

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Press release

Astana, December 2, 2016

ISU Speed Skating World Cup Astana Day 1

#WCSpeed

Peter Michael took a historic first New Zealand World Cup gold, when he won the Men's 5000m at the ISU Speed Skating World Cup in Astana on Friday. Martina Sáblíková almost routinely grabbed her 30th 3000m gold, while China dominated the Ladies' 500m.

Sáblíková makes it thirty

Collecting her her career 30th 3000m World Cup win, Sáblíková also broke her own 2011 track record in Astana with 4:02.90. The Czech strengthened her lead in the 3000m World Cup standings, being unbeaten in 2016/17 after wins in Harbin and Nagano.

Sáblíková beat Antoinette de Jong in the final pair. The Dutchwoman finished in 4:06.14 and ended up fifth. De Jong retained her second place in the World Cup standings, but Anna Yurakova came close. The Russian was the only skater in the ladies' 3000m to set a personal best, when she clocked 4:03.84 in the penultimate pair. Yurakova faced Marije Joling (NED), who started very fast, but could not maintain her pace after the 1000m split. Joling ended up skating above 33 lap times to finish 12th, while Yurakova managed one sub-31, three sub 32 and three sub 33 laps to take silver behind the indomitable Sáblíková.

Miho Takagi (JPN) grabbed bronze with 4:05.68 in the fourth pair. Ivanie Blondin (CAN) set faster split times than the Japanese leady in the fifth pair, but she paid heavily in the final lap and had to settle for fourth place in 4:05.94.

Sáblíková leads the World Cup standings with 300 points. De Jong follows with 190 points and Yurakova is third with 185 points.

China on top in Ladies' 500m

With World Cup leader Nao Kodaira (JPN) absent in Astana, China ruled the ladies' 500m. Two-time World Sprint Champion Jing Yu, who won bronze 500m medals at the Harbin and Nagano World Cups earlier this season, clocked 37.85 to beat compatriot Hong Zhang and Olympic 500m champion Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR).

Until Astana, Zhang's best 500m classification in the 2016/17 World Cup was sixth. In Kazakhstan she bounced back from her disappointing season start. Being a notorious slow starter, Zhang only set the nineteenth split time on the first straight (10.87). The Olympic 1000m Champion made up for that with the fastest full lap of the field in 27.0, to finish in 37.87.

Despite not having won a single 500m World Cup race this season yet, Sang-Hwa Lee could have surpassed Kodaira in the World Cup standings, if she would have won in Astana. The Korean clocked 10.42 in the first 100m, but was not able to match Zhang's 27.0 or Yu's 27.3 full lap in the final pair and had to settle for bronze.

Absent Kodaira retained her 500m World Cup lead with 300 points. Lee is second with 275 points and Yu third with 272.

Official Series Hashtag: #WCSpeed

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Michael takes first New Zealand World Cup gold

Peter Michael became the first ever skater from New Zealand to grab a gold World Cup medal. He finished the Men's 5000m in 6:21.58, ahead of German Patrick Beckert and Canadian Ted-Jan Bloemen. Jan Blokhuijsen (NED) set the fastest time of the day with 6:19.31 in the B Division.

Michael started in the final pair versus Alexis Contin (FRA), who couldn't keep up from the very beginning. The 27-year-old former Inline Skating World Champion likes to race an opponent, but he proved to be able to push himself hard as well. Michael's split times were well under Beckert's throughout the race, but the German managed to pull his sub-31 laps through to the finish line, whereas Michael struggled with 31.4 in the penultimate lap. The New Zealander managed to bounce back with 30.5 to secure victory on the finish line.

Bloemen started with four sub-30 laps in the penultimate pair and seemed on his way to crush Beckert's 6:22.09, but the Canadian wasn't able to maintain his pace. Finishing with 31.1 and 31.2 laps, he had to settle for bronze in 6:22.82.

The top five in the World Cup classification was absent in Astana and Michael took advantage to push Sven Kramer to second place. Both the New Zealander and the Dutchman collected 200 points so far, but Michael has one more race under his belt. Jorrit Bergsma, who also was absent in Astana, is third with 160 points.

For full results of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series 2016/17 please refer to <http://www.isuresults.eu/> and <http://www.isu.org/en/speed-skating/series/isu-world-cup-speed-skating>

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series continues tomorrow with the Men's 500m, the Ladies' and Men's 1000m and the Ladies' and Men's Team Pursuit.

About ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2016/17 Series

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating circuit consists of six events across Asia and Europe. The series starts in Harbin (CHN) on November 11-13 and moves to Nagano (JPN) on November 18-20. In December the Series goes to Europe stopping in Astana (KAZ) on December 2-4 and to Heerenveen (NED) on December 9-11. On January 27-19 2017 the fifth leg of the event will be in Berlin (GER) and the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final will take place in Chelyabinsk (RUS) on March 10-12. The full ISU Calendar of Events is available here:

<http://www.isu.org/en/news-and-events/calendar-of-events>

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series is available as a live stream on the ISU Skating Channel. Please note that geoblocking may be required in certain territories

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

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ISU World Cup Speed Skating Astana (KAZ) medalists

3000m Ladies

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	4:02.90 TR
2	Anna Yurakova	RUS	4:03.84 PB
3	Miho Takagi	JPN	4:05.68

500m Ladies

1	Jing Yu	CHN	37.85
2	Hong Zhang	CHN	37.87
3	Sang-Hwa Lee	KOR	37.95

5000m Men

1	Peter Michael	NZL	6:21.58
2	Patrick Beckert	GER	6:22.09
3	Ted-Jan Bloemen	CAN	6:22.82