

# INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: CHEMIN DE PRIMEROSE 2 - CH 1007 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND  
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 7 E-MAIL: info@isu.ch

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## **Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games** **Speed Skating Men 1500 m**

The Speed Skating competition continued today at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games in the Adler Arena with the Men's 1500m.

For the first time in Olympic history a Polish skater won a gold medal in Speed Skating. Zbigniew Bródka took the distance with the smallest ever margin on Koen Verweij (NED). They both finished in 1:45.00, but the thousands of a second (6 for Bródka, 9 for Verweij) separated the gold over silver. The 2014 Men's 1000m silver medalist Denny Morrison (CAN) took the bronze. It is the first time at these Olympic Games that a Dutchman did not win the gold medal. The 2010 Olympic Champion Mark Tuitert finished in fifth, world champion Denis Yuskov (RUS) in fourth.

In the first half of the competition, 1000m champion Stefan Groothuis (NED) was fastest with 1:46.08, he had the fastest opening of the day, 23.23 and only the bronze winner would beat his first full lap of 25.5. He finished with 27.33 and 29.97 and in twelfth place. The Norwegian coach Jarle Pedersen commented later: "I have never seen so many skaters below 1:46 in a low land competition. The first twelve could all have won."

After the ice preparation several skaters achieved 1:45s times. The first to break last year's 1:45.85 track record was Olympic champion Mark Tuitert. All his laps were good, 23.52, 25.8, 27.1, 28.8. In the last two laps he made the difference with Groothuis and finished in 1:45.42. Bart Swings (BEL), also one of the favorites opened a bit too slow. After 24.26 followed 26.1. Then he went on well, with 27.0 and 28.4, but 1:45.95 was not good enough for a place on the podium. In the next pair, Tuitert lost the lead to Morrison, who had the fastest first full lap in the field with 25.4, after a 23.49 opener. With his next lap of 27.0 he was the fastest skater at 1100m, 1:15.92. He then slowed down considerably in the last lap. After a 29.3 he finished in 1:45.22, enough to stay ahead of Tuitert. His pair mate Håvard Bøkko (NOR) who won bronze in Vancouver came close to Morrison in the final lap, which was 28.5, after 26.1 and 27.1, but with 1:45.48 he finished right behind Tuitert. Brian Hansen (USA) had similar laps to Bøkko, just lost 0.1 to him in the first full lap and finished in 1:45.59, eventually 7<sup>th</sup> place. His countryman Shani Davis, the 2010 silver medalist, skated in the next pair with Bródka. They were head to head with, 23.5, and then Bródka was a little in front with a 25.6 lap versus 25.7 for Davis. Both had a follow up lap of 27.2 and Bródka had last inner lane and could use that to skate towards Davis and pass him in the final turn. The last lap for the Polish was 28.5 and his time was 1:45.00, another track record. Davis' last lap was 29.4, and that dropped him to 1:45.98, rank 11. Denis Kuzin (KAZ), 1000m World Champion, finished in 1:45.69, and then came Denis Yuskov (RUS), World Champion in this distance against Sverre Lunde Pedersen (NOR). They were both conservative starters. Yuskov had a 26.1 first lap and the Norwegian was 0.2 slower at 600m. Then Yuskov had the fastest second lap of all, 26.8, while Lunde Pedersen did well with 27.0. Their final lap was good too, Pedersen had the fastest last lap of the day, 28.1, and Yuskov 28.2. But Yuskov ended up in fourth with 1:45.37 and the Norwegian in 8<sup>th</sup> with 1:45.66. And last of the favorites Koen Verweij (NED) skated. There were high expectations from the Dutch to continue their success of racking in the gold medals. His opening lap was 23.73, then he continued with 25.8, 26.9 and 28.4. His total time was 1:45.00, the same as Bródka. While the thousands of seconds taken into account, the verdict was that Verweij was 0.003 slower than Bródka. The smallest ever difference between Olympic gold and silver in speed skating history.

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2010 reigning Olympic Champions Mark Tuitert who finished fifth: "I've defended my medal with honor. The reality is that a couple of people were better today. I feel for Koen. He is a fighter. It's incredibly sad when you miss a medal like this. Bródka is a first-class skater. The best has won today. I don't feel that he stole the victory."

Denis Yuskov, fourth: "To say that it's a disappointment is to say nothing at all, but the Olympic Games are the sports where the results can be surprising. Take Denny Morrison. I have no idea what he has been doing before. I've never seen him get a medal, and now he has two."

Denny Morrison Olympic bronze medalist commented: "The 1000m really gave me much confidence. Just crossing that line in the 1000m and feeling like I had extra energy and feeling like I was increasing in speed towards the end of the race. Also it did lift a lot of pressure off my shoulders. I have been wanting it for eight years and I have been trying to win an individual medal. It was a relief, but at the same time I was pretty nervous for the 1500m."

Koen Verweij Olympic silver medalist said to the press: "When I crossed the finish line, I saw that I had the same time and I thought it was the winning time, but it was not. At some point I will be happy with this medal, it is still silver. But right now I'm not satisfied. It feels like a huge loss. The silver medalist is the first loser."

Zbigniew Bródka, Sochi 2014 champion said: "It was the perfect race that I had dreamed of and I could profit of the race of Shani Davis, as I had last inner and Shani last outer. It is unbelievable, esp. since we have no indoor rink and we spent so much time travelling all over Europe to train. After the ladies won bronze in the 2010 Team Pursuit, we started to believe that we could be a good team and we trained as well as we could. Now is the moment to decide to build an indoor rink in Poland. If not, my determination might disappear."

- |                    |     |             |
|--------------------|-----|-------------|
| 1. Zbigniew Bródka | POL | 1:45.006 TR |
| 2. Koen Verweij    | NED | 1:45.009    |
| 3. Denny Morrison  | CAN | 1:45.22 TR  |

## Preview ladies 1500m

Tomorrow, the ladies will skate the 1500m. Ireen Wüst 3000m gold medalist and 1000m silver medalist, is the main favorite. When she skates in pair 15 together with Ida Njåtun (NOR), three pairs will still have to take to the ice. Katarzyna Bachleda-Curus (POL) with Julia Skokova (RUS), Brittany Bowe (USA), Yekaterina Lobysheva (RUS) and Claudia Pechstein (GER) with Lotte van Beek (NED). Of the earlier skaters, Jorien ter Mors (NED) who also competes in Short Track Speed Skating is also a medal contender and so is Yekaterina Shikhova (RUS) and Heather Richardson (USA).

For more information, full entry lists and results please see: [www.sochi2014.com](http://www.sochi2014.com) and [www.isu.org](http://www.isu.org)

## For further information please contact:

Selina Vanier, ISU Media Coordinator  
Telephone: +7 938 454 2132  
email: vanier@isu.ch

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