

November 23, 2018

Obihiro, Japan

First outdoor World Cup in ten years

Will the Japanese Ladies and the Russian Men be able to bring their season-opening form from the indoor rink at Obihiro to the Tomakomai Highland Sports Center this weekend? The coast city, situated 200 kilometre west from Obihiro on the Japanese Hokkaido island, hosts the first outdoor ISU World Cup Speed Skating event since German Inzell in 2008.

Tomakomai features the exact same program as Obihiro, starting with the Team Pursuit events on Friday. The Japanese Ladies hope to extend their winning streak to nine World Cup golds after an immaculate performance by [Ayano Sato](#) and the Takagi-sisters [Miho](#) and [Nana](#) last week. In the Men's Team Pursuit, the season started with a surprise win of the Russian Men, after having come only tenth in last season's ranking. Olympic Champions Norway came third. [Håvard Bøkko](#), [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) and [Simen Spieler Nilsen](#) will be looking for revenge in Tomakomai.

Empress Kodaira

After the Team Pursuit, it's time for the fastest Men and Ladies on ice in the first 500m of the Tomakomai weekend. [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) led Japan's medal haul in Obihiro, winning both Ladies' 500m races and taking a bronze medal in the 1000m. She's aiming for her 19th 500m World Cup win and her 22nd World Cup win in total. The only one who came close to the Japanese Empress of the short distance in Obihiro, was [Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT), who finished second twice. The Austrian was only 0.12 seconds behind Kodaira in last week's first run and she gained confidence winning the first 1000m of the season.

The Men's 500m is more than a two horse race. [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) showed excellent form last week, winning the second 500m race and crushing the opposition in the 1000m, but Olympic Champion [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) won the season opening 500m race edging out Kulizhnikov by 0.04 seconds. Japan's [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) was only 0.13 behind in that race, while his compatriot [Ryohei Haga](#) was just 0.09 seconds behind Kulizhnikov to take silver in the second Obihiro 500m race.

Exciting 1500m and Mass Start races

Saturday's 1500m races look promising again. [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) leads the Ladies' ranking after she kept home favorite [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) and Olympic Champion [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) at bay in Obihiro. Takagi came second, Russian [Yekaterina Shikhova](#) (RUS) was third and Wüst finished just off the podium, at only 0.72 seconds from the winner. There was a big gap between the first four and number five [Lotte van Beek](#) (NED) who finished 1.87 adrift.

In the Men's 1500m [Denis Yuskov](#) (RUS) gave a masterclass in pacing. The world record holder was the only one to skate a sub 28-second final lap to leave Olympic Champion [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED) 0.26 seconds behind. [Patrick Roest](#) (NED) claimed bronze at 0.81 seconds from Yuskov.

On Saturday the crowd will also be treated to the second 500m races and the always exhilarating Mass Start finals. In Obihiro the Ladies race ended up with [Nana Takagi](#) (JPN) on top, accompanied by [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) and [Bo-Reum Kim](#) (KOR, who swapped their third and second places from the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Games, where Kim had taken silver and

Schouten bronze. Schouten will be absent in Tomakomai. The Dutchwoman returned home to compete in marathon races in the Netherlands.

The Men's Olympic Champion [Seung-hoon Lee](#) (KOR) also skates marathon races in the Netherlands and in his absence [Andrea Giovannini](#) (ITA) took his second Mass Start World Cup win in Obihiro last week. He beat Simon Schouten (NED) and [Cheon-Ho Um](#) (KOR) in the sprint. Together with sister Irene, Simon Schouten travelled back home to skate marathon races.

Sunday spectacle in short and long distances

On Sunday the sprinters will take on the 1000m, after having tested themselves and each other in the 500m races on Friday and Saturday, and they will conclude the event with the Team Sprint event, but the main event on Sunday will be the Ladies' 3000m and the Men's 5000m. This season might produce the definitive changing of the guard in the endurance events. In Obihiro 22-year-old Esmee Visser, last year's surprise 5000m Olympic Champion, won the 3000m to take her first career World Cup gold ahead of [Natalya Voronina](#) (RUS) and [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE).

In the Men's 5000m last year's World Allround Champion [Patrick Roest](#) (NED) conquered the highest podium spot. His team-mate and Olympic 5000m Champion [Sven Kramer](#) (NED) decided to pull out before the race due to a back injury. He will also be absent in Tomakomai. Russia's 32-year-old veteran [Aleksandr Rumyantsev](#) (RUS) took silver and another Dutch youngster, 21-year-old Marcel Bosker, edged out [Patrick Beckert](#) (GER) for bronze in 6:18.12.

For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series please visit: isu.org/speed-skating. Results are [here](#) and you can follow the discussion on social media by using #WCSpeedSkating and #SpeedSkating.

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series will be available on in some countries on [the ISU Skating Channel](#).

About ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating is a Series of international Speed Skating competitions which takes place annually. The Series started in 1984 and usually consists of six or seven Events including the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final. Skaters can earn points at each competition, and the Skater who has the most points on a given distance at the end of the Series is the World Cup winner of that distance. The World Cup Competitions held from November to December serve as qualifying events for entry quotas at the ISU European, World Single Distances, World Sprint and World Allround Speed Skating Championships. A number of World Cup titles are awarded every season; For Men: 500m, 1000m, 1500m, combined 5000m / 10,000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For Ladies 500m, 1000m, 1500m, the combined 3000m / 5000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For further information please visit isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating.