

January 10, 2019

Collalbo, Italy

## **Idyllic Collalbo turns into merciless battleground**

With its idyllic mountain setting, the outdoor Ritten Arena in Collalbo is the favorite training rink of many international Speed Skaters, but this weekend the relaxed training paradise will be a merciless battleground for the European Allround and Sprint titles.

Sven Kramer (NED) and Ireen Wüst (NED) will defend their 2017 Allround titles. Kai Verbij (NED) hopes to retain his 2017 Sprint title and the ladies' sprint crown is vacant after Karolína Erbanová (CZE) decided to quit Speed Skating last August.

### **Tenth title long shot for Kramer**

Collalbo already hosted the ISU European Speed Skating Championships in 2007 and 2011. In 2007, [Sven Kramer](#) (NED) won the first of his record nine European Allround titles as a rookie at the Ritten Arena. Four years later [Ivan Skobrev](#) (RUS) took the title in absence of the injured Kramer, who will be aiming at a tenth European title this year.

The Dutch Allround king grabbed his ninth European title with a sovereign performance two years ago on home soil in Heerenveen, but he lost the aura of invincibility at the World Allround Championships in Amsterdam last year. Kramer's nine year younger team-mate [Patrick Roest](#) (NED) was crowned World Champion after a dramatic [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) (NOR) crash in the 10,000m. The Norwegian was on title course before he slipped away in the final distance to miss his chance at the title. Kramer even missed to podium and finished fourth.

This season Kramer has been struggling with a back injury, but he still comes fifth on the final Qualification Ranking List ([SQRL](#)) for the Allround category, in which the best 1500m and 5000m results of the first four World Cups are combined. The Dutchman has set sights on three events for the remainder of the season:

"It's not realistic to think I can skate all events this season," he said after the ISU World Cup Speed Skating in Heerenveen. "I love Allround tournaments so I'll do Collalbo, after that the World Single Distance Championships in Inzell and the World Allround Championships in Calgary."

Patrick Roest leads the Qualification Ranking List and heads to Collalbo as the main favorite. Sverre Lunde Pedersen will try to make up for last year's crash at the ISU World Allround Speed Skating Championships. Russia has two strong contenders with [Sergey Trofimov](#) (RUS), who is second on the SQRL and [Danila Semerikov](#) (RUS), who surprisingly beat Roest and Kramer with a track record in the 5000m at the World Cup in Heerenveen last December.

### **De Jong and Lollobrigida challenge veterans**

[Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE) and [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) both won five of the last eleven European Allround titles, with [Claudia Pechstein](#) (GER) taking the odd one out in 2009. Sáblíková took the title in 2007 and 2011, when the Championships were held in Collalbo too. Like Kramer, the Czech veteran has not been her dominant self the past two seasons however. She hasn't won a World Cup race yet this season and she's ranked seventh on the [SQRL](#).

Wüst, who took the European Allround title in Heerenveen in 2017, is ranked second on that list, behind compatriot and former team mate [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED), who came third behind Sábliková and Wüst in the 2016 and 2017 Championships. De Jong is the only lady who managed to skate the 3000m under 4:00 minutes so far this season.

[Francesca Lollobrigida](#) (ITA) could also be aiming at a podium spot. The Italian multiple inline Skating World Champion is a specialist in the Mass Start events, but she has been working hard to develop in the classical distances too and she's third on the SQRL, just ahead of Russian long distance specialist [Natalya Voronina](#) (RUS), who has already finished fifth at the 2016 European Allround Championships.

### **Verbij hopes to retain title**

The European Sprint Championships don't have the history of the Allround counterpart, but the inaugural 2017 tournament added much excitement to the Championships weekend. [Kai Verbij](#) (NED) took the first Men's title, beating compatriot [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED) and German [Nico Ihle](#). The Dutchman will face similar competition in Collalbo.

[Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) leads the Sprint qualification ranking ([SQRL](#)), which is based on the best 500m and 1000m times in the four World Cups so far, but the Russian 500m world record holder is not on the start list. Kulizhnikov, who dominated the Men's sprint this season so far, did not start in 2017 either. Olympic 500m Champion [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) is second on that list and seems to be Verbij's main rival.

### **No Japanese competition for Herzog**

In the Ladies Sprint competition [Vanesse Herzog](#) (AUT) should be on course for a first European Sprint title. The Austrian only had to bow her head to Olympic champion [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) this season, and in Collalbo Herzog will be relieved of her Japanese rival.

Herzog leads the Ladies' SQRL with [Olga Fatkulina](#) (RUS) in second place. The Russian already took bronze at the 2017 European Sprint Championships. Youngsters Jutta leerdam (NED) and [Daria Kachanova](#) (RUS) are third and fourth on the SQRL.

The full list of entries and further information regarding the [ISU European Speed Skating Championships](#) and additional details can be found on: [isu.org/speed-skating](http://isu.org/speed-skating).

Results are available [here](#) and you can follow the discussion on social media by using #EuroSpeed and #SpeedSkating.

The ISU European Speed Skating Championships will be available in some countries on the [ISU Skating Channel](#).

### **About ISU European Speed Skating Championships**

The ISU European Speed Skating Championships combines a Sprint and Allround format. Unlike the World Cup, in which Skaters race for single distance titles, at the European Sprint and Allround Championships performances in four distances add up to the final ranking. In both formats, times are calculated based on the 500m, for example the 1500m time will be divided by 3. In the Allround competition the Men will skate 500m, 5000m, 1500m and 10,000m. The Ladies Allround competition features 500m, 3000m, 1500m, 5000m races. In the Sprint competition both the Men and the Ladies race the 500m and the 1000m twice.