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Beijing, China

History of Speed Skating at the Olympic Games **Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games**

Speed Skating is one of the corner stones of the Olympic Winter Games. Together with Nordic Skiing, Ice Hockey and Figure Skating, it is one of only four sports that has continuously been on the program since the inaugural 1924 Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix (FRA).

From iconic names of the past like Finnish Clas Thunberg, Soviet Lidiya Skoblikova and American Eric Heiden, to modern day legends like Dutch [Sven Kramer](#) and [Ireen Wüst](#), Speed Skating has always captured the imagination.

Allround versus Single Distances

The classical distances in Speed Skating are 500m, 1500m, 5000m and 10,000m. Since the first ISU World Speed Skating Championships in Amsterdam (NED) in 1893, the world title was awarded to the winner of classification over the four distances combined. At the 1924 first Olympic Winter Games separate medals were awarded for the individual distances, as well as an Allround title. It was a Men's only event, as Women made their debut in Speed Skating at the Olympics in 1960.

American Charles Jewtraw won the very first Olympic Speed Skating gold medal in the 500m, but Clas Thunberg (FIN) won the 1500m, the 5000m and the Allround titles. The Finn went on to win 500m and 1500m gold at the 1928 Olympic Winter Games in St. Moritz (SUI) and to this date still tops the Men's all-time medal ranking in Speed Skating.

Thunberg is also the only man to have won the Olympic Allround title, which was removed from the Olympic program in 1928. Olympic medals are still only awarded for single distances, unlike the world titles, which were only awarded for combined Sprint or Allround classifications for decades. In 1996, the ISU also introduced the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships, separately from the continued World Allround and Sprint Championships.

Extended program

Starting with 5 medal events at the inaugural Winter Games, the Olympic Speed Skating program has noticeably evolved and now features 14 medal events since the PyeongChang 2018 Games. Apart from adding Women to the program in 1960, Speed Skating competitions remained the same during the first eight decades, with the classical distances (500m, 1500m, 5000m and 10,000m for the Men, and 500m, 1500m, 3000m and 5000m for the Women).

In 1976, the 1000m was added to the Men's program, and twelve years later the Women also competed in the 1000m, making up a program of five classical distances for both genders. It was not until Torino 2006 Olympic Winter Games, that another event was added to both the Men and Women competitions: the Team Pursuit. Home Skaters Matteo Anesi, [Stefano Donagrandi](#), [Enrico Fabris](#) and [Ippolito Sanfratello](#) won the first gold medal in the Men's event, while Germany's [Daniela Anschütz-Thoms](#), [Anni Friesinger](#), [Lucille Opitz](#), [Claudia Pechstein](#) and [Sabine Völker](#) were crowned as the Women Team Pursuit Olympic champions. The Team Pursuit event has been featured in the program ever since.

The last addition to the Olympic program was the Mass Start at PyeongChang 2018, with home Skater [Lee Seung-Hoon](#) (KOR) winning the Men's gold and [Nana Takagi](#) (JPN) taking the honor in the Women's event.

Queen Skoblikova

Although Women already had their first official ISU World Speed Skating Championships in 1936, they had to wait another 24 years to be admitted into the Olympic program. At the 1960 Games in Squaw Valley (USA), Lidiya Skoblikova (RUS) immediately put her name on top of the all-time medal table, and she has stayed on top ever since.

Skoblikova took 1500m and 3000m gold and went on to win all four Women events (500m, 1500m, 3000m, 5000m) at the Innsbruck Games in 1964, for a combined total of six medals. The Soviet athlete still is the only woman to have won four gold medals in one single Olympics event in Speed Skating.

With eleven Olympic medals (5 gold, 5 silver, 1 bronze), Ireen Wüst (NED) has won the most silverware in Olympic history. Having qualified for her fifth Olympic Winter Games in Beijing 2022 in the 1000m, the 1500m and the Team Pursuit, she aims at Skoblikova's crown by winning a sixth Olympic gold.

Imperious Heiden

Clas Thunberg (FIN) still leads the Men's all-time medal table with five gold, a silver and a bronze, but [Eric Heiden](#) comes close. The imperious American became the most prolific Speed Skater at a single Olympic Winter Games event, winning all five competitions at the 1980 Games in Lake Placid (USA).

Dutch Sven Kramer collected the all-time most Olympic medals in the Men's events, with 4 gold, 2 silver and 3 bronze for a total of 9 medals. After being present at the 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018 Games, the Dutch legend was selected for the 5000m, the Mass Start and the Team Pursuit at his fifth Olympics in Beijing 2022. He will not be able to match Heiden's single Games tally, but he is chasing Thunberg's all-time crown.

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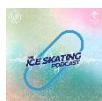
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About the International Skating Union

The International Skating Union (ISU), founded in 1892, is the oldest governing international winter sport federation and the exclusive international sport federation recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) administering the sports of Figure Skating (Single & Pair Skating and Ice Dance), Synchronized Skating, Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating worldwide. The objectives of the ISU are to regulate, govern, promote and develop its sports on the basis of friendship and mutual understanding between athletes. Currently three ISU disciplines are included in the Olympic Winter Games program (Figure Skating, Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating). For further information please visit isu.org.