

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Event 2 of 6

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Essent ISU World Cup Speed Skating – Salt Lake City (USA) – Day 1

The second Essent ISU World Cup of this season started today on the faster than ever Olympic Oval of Salt Lake City. Like Calgary, Salt Lake City is at altitude and the weather helped lower the air pressure. Sang-Hwa Lee lowered the world record for the 500m that she set last week. This week the new mark is 36.57. Antoinette de Jong (NED) skated a world record for Juniors in the 3000m of 3:59.49.

On the first day there were 107 new personal best times, including 27 NRs: for Austria (Vanessa Bittner, 38.35; Bram Smallembroek, 1:45.95), Belgium (Bart Swings, 1:45.23; Jelena Peeters, 4:04.00), China (Beixing Wang, 36.85), Estonia (Saskia Alusalu, 4:19.61), Finland (Elina Risku, 38.83), France (Benjamin Macé, 35.47 and 1:43.70), Hungary (Konrád Nagy, 1:45.69), Italy (Francesca Lollobrigida, 4:05.35), Japan (Nao Kodaira, 37.29), Kazakhstan (Yekaterina Aydova, 37.64; Denis Kuzin, 1:43.60), Korea (Sang-Hwa Lee, 36.57; Bo-Reum Kim, 4:04.62), Latvia (Haralds Silovs, 1:44.66), the Netherlands (Michel Mulder, 34.26; Koen Verweij, 1:42.28), Poland (Zbigniew Bródka, 1:42.89; Katarzyna Bachleda-Curus, 4:02.12), Russia (Olga Fatkulina, 37.19; Denis Yuskov, 1:42.36), Chinese Taipei (Ching-Yang Sung, 34.64; Darren Ta-Yuan Huang, 1:48.83), USA (Heather Richardson, 36.97; Mitchell Whitmore, 34.29).

Ladies' 500m

The Ladies' 500m, the opening race, immediately saw a world record for Sang-Hwa Lee. In pair 7 Olga Fatkulina (RUS) skated a NR well under her old mark, 37.19. Fast as it was, it did not bring her to the podium. For the first time in history, all Ladies on the podium skated a time below 37 seconds. In pair 8 Heather Richardson brought the US record down to 36.97, and in the next pair Beixing Wang took the Chinese record with 36.85. In the final pair, Sang-Hwa Lee combined the fastest opening with the fastest lap ever (10.16+26.41) to reach 36.57, taking another big chunk off the world record. Jenny Wolf (GER) was fourth with 37.15. Lee said: "I did not expect to have the ice this fast, but like in Calgary I went out to do my best and ended with a world record. I did not expect a world record here, it is a new feeling for me."

Men's 500m

In the Men's 500m Gilmore Junio (CAN) was the first to skate a personal best, and he took the lead with 34.25. A little later Joji Kato (JPN) also skated 34.25, and even thousandths of a second could not separate them. Mitchell Whitmore at first seemed to equal Fredricks's US record of 34.31, but his time was later corrected to 34.29, a national record. Fredricks lowered his best to 34.30 but lost his NR. Michel Mulder (NED) skated strong and set a Dutch record, 34.26. Tae-Bum Mo fell in the last pair, which slightly hindered his pair mate Ronald Mulder. Neither was able to mount a challenge today. Junio and Kato shared the win, with Michel Mulder missing out by a fraction. For Junio it was his first World Cup win.

Junio said: "I am not super surprised. I have been skating well. That time was a bit surprising but I knew I had it in me. It was a barrier I wanted to break for a while. I have been questioning myself, starting in the B-group, if I could skate with the big guys. One goal is qualifying for the Games. Winning gold is the ultimate goal. You don't want to be ahead of yourself. I have to stay on my game."

Ladies' 3000m

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As in the 500m, more than half of the Ladies skated personal best times. There were some tight races, one of them between two Poles for the Polish record, which Katarzyna Bachleda-Curus won by a quarter of a second in 4:02.12. The final two pairs were much tighter, such as the one featuring two Dutch Ladies, Antoinette de Jong and Jorien Voorhuis. De Jong set a Junior world record last week just above 4 minutes and wanted to go faster. Voorhuis also aimed for her first sub-4 and as the fastest time at that point was the 4:01.00 posted by their countrywoman Linda de Vries, the winner of this race, with one pair still to race, was sure of bronze. In the end, De Jong finished in a 3:59.49, 0.02 ahead of Voorhuis. In the final pair it was even tighter between the two best skaters of last week. This time it was Martina Sáblíková (CZE) who won in 3:57.79, Claudia Pechstein (GER) was second in 3:57.80. Ireen Wüst (NED), who last week was also on the podium, did not race, deciding that to compete over four distances both weeks would not be wise.

De Jong said: "I thought as everybody was faster than last week that I could be faster too. I tried to open faster, and go on like that, keep rest in my strokes. Last week I felt I had to do it on my own. Here my pair mate skated next to me and in front of me. Now I am the only Junior who ever was below 4 minutes. Cool. I hope I will improve technically, there is still much to learn."

Men's 1500m

Thirteen of the 20 skaters skated personal best times for this distance. Denis Yuskov took the Russian record from Ivan Skobrev, lowering it to 1:42.36, Benjamin Macé Alexis Contin's French record and brought it down to 1:43.70. Zbigniew Bródka bettered Konrad Niedzwiedzki's NR, setting a new mark of 1:42.89. World champion Denis Kuzin (KAZ) skated a NR of 1:43.60. Brian Hansen (USA) set an impressive personal best of 1:42.16, the fifth fastest time ever skated, opening with 23.42 and with laps of 25.2, 26.2 and 27.1. Shani Davis (USA) won the Men's 1500m in the third fastest time ever skated: 1:41.98, opening in 23.41, with laps of 25.1, 26.1 and 27.3. Only he has ever gone faster. His pair mate was last week's winner Koen Verweij (NED), who tried to keep up with Davis but had to settle for third place in 1:42.28. The fact that this was a new Dutch record, overtaking Erben Wennemars's mark, made losing more bearable.

Verweij said: "You can see that Davis is the most experienced at altitude. I wanted to have a good race and be constant. It is tricky at altitude, speeds are so different, but it went well, I am happy with it. Davis is a good guy ... With him I can go well through one turn."

Tomorrow's program has the second 500m and the 1500m for Ladies, and for Men the 1000m and Team Pursuit.

Essent ISU World Cup Speed Skating – Salt Lake City (USA) - Medal Winners Friday

500m Ladies

1	Sang-Hwa Lee	KOR	36.57 WR
2	Beixing Wang	CHN	36.85 NR
3	Heather Richardson	USA	36.97 NR

500m Men

1	Gilmore Junio	CAN	34.25(8) P
1	Joji Kato	JPN	34.25(8)
3	Michel Mulder	NED	34.26 NR

3000m Ladies

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	3:57.79
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2	Claudia Pechstein	GER	3:57.80
3	Antoinette de Jong	NED	3:59.49 WJ

1500m Men

1	Shani Davis	USA	1:41.98
2	Brian Hansen	USA	1:42.16 P
3	Koen Verweij	NED	1:42.28 NR

For details of the Essent ISU World Cup, including complete results see www.isu.org .

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