

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: AVENUE JUSTE-OLIVIER 17 CH 1006 LAUSANNE SWITZERLAND
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 77 E-MAIL: media@isu.ch

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For immediate release

ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2015/16 – Inzell (GER) Day 1

After a silver medal and a fourth place in Salt Lake City Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) hit back at the Ladies' 500m on Friday. She took gold in a new track record of 37.33 at the Max-Aicher-Arena in Inzell.

Canadian Gilmore Junio and Alexandre St-Jean took advantage of Pavel Kulizhnikov's (RUS) absence on the first day of the third World Cup leg this season, taking gold and silver in the men's 500m.

Martina Sáblíková (CZE) grabbed her fifth consecutive 3000m World Cup win to strengthen her lead in the long distance World Cup and the Netherlands won the men's Team Pursuit.

Sovereign Sáblíková

Not only did Martina Sáblíková take her fifth consecutive 3000m World Cup win, she also collected her 25th 3000m World Cup gold in total. With 4:03.18 in the final pair she was the only skater to beat Marije Joling's (NED) 4:04.08 mark.

Joling had been in the hot seat for a while. The 28-year-old Dutchwoman had slightly ascending lap times with four 31 laps followed by three 32 laps in the third pair. One after another skater fell short of beating her, with Olga Graf (RUS) coming closest when she set 4:05.87 in the fifth pair. In the penultimate pair Irene Schouten (NED) and Ivania Blondin (CAN) ended up with 4:09.78 (10) and 4:09.48 (10) and Joling was close to winning her first individual World Cup gold.

Sáblíková started a little faster than Joling, but lost her advantage halfway the race. The Czech long distance specialist managed to keep her lap times even towards the end however. With 32.2 versus Joling's 32.9 she secured the win in the final lap. Joling had to settle for silver and Graf took the bronze.

Sáblíková sovereignly leads the 3000m World Cup standings with 300 points. Natalya Voronina (RUS), who finished fifth in Inzell, is second with 200 points and Schouten is third with 155 points.

Lee regains 500m throne

In absence of Hong Zhang (CHN), who had won the last three 500m World Cup races in a row, the shortest distance was a battle between Heather Richardson-Bergsma, Brittany Bowe (USA) and Sang-Hwa Lee. Richardson started in the penultimate pair against Austria's Vanessa Bittner. After an intense battle the American lady ended on top with 37.99, the first time below 38 seconds. Bittner clocked 38.08 (fifth), just behind Canada's Heather McLean who had set 38.01 before.

Lee had the fastest opener of the field when she set 10.29 in the final pair versus Bowe (10.4). The reigning Olympic Champion left her American pair-mate far behind and even managed to beat the track record (37.36), which Beixing Wang (CHN) had set in 2014 by 0.03. Bowe finished in 37.70 to take the silver medal and Richardson took home the bronze medal.

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With her victory Lee regained the 500m World Cup lead with 420 points. She overtook Zhang, who still has 380 points. Bowe is third with 360.

Canadian double

In absence of Kulizhnikov, who had fallen ill after his world record campaign in Calgary and Salt Lake City, the first 500m was anyone's game on the first day in Inzell. Gilmore Junio and Alexandre St-Jean took advantage. Junio grabbed his second career World Cup gold with 34.86.

The five skaters finished within 0.11 seconds. St-Jean took silver in 34.90 and three men applied for bronze in 34.97. Laurent Dubreuil almost secured an all-Canadian podium, but Artur Waś (POL) turned out to be 0.001 faster to join Junio and St-Jean for the ceremony. Hein Otterspeer (NED) also clocked 34.97, but he lacked 0.004 for a medal.

Kulizhnikov, who may decide to start in the 2nd 500m of the Inzell World Cup on Sunday, still leads the 500m World Cup with 400 points. William Dutton (CAN) is still second, despite a disappointing 18th place on Friday. Junio climbed to third place with 225 points, the same amount as Dubreuil, who is fourth because Junio took a win and Dubreuil did not.

Dutch revenge

The Netherlands were chasing revenge after their crash at the men's Team Pursuit in Calgary. Dutch coach Geert Kuiper decided to field the same line-up in Inzell, to hand Jan Blokhuijsen, Arjen Stroetinga and Douwe de Vries a chance to regain confidence.

The skaters did not disappoint their coach. In the first pair the Netherlands shattered Austria with a new track record in 3:41.27. Norway followed the Dutch example when they overtook Switzerland in the second Team Pursuit race. Sverre Lunde Pedersen, Håvard Bøkko and Sindre Henriksen finished in 3:44.88 to take silver. Poland's Jan Szymanski, Konrad Niedzwiedzki and Zbigniew Bródka defeated Italy to take the bronze in 3:46.17.

Canada, who had won the first World Cup Team Pursuit race on home ice in Calgary, did not start in Inzell. Ted-Jan Bloemen collided with Stefan Waples during the warm up and was taken off the track on a stretcher with a flesh wound in his left leg. The fresh 10,000m World Record holder went to hospital. "He will not be able to skate for a long time and he may be out for the season", his coach Bart Schouten said.

Bloemen's injury cost Canada the World Cup lead. With 100 points they are now equal with the Netherlands in 4/5 place. Korea, who were fourth in Inzell and second in Calgary, now lead the World Cup standings with 140 points. Poland are second with 130 points and Italy (5th in Inzell) are third with 120 points.

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For further information please contact

ISU Media Coordinator

Selina Vanier

Phone: +41 21 612 66 66

email: vanier@isu.ch

ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2015/16 – Inzell (GER) Day 1, medal winners

3000m Ladies

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	4:03.18
2	Marije Joling	NED	4:04.08
3	Olga Graf	RUS	4:05.87

500m Ladies

1	Sang-Hwa Lee	KOR	37.33 TR
2	Brittany Bowe	USA	37.70
3	Heather Richardson-Bergsma	USA	37.99

500m Men

1	Gilmore Junio	CAN	34.86
2	Alexandre St-Jean	CAN	34.90
3	Artur Waś	POL	34.97

Team Pursuit Men

1	Jan Blokhuijsen, Arjan Stroetinga, Douwe de Vries	NED	3:41.27
2	Sverre Lunde Pedersen, Håvard Bøkko, Sindre Henriksen	NOR	3:44.88
3	Jan Szymanski, Konrad Niedzwiedzki, Zbigniew Bródka	POL	3:46.17