

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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January 11, 2015

For immediate release

ISU European Speed Skating Championships 2015

Day 2

Chelyabinsk, RUS

Ireen Wüst and Sven Kramer (both NED) were crowned European Champions in the Uralnaya Molniya ice rink in Chelyabinsk on Sunday. Wüst took her fourth European title and Kramer a record seventh. Martina Sáblíková (CZE) and Koen Verweij (NED) had to settle for silver. Linda de Vries (NED) and Denis Yuskov (RUS) took bronze.

In total 18 ladies and 21 men from 16 different European countries fought for European glory. Three track records were broken, in the 1500m and the 5000m ladies and the 10.000m men. Natalia Voronina (RUS) was the only one to skate personal best times (in both the 1500m and the 5000). Skaters from five different countries made the distance podia on Sunday, making it seven the entire weekend. Kramer now has 48 track records in the world, including the Big Combination, and that in itself is a record.

Ladies

Wüst and Sáblíková were first and second after the first day, more or less as expected. The battle for the third spot on the podium was led by Linda de Vries, with Ida Njåtun (NOR), Julia Skokova (RUS) and Jorien Voorhuis chasing. Olga Graf (RUS), traditionally strong in the long distances, was also within striking distance.

1500m

Russians Graf and Voronina were the first to impress in the sixth pair of the 1500m. Voronina skated a personal best time (2:01.69) to qualify for the final 5000m and her pair mate was even three seconds faster. Graf set 1:58.60 and climbed to rank six, because Skokova (1:59.27) lost too much time in the next pair. Voorhuis also Skokova with 120.603 points after 1:59.01.

Njåtun and De Vries battled for rank three in the penultimate pair. The Norwegian won the race, with a new best time of 1:58.09, but with 1:58.33 De Vries stayed ahead of Njåtun in the ranking. De Vries had 120.743 points and Njåtun 120.911.

The final 1500m pair featured the two top rivals Wüst and Sáblíková. The Dutch leader started aggressively and left Sáblíková far behind to improve her own track record by a second to 1:56.05. Sáblíková was more cautious in her opening, but set a decent time (1:58.24) and skated the the fastest last lap (31.2) of the field. She finished between Njåtun and De Vries in third place. With her two second win over Njåtun, and her even bigger gain on Sáblíková, Wüst was confident heading into the 5000m.

Wüst: "The race went well. For myself I needed to skate a brilliant 1500m, so fast that Sáblíková could not benefit in the end, and that plan succeeded. I was not satisfied with my 3000m yesterday. It's an allround tournament, there is always a lesser race, then I get angry and I used that energy to skate fast. 11.7 should be enough margin heading into the 5000m. The last 5k I skated against Sáblíková was at the Olympics and the difference was only 3 or 4 seconds."

De Vries: "I've lost nothing, that is good, although it was not an easy race. I still need to skate a good race, but there is a very big chance I will end up on the podium."

5000m

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In the final distance, Voronina set another personal best time and climbed in the ranking because pair mate Skokova crashed and finished more than a lap later, to end up 8th in the overall classification.

Voorhuis and Graf, ranked 6 and 5, took the ice in the second pair and the Russian easily won to pass the Dutch lady in the ranking. With support of the Russian crowd Graf managed to skate lap times of 33 in the first half of the race. The laps went up to 34.2, but Graf kept on winning time on Voorhuis. The two final laps were a bit of a struggle, but Graf still took 18 seconds off the track record, finishing in 7:09.11. She secured a top-5 finish with 164.532 points. Voorhuis had 165.003.

The penultimate pair featured De Vries and Njåtun. De Vries gained on Graf in her opening and then copied the schedule of the Russian, while Njåtun's laps went up halfway. In the last three laps, De Vries lost half a second per lap. Despite finishing behind Graf in 7:09.52, she secured a bronze medal on the overall podium with 163.695 points. Njåtun struggled and finished in 7:21.82 with four 36 laps, to drop behind Graf and Voorhuis with 165.093 points in the overall classification.

The final pair decided over silver and gold. Wüst (20.84) opened faster than Sábliková (21.29) and attacked with a few quick laps from the start. Sábliková, who had to make up a second per lap, stayed behind Wüst, crossing in her slipstream. After the first 1000m, Sábliková took on the battle, but she did not seem to want anything else than the 5000m win. Wüst managed to keep 33s until 3400m, and only in the final four laps Sábliková took a bigger margin, but Wüst never was slower than 34.1. Sábliková brought the track record to 7:00.70. With 7:05.63 Wüst came second in the 5000m, but it was more than sufficient for her fourth European title. Wüst gathered 161.734 points, Sábliková 162.414.

Wüst: "I like it when Sábliková attacks and I can counter, but now it was good as well. As long as I can stay with her the first 3km, it's ok. I don't think she could go any faster. In these conditions 7.00 is very fast. This 5k was much better than yesterday's 3k. I want to race four good distances. To screw it up in the distance in which I am Olympic champion is pretty bad. Now I am happy to be European Champion. Every title is a title. I have a new team and new coaches and I am happy I can do it again with a different kind of training and environment. I would skate on such a small rink with a big crowd like this any time. The enthusiastic supporters made up for a fantastic atmosphere."

Sábliková: "I am happy. Wüst is really strong in the 1500m. I know that so it was a nice fight. My cycling accident this summer doesn't bother me anymore. I feel good now."

On the question, whether she was too cautious in the 5000m: "Maybe it looked like that, but I was so tired after the 1500m. When I stood at the start of the 5000m, I felt like going to bed. I had to be cautious at the beginning. I think I could have done 6:58 or 6:57, but still Ireen would have won. I am satisfied."

De Vries: "It's nice to be on the podium and to be sure of racing the World Championships. To reach the podium was my goal today. I knew that more was impossible, so but keeping third place was good. I don't like the 5k usually, but this tournament it was the nicest distance for me. I was happy I could keep it flat and even."

In her speech at the banquet after the competition, Wüst asked for a minute of silence for the victims in France.

Men

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The three Dutchmen were favourite for the medals and after the first day, Koen Verweij, Sven Kramer and Wouter Olde Heuvel were one, two and three. Sverre Lunde Pedersen (NOR), Denis Yuskov (RUS) and Bart Swings (BEL) were chasing.

1500m

The men's 1500m was as exciting as expected. Jan Szymanski had taken the lead in with 1:48.47, when Håvard Bøkko (NOR) and Haralds Silovs (LAT) took the ice. Silovs opened strong with 24.05 and 26.5 and Bøkko couldn't get close. With a 27.8 and a 29.0 lap, Silovs set 1:47.54 to pass Bøkko in the classification for rank 7 with 111.804 points. Bøkko finished in 1:49.43, dropped out of the top-8 and failed to qualify for the 10,000m. He missed a few months of training in the summer due to a jumper's knee. The Russians cheered for Danil Sinitsyn, who finished in 1:48.81, who now entered the 10,000m based on his 8th place in the 5000m.

Yuskov, Swings, Olde Heuvel and Lunde Pedersen fought for the overall bronze with the Belgian and the Russian facing each other in the ninth pair. Yuskov opened in 24.03, and continued with 26.5 and 27.1. Swings answered with a 26.4 and but he couldn't match Yuskov's 27.1. The Russian powered on to 1:46.22, already cheering right after his race. Swings finished in 1:47.08, which eventually handed him third place in the 1500m. Yuskov had 110.639 points after the 1500m and Swings 111.395. In the tenth pair Lunde Pedersen started 24.04, but he could not keep up with Yuskov's pace and pair mate Olde Heuvel did not deliver. The Norwegian had to race by himself and finished in 1:47.32, behind Yuskov, who also passed him in the ranking.

In the final pair Verweij and Kramer entered the rink. Verweij knew he had to gain a lot on Kramer to carry his margin through the 10,000m. He opened in 23.88; Kramer in 24.20. Verweij continued with a 26.1 lap and Kramer couldn't follow (26.6). Verweij even crossed in front of Kramer after 700m and set a 27.3 lap against 27.9 for Kramer. In the final lap Verweij almost lost his balance, but he finished in 1:46.28 just behind Yuskov. Kramer (1:47.41) finished fifth in the 1500m, between Lunde Pedersen and Silovs.

In the ranking Olde Heuvel dropped from three to six, Yuskov climbed to three, Lunde Pedersen stayed in fourth and Swings was fifth. Verweij led with 110.012 points and had an eleven-second-margin over Kramer (110.565) in the 10,000m.

Olde Heuvel: "I had no energy in this race, contrary to the rest of the season. I thought that with a good 1500 I could race the 10k with Sven, but now I have no chance whatsoever. The preparation was not what it should have been, with some physical flaws and an inflammation of a tooth. It cost too much energy."

Kramer commented: "This was below the standard. Yesterday wasn't good and today it certainly wasn't good. Even if I win in the end, it hasn't been good this weekend. I don't know why. I didn't make the summer I wanted, so I do not have a solid foundation."

Verweij: "It feels good. It doesn't feel like I have the cards in my hands, because I have not been training as well as I need to. I don't think he (Kramer) feels good about this 1500m. Sometimes I lose 20 seconds to him in the 10k though. I had not expected to cross in front of him, it felt good and went smoothly. I just missed the rhythm in the last lap, I couldn't keep it going as usual, but I had my fastest time of this season."

10,000m

In the first pair of the 10,000m, Harald Silovs defended his advantage over Danil Sinitsyn. The Latvian had a 21-second-margin over the Russian, who had a personal best time that was 17 seconds faster. Silovs took it

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easy in the first half of the race, but then brought his lap times down and finished only 12 seconds behind Sinitsyn. The Russian took the pair in 13:50.40 and Silovs secured 7th place overall in 14:02.15.

In pair two, Olde Heuvel needed to make up 2.4 seconds on Swings. The Dutchman took the initiative, but Swings followed easily and at 6000m even took a small advantage. Olde Heuvel's laps went up to low 32s, while Swings showed an even race, with laps between 31.5 and 32.0. The Belgian finished in a new track record: 13:21.06 to stay ahead of Olde Heuvel (13:24.95) in the ranking.

In the third pair Kramer had to set a bar for Verweij and Sverre Lunde Pedersen needed to aim at 13:29.9 to stay ahead of Swings. The Norwegian was faster than Swings, but he skated in the shadow of Kramer, who gave it all to set 13:07.27, a new track record. Lunde Pedersen had one of his best races ever and finished in 13:16.27 to stay ahead of Swings in the ranking.

In the final pair Verweij needed 13:18.33, whereas Yuskov needed 13:24.50 for third place on the overall podium. Verweij took the initiative but had no help from Yuskov. Verweij skated 31 laps until 4000m. Yuskov skated about 3 seconds behind, but in the second part of the race they both managed low 32 laps. Yuskov had lost more than 5 seconds to Lunde Pedersen at 7200m, but then smelled his chances. While Verweij dropped to 32.5 laps, Yuskov went into the mid 31s. Verweij kept fighting, but Yuskov finished with two laps of 30.9. With 13:21.15 the Russian celebrated the overall bronze, whereas Verweij knew he had lost the title to Kramer when he finished in 13:21.90.

Kramer took his seventh title with 149.928 points. Verweij had 150.107, Yuskov 150.696 and Lunde Pedersen was not far behind with 150.764. Swings ended up fifth with 151.448.

Kramer said: "It feels good when you can still fight in the 10k after a slightly disappointing weekend. I was happy with the 10, because I'm not in the best shape. I am happy inside, but we should not forget what happened a few months ago and what happened in Paris this week. You try to focus on your competition, but I think it is important not to forget what happens in the world.

"Koen has skated well. He is a good skater, that is not news for me. My 500 and 1500 have to be better. It's a puzzle. It's a new route and I give it a chance, I try to be patient."

Verweij: "I've got mixed feelings. I came here with lower expectations and eventually lost the title by only three seconds. I'm not experienced enough on this horrific distance. Of course I would have liked to take the title, but one day it will come. I had spoken with Yuskov before the race, hoping we could race together, but we didn't. He did well in the end. I am happy, my four cylinder engine is a V6 again. For the people here I think it was a nice tournament, very exciting."

Lunde Pedersen said: "My 500 and 1500 were not good enough. I was so close to the podium and I am disappointed, but the 5k and the 10k were very good."

Swings: "I'm rather content with my second day. I skated a decent 1500m and the 10,000m was flat. The first day was a bit of a 'false start'. I false-started in the 500m and in the 5000m I went too much into acidification, because of which my lap times went up too much. With a better 5k I could really have competed for the podium. But the second day certainly gives me motivation for the world championships."

ISU European Speed Skating Championships – Chelyabinsk (RUS) - Medal Winners day 2 1500m Ladies

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1	Ireen Wüst	NED	1:56.05 TR
2	Ida Njåtun	NOR	1:58.09
3	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	1:58.24

1500m Men

1	Denis Yuskov	RUS	1:46.22
2	Koen Verweij	NED	1:46.28
3	Bart Swings	BEL	1:47.08

5000m Ladies

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	7:00.70 TR
2	Ireen Wüst	NED	7:05.63
3	Olga Graf	RUS	7:09.10 TR

10,000m Men

1	Sven Kramer	NED	13:07.27 TR
2	Sverre Lunde Pedersen	NOR	13:16.27
3	Bart Swings	BEL	13:21.06 TR

TOTAL Ladies

1	Ireen Wüst	NED	161.734 39.24(1)-4:07.49(2)-1:56.05(1)-7:05.63(2)
2	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	162.414 40.06(6)-4:05.23(1)-1:58.24(3)-7:00.70(1)
3	Linda de Vries	NED	163.695 40.05(5)-4:07.50(3)-1:58.33(4)-7:09.52(4)

TOTAL Men

1	Sven Kramer	NED	149.928 37.03(10)-6:17.32(1)-1:47.41(5)-13:07.27(1)
2	Koen Verweij	NED	150.107 36.20(1)-6:23.86(4)-1:46.28(2)-13:21.90(5)
3	Denis Yuskov	RUS	150.696 36.49(4)-6:27.43(6)-1:46.22(1)-13:21.15(4)

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