

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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2014 Sochi Olympic Winter Games **Short Track Speed Skating Men's 500 m, Ladies' 1000m** **and Men's 5000m Relay**

The short track speed skating competition at the 2014 Olympic Winter Games concluded in Sochi on Friday with the Men 500m Final, Ladies 1000m Final and Men 5000m Relay Final.

Victor An (RUS) ties Apolo Ohno (USA) to become the most successful short track speed skater in the Winter Olympic Games with six medals.

Victor An makes Olympic history

Russia's Victor An outskated his competition to win his third medal of these Games by clinching gold in the Men 500m event. During the quarterfinals, competition was fierce with top contenders Sjinkie Knegt (NED), Wenhao Liang (CHN), J.R. Celski (USA), Dajing Wu (CHN) going through to the next round. Charles Hamelin (CAN), a strong potential medal contender did not make it through the Heats.

The next round brought exciting races to the Iceberg Skating Palace. In the first semifinal Chinese duo Dajing Wu and Tianyu Han started faster than their rivals but Charles Cournoyer (CAN) and Celski managed to stay close. Satoshi Sakashita (JPN) could not keep up with the pace. The surprise of this event was the Canadian who overtook Han in the last curve to finish second and qualify to the Final A along with Wu who finished first. The second Semifinal started with Liang at the front but was quickly overtaken by An. Jon Eley (GBR) skated strongly and stayed close to the Russian making him work for his position. Knegt put pressure on Eley making him lose his footing when the Dutchman passed. With two laps to go An passed Liang and they both qualified for the Final A.

Final B started with Han, Celski, Knegt and Eley. Han took command of the race and won it wire to wire. Jon Eley was looking good in second place but Celski took second while Knegt was left behind early in the race.

The four skaters starting Final A were Wu, Cournoyer, An and Liang. The athletes kept these positions for the first few laps. However with two laps to go Liang fell after bumping shoulders on the straight with the Canadian. This was the perfect distraction for Victor An to make his move. First he took Cournoyer on the outside and then Wu on the inside and crossed the finish line first making him 500 Olympic Champion. Wu took silver and Cournoyer bronze.

Victor AN (RUS) – gold: On his plans for the future: "As an athlete, I think I've reached the top position so this is a great honor. I never thought I could finish the Olympics with so many achievements. For the last eight years, I trained very, very hard. After the world championships, I will talk more, but right now I have no plans of quitting." On his status as a national hero in Russia: «So many people have supported me. Before the Olympics, it is true that short track was not very well known. I thought that one of my missions was to make short track very well known in Russia."

Dajing WU (CHN) – silver: On winning a silver medal for China: «In terms of the competition, through our team's effort, we played to the team's strengths."

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Charle COURNOYER (CAN) – bronze: On winning bronze: "I came in here to have as much fun as possible. I was expecting to be good but the bronze medal? It was a fog for me. I was just racing, doing what I know."

Fifth Olympic Medal for Park Seung Hi (KOR)

Park Seung Hi (KOR) proved that she is the strongest Korean skater in Sochi and on Friday was no exception.

The Ladies 1000m quarterfinals skated off with a strong skate from Elise Christie (GBR), Valerie Maltais (CAN), Shim Suk Hee (KOR), Fan Kexin (CHN), Jorien Ter Mors (NED) and Jessica Smith (USA). They all went through to semis leaving the likes of Arianna Fontana (ITA), Marie-Eve Drolet (CAN) and Kim Alang (KOR) on the way.

Semifinal 1 felt like a 1500m race. All the skaters took a lot of time to size each other up. Maltais led the race for the first half followed by Park, Smith and Ter Mors. The Korean took the lead and on the last curve Maltais slipped and Smith came in to take second place. Park and Smith went over to Final A, Ter Mors and Maltais to Final B. On semifinal 2 Shim Suk Hee took the lead early on from Fan Kexin. They traded the leading position a couple of times. Jianrou Li (CHN) stayed in third and Elise Christie in fourth. With three laps to go the Chinese tried to take on the Korean but their efforts were not rewarded. Christie made her move with two laps to go and managed to take the second place in a risky move that only paid off for a moment. Li tried to pass her back and held the line. On the tussle they both went down and received a penalty. Shim and Fan qualified for the Final A.

Final B had only two skaters, Maltais and Ter Mors. The Dutch lady has competed earlier in the day in the Speed Skating Team Pursuit, set a new Olympic record and finished first. In an effort to bring the first medal for the USA Jessica Smith tried early on to take the lead but was denied by Park. In the middle of the race Shim Suk Hee went to second position and the two Koreans kept that lead for most of the race. With two laps to go speed increased and Kexin Fan took over the third spot. This left Smith in 4th and was left out of contention. The Chinese found a way on the tight corner to slip into second place and kept that position on the last curve. Park Seung Hi raised her arms in victory after she crossed the finish line followed by Fan Kexin and Shim Suk Hee.

Seung-Hi PARK (KOR) – gold: On being the only woman to win two gold medals (3000m relay and 1000m) in short track at Sochi 2014: "For the last four years we trained really hard and today's success is the result of our training. The Korean team has a very strong mental capability. I think today's result shows it. Indeed I am in really good shape, but there is no secret - I just worked really hard. I am also an experienced athlete, which helped me a lot. I was slightly injured during the 500m race. I was hit, but I could recover fast thanks to the training and the experience and I showed good results today."

Kexin FAN (CHN) – silver: On her coach LI Yan (CHN): "After four years of coaching, she will not coach us anymore. We need to continue to pay her back for everything she has done for us. She was like a mother for us in training and in everyday life. This is our tribute."

Suk Hee SHIM (KOR) – bronze: On winning a gold in the 3000m relay, a silver in the 1500m and a bronze in the 1000m: "There were various medals: gold, silver and bronze. When I won all these medals, I went through many different experiences and emotions and learned a lot. It was a good performance throughout the whole Olympics."

A golden race brings Russia its first Relay medal

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The Final B was won by Canada after a fine skating battle with the Koreans who finished second. Italians were also a good contender on this race.

All the action was saved for the last race of the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games. The starting teams were Russia, China, Netherlands, Kazakhstan and United States. The gun went off and on the first curve the Dutch and Chinese went down. This event broke the race in three. At the front were Russia and USA battling for first. In the middle was Kazakhstan all alone trying to keep up and at their tail the fallen trying to come back to medal contention. Laps went by and Russians and Americans were trading blow for blow. The Kazakhs were skating with all they had to keep that third spot. Chinese and Dutch, far from working together to get back on the race were going at each other and making up. The Dutch and Chinese broke the Kazakh dream when they caught them and bronze became a possibility for them. China passed the Netherlands on the last two laps to finish in third. On the last laps Russia's finisher Victor An was too strong for J.R. Celski and the Iceberg Skating Palace celebrated the host country's first Men Relay gold.

Victor AN (RUS) - gold: On winning gold medals in both the 500m and 5000m relay in one evening:

"I'm very happy we were able to win a medal as a team. I wanted one thing tonight, which was for all of us to be smiling together. This has been the best experience of my sporting career and I will never forget Sochi. Before the competitions started, I just wanted to concentrate on doing my best and show what I could be on the Olympic stage."

On matching Apolo Anton OHNO's (USA) Olympic record of winning eight short track medals:

"I'm happy to have tied the record for medals in short track - and I'm even happier to have done it as a Russian."

JR CELSKI (USA) – silver: On winning the silver medal in the relay: «It's so rewarding to be here with the medal and not empty-handed. I'm so proud of my team for winning this medal, we were trying all of our lives to get to this moment. It's awesome. It's not gold but at the same time we worked hard to get to this moment and I am really happy and proud of these guys."

Jingnan SHI (CHN) – bronze: On coming back from the fall to win the bronze medal: "It was Jing (Dajing WU, CHN) who fell, not me. We were confident. After the fall, our team kept on going and we were confident until the end."

For more information, full entry lists and results please see: www.sochi2014.com and www.isu.org

For further information please contact:

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