

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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For immediate release

Essent ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships – Preview Salt Lake City, USA

The Essent ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships 2013 will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah (USA) this weekend. On January 26 and 27 the best sprinters of the world will compete in a 500m and 1000m race on both days. Skaters who start in the inner lane on the first day, will start in the outer lane the next day. Times are calculated based on the 500m so the 1000m time will be divided by 2 to give points that can be added up to a fair ranking. In such short distances minor mistakes are easily made and can have important consequences to the final result.

The Utah Olympic Oval in Salt Lake City is the fastest in the world together with the oval in Calgary, Canada. Both are at a high altitude, Salt Lake City at 1425m and Calgary at 1105m. Because of the diminished air resistance, most world records are set in these two venues, especially in the Sprint distances. The Ladies World Records in the 500m (held by Sang Hwa Lee KOR) and the 1000m (current record holder Christine Nesbitt CAN) are held in Calgary while the 500m (Jeremy Wotherspoon CAN) and 1000m (Shani Davis USA) World Records for the men were set in Salt Lake City. There is a chance of some new World Records this weekend.

Last week at the Essent ISU World Cup Speed Skating competition in Calgary Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) beat the 500m World Record which is now at 36.80 and the world record points for the sprint combination was set by Heather Richardson (USA) at 147.735 (37.12-1.13,09-37.42-1.13,30). This was during the preparation for the World Championships which makes Richardson favourite for the title. Since 2002 there has been a different Ladies' Champion. Last year it was Jing Yu (CHN), in 2011 it was Christine Nesbitt (CAN), 2010 Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR). They are all strong contenders this time, although Yu has not skated up to the same level as last season. Yu's strength has been mainly in the 500m, but in that distance Sang-Hwa Lee has won all her races this season. Other skaters who can reach the podium are Hong Zhang (CHN), Margot Boer (NED), Olga Fatkulina (RUS), Brittany Bowe (USA) and Nao Kodaira (JPN).

Reigning Men's Champion Stefan Groothuis (NED) will have tough competition from Kyu-Hyuk Lee (KOR) 2012 silver medalist and 4 time world champion. Olympic champion Tae-Bum Mo (KOR) who took the bronze last year has been the strongest skater of the season so far. In 2009 American Shani Davis won, but his weaker 500m kept him outside the US team this season. Other contenders for the title are Pekka Koskela (FIN) who has been on both 500 and 1000m podiums but has often had physical set-backs, Dutchmen Michel Mulder and Hein Otterspeer and Jamie Gregg (CAN). Joji Kato (JPN) is a strong skater in the 500m but not in 1000m while for Samuel Schwarz (GER) his strength is in the 1000m.

Full results are available at www.isu.org

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