

Press release

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Koreans fail to dominate on home ice as Hamelin (CAN) and Christie (GBR) return to limelight

Audi ISU World Cup Short Track – Seoul: Day 1

In near freezing temperatures, what was expected to be a Korean avalanche did not materialise.

On day one at the final stop of the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track in Seoul, the powerhouse country claimed just one gold out of a possible four.

[Choi Min Jeong](#) won the ladies 1500m to finish as the world cup overall 1500m winner, although her teammates did claim three more silver.

The gold in the other three events were split among Canada, China and Great Britain.

Korea might not have dominated the home leg of the series, but Choi has been near unbeatable in the 1500m this season. She won three races out of a possible four. At the only stop in Shanghai, she took silver.

[Kim Boutin](#) (CAN) led for the majority of the race here but eventually succumbed to Choi and silver medallist [Shim Suk Hee](#) (KOR).

“In the last lap, the Koreans always pass me but I feel this race was a good learning experience,” she said. “It was a really hard race.”

Boutin, who will be 23 next month and is fast becoming the star of this Canada squad confirmed her strategy was to skate from the front.

“I’m really comfortable in front so maybe I’m going to try to win the last lap,” she said.

[Hwang Dae Heon](#), the next big thing in Korean short track speed skating, finished atop the 1500m classification, but not before a last-gasp defeat in the final here at the hands of Canadian veteran [Charles Hamelin](#).

The 33-year-old Hamelin, who had previously taken one individual bronze in Dordrecht, said: “It was my best racing so far this season. I wanted to prove to myself I still can be on the podium in the world cup and I think today was a perfect day for me.”

The three-time Olympic gold medallist was overjoyed, punching the air after the finish line and rushing over to kiss partner [Marianne St-Gelais](#) (CAN).

“I felt really, really good. I never felt like that for the whole year,” he added.

After several laps of constant overtaking, the race settled into a fight between Hamelin and Hwang. The latter looked to be on track for his seventh individual medal this world cup series until Hamelin sprang into action.

“I was waiting and waiting for the perfect moment and he opened the door a little bit in the second-last corner and I took advantage. I knew I had to attack the last corner to have a good finish so I could be first at the line... pretty proud of myself,” Hamelin said.

He is already looking ahead to the Olympic Games.

“It’s really good to have such results in Korea because we’ll be back in two months for the Olympics so just to have some good vibes here is really good for me.”

[J R Celski](#) of the USA scooped up bronze after Lim Hyo Jun (KOR) and [Thibaut Fauconnet](#) (FRA) were penalised in front of him.

Struggling world champion [Elise Christie](#) (GBR) picked her moment to return to the top of the podium, controlling the ladies 500m final to fend off Choi and bronze medallist [Martina Valcepina](#) (ITA), who was aggressive at the start.

This was her first gold medal in an injury-hampered world cup series.

“It’s nice to know when I’m not at my best I can still win, especially in the 500 [metres] because it’s my favourite. It was a really nice boost after everything I’ve had to fight with this season,” she said.

The Briton went eight weeks without training properly and last week in Shanghai was the first time she had skated without pain.

She is optimistic about the Olympic Games despite the marred run-up.

"I feel like I'm only 50 per cent right now and I won, and I have two, three months to turn that around now.

"I'm not injured now so all I have to do is go home and train hard, get my fitness back. If I can do this now then what can I do when I'm at my full fitness?"

She added: "It's horrible racing now because I feel not like myself."

Christie went straight to boyfriend [Liu Shaolin Sandor](#) (HUN) after winning but he was cautious as always.

"He told me to stop rushing so much. He's always finding something to tell me off," she said.

"He knows everything I've been through and he knew how much today meant to me so it's nice to share that with him and my coach."

St-Gelais' penalty in the final did not prevent her from leapfrogging [Arianna Fontana](#) – also penalised, in the B final – to become the 500m overall winner.

The men's 500m was a complete Korean shutout.

[Wu Dajing](#) (CHN) held off Hungary's Liu brothers for victory, after holding off two Koreans in Shanghai for the same gold.

The sprint king also cemented his status, overtaking [Samuel Girard](#) (CAN) – who did not advance from the quarterfinals – to claim the 500m overall crown.

Wu appears to be peaking at the right time and sounded a warning ahead of February's PyeongChang Olympics

"I hope to get more gold medals to raise my confidence," the 23-year-old said.

Wu led from start to finish in a fast final.

It was not lost on the four finalists that there were two Chinese and two Hungarians in it, or that the podium was a repeat of last week's 1000m race.

Silver medallist Shaolin Sandor, who, like his brother [Shaoang](#), is half-Chinese, quipped: "That's what we said after the semifinals. Two Hungarians, two Chinese. We made little jokes about it. We finished the same result as in Shanghai – it was really funny I think."

The 2017/18 world cup concludes on Sunday with the 1000m and relay finals.

The confirmed list of quota places for the PyeongChang Olympics will be announced by the ISU.

About Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating 2017/18 Series and qualification system for PyeongChang 2018

The Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating consists of four events during the Olympic season; Budapest (September 28-October 1), Dordrecht (October 5-8), Shanghai (November 9-12) and Seoul (November 16-19). The 2017/18 Series is also the Olympic Qualifying events for the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games.

The competitions have a single distance character and are held in separate sessions. The first two days of the event are dedicated to all Qualifying Rounds. On the third and fourth days the last Qualifying Rounds take place before the World Cup session. A and B Finals are held for each distance 500m, 1000m and 1500m. Skaters qualify for A and B Finals only through the Semi-Finals. Men and Ladies also compete in the Team Relay races, 3000m for Ladies and 5000m for Men. Each team consists of four competing Skaters. Skaters gain World Cup points from each distance they compete in during the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating series. The Skater with the most World Cup points at the end of the season wins the distance World Cup.

A total of 110 Olympic spaces are up for grabs during the four Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating events. As the host country, the Republic of Korea automatically qualifies five Ladies and five Men. However, all other ISU Members must compete in the Audi ISU World Cup series in order to qualify up to five Ladies and five Men (quota including a qualified Relay Team), or up to three Ladies and three Men (quota excluding a qualified Relay Team).

Quota places per gender are earned based on the results achieved by the ISU Members competing at the four Audi ISU World Cup Events. Skaters ranked within the top 32 (top eight for the Team Relay) in the World Cup classification of the individual distances will qualify for PyeongChang 2018. If an ISU Member has more than 3 Skaters ranked in the top 32 or decides not to use a spot, skaters on the waiting list will qualify (e.g. athlete ranked 33 in a distance World Cup Classification will take the next available spot).