

February 6, 2019

Inzell, Germany

Pinnacle of the season in Inzell

The ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships is the apogee of the speed skating season. "Everything else is just a cherry on top of the cake," said [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) in Hamar last week. At the last iteration of the event in Gangneung, Korea in 2017, the Dutch men won all the distances except the Mass Start. [Heather Bergsma](#) (USA) was queen of the ladies' tournament with two gold medals and one bronze. Inzell will be up for something completely different. After becoming a mother last year, Bergsma will not skate and by the look of the current World Cup rankings, the Dutch men will have a hard time repeating their 2017 success.

Good memories for Bøkkø, Wüst and Sáblíková

The World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships are held annually, with the exception of Olympic years. The Netherlands lead the all-time medal ranking with 77 gold medals in total (21 for the ladies and 56 for the men). Germany comes second with 36 titles (in the ladies' competition only) and Canada is third with 22 victories (15 for the ladies and 7 for the men).

Since the inaugural World Single Distances Championships in 1996, Inzell hosted the event three times. In 2005 it was held on the outdoor rink of the Ludwig Schwabl stadion and in 2011 it was the first international event at the indoor Max Aicher Arena. Three of the 2011 champions return to Inzell this year: [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED), [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE) and [Håvard Bøkkø](#) (NOR).

Yuskov 1500m favorite

Bøkkø won the 1500m in 2011 and has not won much internationally since. "I don't remember my last time on the podium", he said after collecting 1500m silver behind [Denis Yuskov](#) (RUS) at the ISU World Cup Speed Skating event in Hamar last week. Despite that result, Bøkkø does not think he's a medal contender in the race of the kings at the Max Aicher Arena. After his race in Hamar he said: "Some of the fastest 1500m skaters, [Kjeld] [Nuis](#), [Thomas] [Krol](#) and [Patrick] [Roest](#) (NED) were not here, and I was 1.3 seconds slower than [Denis] [Yuskov](#) (RUS), who's been very strong over the past couple of years. He's the big favorite for the 1500m World title."

Bøkkø has set his sights on another medal in Inzell. He said: "Both me and [Sindre Hendriksen](#) (NOR) will focus on the Team Pursuit. It's all about following Sverre [[Lunde Pedersen](#)]. He's a machine in the Team Pursuit." With Pedersen as locomotive and Bøkkø as one of the support engines, the Norwegian men won the Olympic Team Pursuit gold in PyeongChang last year.

Roest and Kramer

The Dutch men hope to conquer a sixth consecutive World title in the Team Pursuit after last year's disappointing Olympic bronze, but they'll have to skate without World Allround Champion [Patrick Roest](#) (NED), who wants to save energy for the individual events, competing in the 1500m, 5000m and 10,000m. His team-mate [Sven Kramer](#) (NED) will anchor the Dutch Team Pursuit men, but he'll also be a title contender in the individual 5000m. With 19 gold medals in the World Single Distances Championships and 22 medals in total, Kramer is the undisputed leader of the all-time medal table, leaving Shani Davis (USA), who won 8 titles and 15 medals in total, far behind in second place.

Pure luck

The men's short distances seem to be the most competitive of the tournament. [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) is favorite to win the 500m. The Russian world record holder had a good dress rehearsal with two gold medals at the Hamar World Cup last weekend, but the margins of error are small in the shortest distance. He said: "It comes down to pure luck next weekend. We'll see what happens."

European sprint champion [Kai Verbij](#) (NED), who won the 1000m at the Hamar World Cup, agreed: "This win doesn't tell you anything about next week's chances. The level is so high, everyone can win. It will be luck and the form of the day."

Ladies' new generation

In the ladies' competition Sábliková and Wüst are challenged by a new generation. The Dutch veteran won the 1500m and the 3000m in 2011. She also took the 3000m World title in 2017 and the Olympic 1500m title in 2018, but she'll face tough competition in both distances at the Max Aichler Arena. World Allround Champion [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) will be looking for revenge after missing out on an individual title at last year's Olympic Games, and fresh European Allround Champion [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) hopes to land a career first World Distance title too.

Sábliková has won the last nine 5000m World titles, but last year she had to settle for silver at the Olympic Games after struggling with a back injury in the run-up to the Games. Her back-problems are solved, but Olympic champion [Esmee Visser](#) (NED) will still be a tough nut to crack for the Czech veteran. In Hamar last weekend, Sábliková won her first World Cup race in almost two years. She took gold in the 3000m. Visser finished fourth and said: "I have not given it my all here, but the result is a bit disappointing. All-in-all it's a good final stimulation that sets me up well for next week."

[Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) also spoke of a good set-up for next week, after winning both the 1000m and the 1500m at the Hamar World Cup. Bowe hopes to succeed reigning World Champion Bergsma in both distances. Apart from Wüst, Takagi and De Jong in the 1500m, she'll have to deal with [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) and [Vanesse Herzog](#) (AUT) in the 1000m. Before however, that the Japanese Empress of the sprint and her Austrian challenger will start their chase for glory in Inzell in a 500m showdown.

Schedule

Competition in Inzell begins with the Team Sprint, the ladies' 3000m and the men's 5000m on Thursday. The Friday program consists of the 500m and the Team Pursuit for both genders, and on Saturday both genders will skate the 1000m, while the ladies also compete for the 5000m title and the men for the 10,000m title. The tournament concludes with the 1500m and the Mass Start for both genders on Sunday.

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

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

About ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 2019

The ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships consists of single distance races. The 2019 Championships take place in Inzell (GER). The Ladies will compete in the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 3000m and 5000m, Team Sprint, Team Pursuit and Mass start race over 16 laps. The Men's competitions are the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 5000m, 10000m, Team Sprint, Team Pursuit and Mass start race over 16 laps.