

December 12, 2018

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

## **Kramer question mark in Heerenveen**

The fourth leg of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating series 2018/2019 in Heerenveen is the last qualifying event for the major Championships in January and February. After some of speed skating's superstars decided to skip last week's World Cup races in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Poland, this weekend's competition will feature the strongest field possible. Nao Kodaira will be back, as well as Kjeld Nuis (NED). Sven Kramer (NED) is a question mark however. The Olympic 5000m Champion is struggling with a back injury.

### **Kodaira back for battle with Herzog**

Olympic 500m Champion [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) won the first four 500m races of the current World Cup season, but in her absence [Vanesse Herzog](#) (AUT) took over the lead in the World Cup ranking in the shortest distance last weekend. The European 500m Champion from Austria came second in all of the races Kodaira won and lived up to those results when she took gold twice in Tomaszów Mazowiecki. Herzog said she will have to improve her first 100m to challenge the Japanese sprint empress in the 500m.

### **Takagi major force in 1000m and 1500m**

The ladies' 1000m, which is skated on Sunday, is more than a two-horse race. Herzog and Kodaira both won a World Cup race already, but [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) leads the ranking after taking gold in Poland last week. [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN), who already took silver twice this season, is another force to reckon with. The top three in the World Cup ranking are only 11 points apart.

Takagi took over the lead in the 1500m World Cup with her first individual World Cup gold of the season in Tomaszów Mazowiecki last week. [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) and Brittany Bowe won the other two 1500m gold medals of the season. They are second and third in the ranking.

### **Visser back on top**

Esme Visser (NED) bounced back from a disappointing outdoor performance in the 3000m in Tomakomai, Japan, winning the only 5000m race of the long distance World Cup in Tomaszów Mazowiecki last week. On indoor rinks the Dutch Olympic 5000m champion seems to be unassailable in the ladies' endurance events, although [Isabelle Weidemann](#) (CAN) conceded only one second to Visser in Poland last week. The Canadian won her first World Cup gold in the Tomakomai 3000m and is second in the long distance World Cup.

### **Kulizhnikov in form**

In the men's World Cup [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) countered the Japanese surprise assault in the 500m at the beginning of the season. [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) won both 500m races in Tomakomai to seize the lead in the World Cup, while [Ryohei Haga](#) (JPN) and [Yuma Murakami](#) (JPN) are high up in the ranking too. World record holder Kulizhnikov won two 500m races and the 1000m in Tomaszów Mazowiecki last week to climb to second place in the ranking and Olympic Champion [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) is third after having collected one gold and two bronze medals already this season.

Kulizhnikov's compatriot [Denis Yuskov](#) (RUS) ruled the 1500m in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, but Dutchmen [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED) and [Thomas Krol](#) (NED) were absent. The Russian skipped the Tomakomai World Cup himself. [Seitaro Ichinohe](#) (JPN), who did not win a race yet, therefore

managed to clinch the World Cup lead. In Heerenveen everyone will be present for a top battle in the Race of the Kings.

### **Question mark Kramer**

[Aleksandr Rumyantsev](#) (RUS) leads the men's long distance World Cup after two silver medals and a seventh place. [Marcel Bosker](#) (NED) surprisingly won the men's 10,000m in Poland last week, but World Allround Champion [Patrick Roest](#) (NED) was absent and [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) skated faster in the B Group. Both Bergsma and Roest are looking for a podium spot in Heerenveen, while the home crowd hopes to see [Sven Kramer](#) (NED) on the ice despite his back injury.

### **Program**

The Heerenveen World Cup starts with the Mass Start Semi-Finales on Friday. Saturday features the Ladies' and Men's 500m, 1500m and Mass Start Final, and Sunday features the Ladies' and Men's 1000m, the Ladies' 3000m and the Men's 5000m.

For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series please visit: [isu.org/speed-skating](http://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 the 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](http://isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating).