether the 10,000m was unfinished business at a press conference just ahead of the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Games at the Gangneung Oval, Kramer said: "That's no secret, but I take it step by step. First I focus on the 5000m."

This first hurdle was taken last Sunday, when Kramer grabbed a record third consecutive 5000m gold. It makes him all the more favorite for the longest distance. It doesn't bother him too much, although he thinks the underdog position is more comfortable: "I don't know how to race as an underdog since I was eight years old. It's more difficult to race as a favorite, sometimes it looks more like defending. Sometimes I race not to lose, looking over my shoulder all the time. I have to focus myself to race to win."

Looking over the shoulder

Bloemen is the man Kramer is watching when he looks over his shoulder. The Dutchman defeated the 31-year-old Canadian three times in a head-to-head battle this season, twice in the 5000m (Heerenveen and Calgary) and once in the 10,000m (Stavanger). But when it comes to world records, it is Bloemen looking over his shoulder to Sven Kramer. After having switched from his Dutch to his Canadian passport in 2014, Bloemen found his groove on the ice. In 2015 he broke Kramer's 2007 world record in the 10,000m by more than five seconds, when he clocked 12:36.30. Last December Bloemen literally tore Kramer's 2007 record (6:03,32) in the 5000m to pieces. Bloemen clocked 6:01.86 and cracked the plastic plate with Kramer's time on the record board when he replaced it with his own time.

Kramer was absent in Salt Lake City, but Bloemen thought that he would have beaten the Dutchman. "I got closer every race we skated this season, so the momentum is on my side," he said. Despite this momentum Bloemen had to settle for silver in Sunday's 5000m. He hadn't found the groove at the Gangneung Oval just yet. "It's a very rhythmic movement, a kind of tunnel you're going into, sort of hypnotic. Sometimes you get your strides going and you just flow to the finish and it's still hard, but



INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS AVENUE JUSTE-OLIVIER 17 - CH 1006 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND
PHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 FAX (+41) 21 612 66 7 E-MAIL media@isu.ch

less hard, and you can get more out of yourself in that way in a long distance. I'm going to be looking for that last little bit of flow and rhythm in the next couple of days," he said.

Bergsma and Pedersen

Kramer praised Bloemen, but he thinks there are more contenders on Thursday. "He's getting better and better, especially when he moved from the Netherlands to Canada. He became a more professional athlete, that's why he is where he is now. He's not my main rival, but one of the competitors, together with (Jorrit) Bergsma (NED) and (Sverre Lunde) Pedersen (NOR). Jorrit's been skating very good lately."

Bergsma is the reigning Olympic Champion, but last year Kramer beat him at the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships in Gangneung and things did not seem to go Bergsma's way this season either. He failed to qualify for the Olympic 5000m at the Dutch trials, but clinched a ticket for the 10,000m by the skin of his teeth.

Pedersen showed great form, when he came only two thousandths short of the silver medal in Sunday's 5000m. Despite missing the silver, he was happy with a medal. "'It's unbelievable. I've been dreaming of this so long and working so hard, and now finally I achieved it. It was my main goal for this season and for my whole career, as well. Now that the first race is over, I can relax and have fun the rest of the Olympics. "

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.