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For immediate release

ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships – Astana (KAZ) Day 2

Brittany Bowe (USA) and Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) were crowned ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Champions in Astana on Sunday. The two skaters won with impressive margins and the fastest sprint combination ever skated on a lowland rink.

Both Bowe's total of 149.600 and Heather Richardson's (USA, 150.815) both were below Jing Yu's (CHN) former best lowland sprint combination of 151.275. Bowe was the first champion since Monique Garbrecht in 2003, who won the World Sprint title without losing a single distance.

Kulizhnikov gathered 138.325 points. His lead over silver medal winner Hein Otterspeer (NED) was just over one full point. Only Eric Heiden (USA, 4 time sprint champion from 1977 to 1980) and Igor Zhelezovsky (BLR, 6 time world sprint champion between 1985 and 1994) did that before. Kulizhnikov became the second-youngest world sprint champion since Heiden in 1977.

There were ten personal best times over the whole weekend, and two track records (500m men and 1000m ladies) on Saturday.

Ladies

Brittany Bowe already had a large lead going into the second day. In Sunday's 500m she was paired with her main rival, Heather Richardson (USA). She was faster in both the start and the full lap, and won the distance in 37.71. Richardson was the only other Lady below 38, with 37.90. Karolina Erbanová (CZE) finished 3rd and overtook Olga Fatkulina (RUS) in the classification. Erbanová's 38.06 kept home favourite Yekaterina Aydova (KAZ, 38.19) off the podium, but Aydova proved that she was much better than her nervous first 500m on Saturday.

After three distances, Bowe had 112.350 points and Richardson 113.285, which gave Bowe a 1.87 second margin in the final 1000m. Richardson did not have to worry for her silver medal either. Third ranked Erbanová had only 114.555 points and she had to hold off fourth ranked Fatkulina (114.875), Aydova (115.020) and Dutch skaters Thijsje Oenema and Margot Boer.

The fight in the 1000m was mainly about that remaining spot on the podium behind the gold and silver US Ladies. Boer was eliminated for the medals when she skated a disappointing 1:16.80, which got her seventh place in the distance and seventh place overall because Qishi Li (CHN) overtook her. The Chinese slow starter opened in 18.32, but her first lap was 27.6, which was only bettered by the top American ladies. After another 29.9 Li finished in 1:15.85.

Aydova, who was fourth on Saturday, opened faster than Li and was still ahead of her after a first 27.8 lap. However, Aydova lost too much in the final lap and finished in 1:16.01. Neither Fatkulina nor Erbanová was able to beat Aydova's time. With 1:16.88, Fatkulina even dropped behind

Aydova in the overall ranking. Erbanová held on to third place with 1:16.14 and thus became the first Czech to win a medal in the World Sprints Championships. Aydova ended fourth with 153.025 points.

In the final pair Bowe and Richardson cruised to the podium. Bowe was a bit slower than Saturday's track record, but her 1:14.50 was more than enough to win. Richardson skated another solid 1:15.06, with a 29.7 final lap. Bowe made the difference with a 29.1 final lap.

"My birthday was last week so this was a pretty good birthday present," said Bowe, who celebrated her 27th birthday on 24 February. "It has been a good year, a lot of stepping stones that I've conquered, a lot of new goals that I've met, and a lot of dreams come true.

"It has been a lot of hard work and I'm glad I came out on top this weekend. I had a great first day yesterday and had built a lot of momentum into today. I'm glad I could finish the job. It didn't bring any tension. I came wanting to win the 500 and wanting to win the 1000 and I did that.

"I just knew what I needed to do to come out on top. I was a bit surprised about the 500s, but each 500 I raced this year has come out better and better and I knew I was capable of it, but it is about putting together four solid races, not just one here and there."

Men

Mika Poutala (FIN) was the first surprise in the 500m, when he finished in 35.03 to take the lead from local hope Roman Krech, who had finished in 35.13. Espen Aarnes Hvammen (NOR) also finished in 35.13. Shani Davis (USA) got injured in the 500m, and finished it carefully in (37.05) only to withdraw for the final distance.

Nico Ihle (GER) was unlucky as well. The German medal contender, who was ranked third after day 1, got disqualified. After a first false start, the tip of Ihle's skate broke the line in a second attempt. His protest was rejected and his podium hopes vanished.

In the penultimate pair Otterspeer beat Ruslan Murashov (RUS) with a strong 35.03 to equal Poutala, while Murashov set 35.06. Kulizhnikov hit the ice against title defender Michel Mulder (NED) in the final pair and opened in 9.6 versus 9.7 for Mulder. The Russian rocket overtook Mulder through the last inner and was the only man to finish below 35 seconds in 34.68. Mulder finished in 35.11 to move up to rank 3 overall, with 104.960 points. Otterspeer was still second with 104.575 and Kulizhnikov's 103.795 was a world apart.

"If I go down, I do it with a fight", said Mulder was on his way to a first World Sprint Championships participation without winning the title after victories in 2013 and 2014. It would not even be easy to hold on to third place, with Murashov (105.025) and Yesin (105.140) chasing.

Mulder's was paired with Yesin in the 1000m. He fought with everything he had, but Yesin was too strong. The Russian set 1:09.41 and Mulder's 1:09.81 was just 0.01 point short for the bronze medal. Murashov lost his medal hopes after being disqualified for kicking a lane marker.

Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen (NOR) finished third in the 1000m with a surprisingly strong 1:09.43 in the third pair. He had already set a personal best in the 500m as well.

In the final pair Otterspeer tried to open aggressively to stay close to Kulizhnikov, but they both were slower than the first day. Through the inner turn Kulizhnikov took the lead, and Otterspeer did not have the power he displayed on day one. Kulizhnikov won the 1000m in 1:09.06 to take the title in style. Otterspeer (1:09.52) was fourth in the distance, but secured second place in the final classification with 139.335 points. Yesin ended up third with 139.855 and Mulder fourth with 139.865 points.

Otterspeer: "It was really hard today. I hoped that I would get off the line a bit easier, but to make up 1.1 seconds on Kulizhnikov, I needed to skate a 1:07 here. I am happy with four good races. Being number two in the world is the high point of my career, I am extremely happy. Kulizhnikov was too strong for me now, but my time will come."

Kulizhnikov was born on 20 April 1994. He was not even three years old when Russia celebrated its last world sprint title with Sergej Klevchenya in 1997. Kulizhnikov didn't have any doubts over the weekend, He said: "I skated a bit cautious on Saturday and everything went perfect today."

**ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships – Astana (KAZ)
 - Medal Winners Sunday**

Ladies

500m

| | | | |
|----------|--------------------|-----|-------|
| 1 | Brittany Bowe | USA | 37.71 |
| 2 | Heather Richardson | USA | 37.90 |
| 3 | Karolina Erbanová | CZE | 38.06 |

1000m

| | | | |
|----------|--------------------|-----|---------|
| 1 | Brittany Bowe | USA | 1:14.50 |
| 2 | Heather Richardson | USA | 1:15.06 |
| 3 | Qishi Li | CHN | 1:15.85 |

Men

500m

| | | | |
|----------|-------------------|-----|-------|
| 1 | Pavel Kulizhnikov | RUS | 34.68 |
| 2 | Hein Otterspeer | NED | 35.03 |
| 2 | Mika Poutala | FIN | 35.03 |

1000m

| | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|-----|---------|
| 1 | Pavel Kulizhnikov | RUS | 1:09.06 |
| 2 | Alexej Yesin | RUS | 1:09.41 |
| 3 | Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen | NOR | 1:09.43 |

Final Classification Ladies

| | | | | |
|----------|--------------------|-----|---------|---|
| 1 | Brittany Bowe | USA | 149.600 | 37.59(1)-1:14.10(1)TR-37.71(1)-1:14.50(1) |
| 2 | Heather Richardson | USA | 150.815 | 37.87(2)-1:15.03(2) -37.92(2)-1:15.06(2) |
| 3 | Karolina Erbanová | CZE | 152.625 | 38.04(3)-1:16.91(7) -38.06(3)-1:16.14(5) |

Final Classification Men

| | | | | |
|----------|-------------------|-----|---------|--|
| 1 | Pavel Kulizhnikov | RUS | 138.325 | 34.56 (1)TR -1:09.11(3)-34.68(1) -1:09.06(1) |
| 2 | Hein Otterspeer | NED | 139.335 | 35.08(10) -1:08.93(1)-35.03(2) -1:09.52(4) |
| 3 | Alexej Yesin | RUS | 139.855 | 35.04 (6) -1:09.46(5)-35.38(12)-1:09.41(2) |

The World Sprint Championships will be available as a live stream here:

<http://livemanager.eurovision.edgesuite.net/isu/index.html>

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