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For immediate release

ISU World Allround Speed Skating Championships 2015 Preview

The Olympic Oval in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, will host this weekend's ISU World Allround Speed Skating Championships. 24 ladies and 24 men from 18 different countries will compete in the big combination: 500m, 3000m, 1500m, and 5000m for the ladies, the men's consists of 500m, 5000m, 1500m and 10,000m. Points will be calculated on the basis of the 500m (eg time from the 1500m and 5000m will be divided by 3 and 10 respectively). Due to its altitude of 1105 meters, Calgary's Oval has fast ice and a number of World Records have been set here including the current 3000m held by Cindy Klassen (CAN) along with her Small Combination and Shani Davis' (USA) Big Combination World Record.

Reigning Ladies Allround Champion and 2015 European Champion Ireen Wüst (NED) will defend her title. Wüst's main challenger is Martina Sáblíková (CZE) but she usually wins whilst competing outdoors. Therefore the fast Calgary ice should be an advantage to Wüst. The slightest mistake can change everything. Heather Richardson (USA), who finished second last weekend at the ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships, plans to build an advantage in the 500m and has all her chances to finish within the top-8 in order to compete in the 5000m. Tough competition will also come from last year's runner-up Olga Graf (RUS), and her teammate Julia Skokova who often finishes high in the ranking, as well as from the other Dutch ladies Linda de Vries and Marije Joling. Claudia Pechstein (GER) made the podium in the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 5000m therefore she is also a contender along with Ida Njåtun (NOR). Home favorites are Ivania Blondin and Kali Christ.

The reigning Allround Champion in the men's field is Dutchman Koen Verweij and his greatest rival is 2015 European Champion and compatriot Sven Kramer. If either of them succeeds, they will clench the 105th Allround title and also be the first Dutchman to win the title in Calgary. However they will not have an easy job, Denis Yuskov (RUS) made the podium last year, is the 1500m World Champion and has proved that he can reach all four podiums and is therefore a strong candidate for the Allround title. One of Yuskov's goals is to beat Shani Davis' 1500m World Record this weekend. Other strong candidates for the podium are Alexis Contin (FRA), Bart Swings (BEL), Sverre Lunde Pedersen and Håvard Bøkko (NOR) and the remaining Dutchman Douwe de Vries. Canadian home favorites are Denny Morrison and Ted-Jan Bloemen. For the first time since 1991 there is no US skater among the top-24 in the world, and the last World Allround Championships without a male US skater, was in 1964.

Track records Men: 34.05, 1:42.01, 6:03.32 and 12:51.60. Points: 145.742.

Championships records Men: 35.08, 1:42.68, 6:09.74 and 12.49.88. Points: 145.742.

Track records Ladies: 36.74, 1:51.85, 3:53.34 and 6:48.97. Points: 154.580.

These are also the Ladies' Championships records, with the exception of the 500m, which is 37.51.

The schedule of the ISU World Allround Speed Skating Championships 2015 is as follows:

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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

Saturday March 7, 2015: 500m Ladies, 500m Men, 3000m Ladies, 5000m Men
Sunday March 8, 2015: 1500m Ladies, 1500m Men, 5000m Ladies, 10000m Men

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For further information please contact

ISU Media Coordinator
Selina Vanier
Phone: +41 21 612 66 66
Email: vanier@isu.ch