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For immediate release

**ISU World Allround Speed Skating Championships 2015, Calgary (CAN)  
– Day 1**

Sven Kramer (NED) laid a solid foundation to win a seventh title at the ISU World Allround Championships at the Olympic Oval in Calgary, Canada, on Saturday. The Dutchman took the lead after a tenth place in the 500m and a strong win in the 5000m. Title defender Koen Verweij (NED) crashed out of the tournament at the start of the 500m and Denis Yuskov (RUS) is Kramer's main rival, he has to make up only 0.17 seconds on Kramer in the 1500m on Sunday to take the lead.

Heather Richardson (USA) leads the Ladies' field after two distances on the first day. She took a big lead with a superb 500m and managed to stay ahead of Martina Sáblíková (CZE) and Ireen Wüst (NED) in a hard-fought 3000m.

**Ladies****500m**

Heather Richardson grabbed silver at the World Sprint Championships in Astana last week and took her speed to the World Allround Championships in Calgary. With 37.11 she broke the Championships record (37.51 by Cindy Klassen, CAN). Richardson was 1.56 faster than Canadian Kali Christ, who skated 38.57, and she was the only lady who managed to skate the full lap below 27 seconds (26.5), while her opener (10.57) was the fastest of the field as well.

Ireen Wüst started her campaign to capture a fifth consecutive World Allround title, by finishing in third place. With 38.73 she was not able to get close to her personal best of 38.44. Her main rival for the title, Sáblíková, who won the World Allround title in 2009 and 2010, skated 0.26 seconds faster than she had ever done before, when she finished tenth (39.23).

In fourth and fifth place finished Ivánie Blondin (CAN) with 38.93 and Xin Zhao (CHN) with 38.98. Only the first five ladies managed to skate below 39 seconds.

**3000m**

Sáblíková was the first of the main title contenders to start in the 3000m when she took the ice in pair nine. The Czech long distance specialist set a new personal and Czech record with 3:55.10. After a 19.8 opener she kept the first five full laps below 31 seconds only to finish with 31.4 and 31.8 laps.

In pair ten 500m winner Richardson opened in 18.7 against Claudia Pechstein (GER). The sprinter had a 12.72 second advantage over Sáblíková at the start of the 3000m. Richardson kept Pechstein behind until the 2200m passing and battled on to keep up with the German in the two final laps. Although Richardson had to bow her head for Pechstein in the pair, she managed to limit her loss towards Sáblíková to 9.90 seconds to stay ahead of the Czech in the classification. Pechstein, age

43, competing for a record 20<sup>th</sup> time in the World Allround Championships, was fifth in the 3000m in 4:02.93. Richardson was ninth in the distance with 4:05.00.

In the pair after Richardson, Wüst faced Olga Graf (RUS). The title defender left her Russian pair mate far behind from the start and kept up with Sáblíková's pace in the first four laps, but like many others Wüst collapsed in the final part. She finished with 33.1 and 33.9 laps to set a disappointing 4:00.34, but it was good enough for the second place in the distance. The podium was completed with Linda de Vries (NED), who had finished in 4:02.41.

"It was very tough," Wüst said. "I wanted to go all or nothing. To win the title you have to skate fast. Heather (Richardson) did that in the 500m and Sáblíková in the 3000m.

"My first four laps were fine but in the fifth round I fell apart. If I had been in super shape I could have coped with it, but now it just hit me too hard."

After day one, Wüst is ranked third with a 2.53 deficit towards first ranked Richardson and 1.12 towards second ranked Sáblíková, but she has not given up on the title just yet: "This is a bigger gap than I had hoped for and Sáblíková is very much in shape. I've got nothing to lose any more so I'll go flat out in the 1500m."

Richardson doesn't really dare to dream of the Allround title, especially because she has very little experience in the longer distances.

"Today was pretty good. I didn't know what to expect in the 3000m and I just wanted to go for a pretty flat race," Richardson said.

"I still need to get a little time on the other girls. I never raced a 5k before, so I'm just going to have fun. Sáblíková is very good at what she does and so is Wüst. It's going to be hard. 12.5 laps might be pushing it a little bit."

Going into the 1500m, Richardson has 77.943 points, which means a 1.41 second advantage over second ranked Sáblíková who has 78.413, and 2.53 over Wüst who has 78.786. Ivania Blondin (CAN) is ranked fourth at 5.16 from the leader.

## **Men**

### **500m**

Denny Morrison (CAN) was the only man to skate below 35 seconds when he broke the Championships record of 35.08 in the 500m to bring it to 34.98. The 30-year-old Canadian is aiming for a career first podium place in the World Allround Championships.

Before Morrison skated his top time, Sven Kramer started his campaign to regain his World Allround title with a solid tenth time. 36.20 was just 0.03 seconds slower than his own personal best.

Kramer's campaign will not be hampered by last year's champion Koen Verweij any more. Verweij's tournament was over after 20 metres into the 500m. Verweij stabbed the point of his left skate into the ice and crashed ten steps after the start. He didn't finish his race and decided not to start in the 5000m because of a knee injury he sustained.

Denis Yuskov will probably be Kramer's main challenger. The 25-year-old Russian set the second fastest time (35.64) in the 500m. Zbigniew Bródka (POL) finished third in 35.78 and Sverre Lunde Pedersen (NOR) gave his title hopes a boost with a fast 35.87 to finish fourth in the 500m.

### **5000m**

Sven Kramer dreamt of improving his own World Record of 6:03.32 (Calgary, 2007) in the 5000m, but that turned out to be too much of a good thing, but with 6:07.49 the six-time World Allround Champion set a new Championships record anyway. Kramer was the last of the main title contenders to take the ice in the 5000m and he was the only one to keep all his lap times below 30 seconds.

500m winner Morrison started his 5000m in the third pair versus Cheol-Min Kim (KOR). The fast Canadian was not able to improve his personal best and finished in the 11<sup>th</sup> time (6:25.01). It took him to the fourth place in the classification at the end of the day.

Besides Kramer, Yuskov and Lunde Pedersen managed to surpass Morrison in the general classification. Pedersen faced Alexis Contin (FRA) in the ninth pair and beat the Frenchman in the fastest 5000m at that moment. Pedersen finished in 6:11.77 and Contin set 6:15.02.

Denis Yuskov started in the tenth pair versus Douwe de Vries (NED) and the Russian opened fast. After a 18.26 opener, he managed to stay below Pedersen's time until 3800m. When his lap times hit 30 and even 31 he seemed to collapse, but Yuskov managed to fight back in the last two laps to keep his loss limited. With 6:13.64 he was just 1.97 seconds slower than Pedersen to set the third time of the day, 6:13.64. De Vries was 7<sup>th</sup> in 6:17.81.

Yuskov and Kramer will face each other in the 1500m on Sunday. The Dutchman has a 0.17 second advantage at the start. Yuskov hopes to gain time in the 1500m, but Kramer is pretty confident after this first day: "I would have liked to skate faster today, but the conditions are not as good as I had hoped. The ice is a bit soft, which is a disadvantage in the long distances. But this ranking is very good for me at the moment."

Kramer has 72.949 points, Yuskov follows with 73.004 and has a 0.13 second advantage over Pedersen, who is third with 73.047 points. Denny Morrison is fourth at 1.30 from Pedersen.

**ISU World Speed Skating Championships – Calgary (CAN) - Medal Winners day 1****500m Ladies**

<b>1</b>	Heather Richardson	USA	37.11 CR
<b>2</b>	Kali Christ	CAN	38.67 P
<b>3</b>	Ireen Wüst	NED	38.73

**500m Men**

<b>1</b>	Denny Morrison	CAN	34.98 CR
<b>2</b>	Denis Yuskov	RUS	35.64 P
<b>3</b>	Zbigniew Bródka	POL	35.78

**3000m Ladies**

<b>1</b>	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	3:55.10 NR
<b>2</b>	Ireen Wüst	NED	4:00.34
<b>3</b>	Linda de Vries	NED	4:02.41

**5000m Men**

<b>1</b>	Sven Kramer	NED	6:07.49 CR
<b>2</b>	Sverre Lunde Pedersen	NOR	6:11.77
<b>3</b>	Denis Yuskov	RUS	6:13.64

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