

March 6, 2019

Sofia, Bulgaria

Sofia ready for intriguing Short Track World Championships

The ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships – the biggest event on the sport’s calendar – take place at the Arena Armeec, Sofia, Bulgaria, from March 8 to 10. It promises to be a riveting conclusion to a season in which much dynamic new talent has emerged and the greatness of others been confirmed.

At the start of the ISU World Cup Short Track season many fans wondered whether the Republic of Korea’s grip on the sport’s top prizes would continue, following an Olympic Games in which challenges from the Netherlands, China, Canada, Poland, Hungary and Italy threatened to break their dominance.

The answer has been both yes and no. In the Men’s competition, Korea completed a clean sweep of winners in the individual World Cup classifications, while in the Ladies’ overall, Europeans reigned supreme.

[Suzanne Schulting](#) has been the standout skater from either gender. In a sport with as many variables as Short Track, she’s been about as dominant during 2018-19as it is possible to be.

The Dutch ace owned the 1000m, winning four of seven possible World Cup gold medals to claim the overall title by a mile. She also came out on top in the 1500m overall competition, after winning in both Calgary and Torino. It’ll be surprising if she doesn’t grab top slot in one distance – or both – in Sofia.

The 1500m feels like the race where Schulting is more vulnerable. Second in the overall World Cup standings was [Kim Ji Yoo](#) (KOR), who has hit form recently and won the 1500m in impressive style in Dresden. Third overall was [Choi Min Jeong](#) (KOR), the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic gold medalist over the distance, who showed her prowess golds in Salt Lake City and Almaty.

The 1000m, though, seems Schulting’s to lose. [Sofia Prosvirnova](#) of Russia is her closest rival, and the lightning young Muscovite took gold in the first 1000m in Dresden – but that was a final in which Schulting didn’t line up. [Alyson Charles](#) and [Kim Boutin](#), both of Canada, were victorious in the second 1000m at Salt Lake City and the 1000m in Torino respectively, but both those finals were missing the Netherlander, too.

As for the 500m, mid-season it seemed like nobody could dislodge [Natalia Maliszewska](#) as the fastest woman on ice. But the Pole clinched the overall title by only a handful of points thanks to a late charge by Italy’s [Martina Valcepina](#), who was remarkably fast in Dresden – then stormed both races on home ice in Torino.

This duo are likely to tussle for the sprint title in Bulgaria, with Kim Ji Yoo, [Lara van Ruijven](#) (NED) and [Petra Jaszapati](#) (HUN) waiting in the wings should they falter.

The Men’s Short Track season has been a game of two halves – over every distance. The 1500m featured a different winner across the first three meetings: [Kazuki Yoshinaga](#) (JPN) in Calgary, [Sjinkie Knegt](#) (NED) in Salt Lake City, then [Lim Hyo Jun](#) (KOR) in the first of two 1500m finals in Almaty . But then a new name emerged, almost from nowhere, to take gold in Almaty’s 1500m (2). [Kim Gun Woo](#) (KOR) added 1500m gold in Dresden and Torino, to also grab the overall title.

The 20-year-old suddenly seemed unbeatable – but he will not compete in Bulgaria. It will leave the likes of [Steven Dubois](#) (CAN), [Lee June Seo](#) (KOR), Lim and Yoshinaga hoping they can take the top prize.

The destination of the 1000m overall title also altered course mid-term, largely thanks to an injury to [Shaoang Liu](#) (HUN), who had been dominating the event until his mishap in Dresden. The door was left open for [Park Ji Won](#) (KOR) to capitalize and take the 1000m overall, for Korea teammate [Hong Kyung Hwan](#) to come second, and for [Hwang Dae Heon](#), also of Rep. Korea, to hit late form and win golds in Dresden and Torino.

Liu isn't fit to compete this weekend – although he is here to cheer on his brother [Shaolin](#) and teammates – but with Hwang and Park in imperious form, it's anyone's guess who will top the podium in Bulgaria.

Finally, the Men's 500m has also been an oddity: [Wu Dajing](#) (CHN) won the first three gold medals of the season but then didn't compete for the final three. Liu was also looking threatening, pre-injury; their absence allowed Lim Hyo Jun, [Samuel Girard](#) (CAN) and Hwang the chance to all win races in the second half of the season, and for Lim to secure the overall No.1 slot.

Wu is back this weekend – and will be favorite despite his recent absence from the World Cup circuit. It gives the 500m a wide-open feel, which should delight the Sofia crowd.

As for the Relays, Russia will be most pundits' tip to win the Ladies' title – while Korea might fancy the Men's title due to a Hungary team weakened by Liu's absence on the anchor leg. The finals of the Men's and Ladies' 500m and 1500m take place on the Saturday; Sunday features the finals of the Men's and Ladies' 1000m, the Ladies' 3000m Relay, Men's 5000m Relay, and the 3000m Super-Finals will determine who will be crowned overall winners.

This will be the third time that Sofia has hosted the ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships, having had that honor in 1999 and 2010. It is the first time at the Arena Armeec, however. The superb venue opened in 2011, and has since hosted the national volleyball team, ATP tennis and major concerts.

The [ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships](#) will be available in some countries as a live stream on the [ISU Skating Channel](#) or find out where to watch the Championships.

Follow the [final event of the season](#) with #OneHandDown on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

About the ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships

The ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships have both a single distance and allround format. A total of 10 World titles are up for grabs, Ladies and Men 500m, 1000m, 1500m, allround and Team Relay. The Allround classification is based on the results of each Skater in the three individual distances 500m, 1000m and 1500m. After the completion of the three distances the top eight-point scorers and ties on the eighth position will skate the 3000m Super Final. For the individual distances the final points 34, 21, 13, 8, 5, 3, 2 and 1 are awarded to Final A and Final B Skaters in descending order. In the case of a penalty or did not finish in the Final A, the Skater(s) concerned will be awarded points equal to the winner of the Final B. In the case of a penalty in the Final B, the Skater(s) concerned will not be awarded any points. No points are awarded to Skaters who receive a yellow or red card or did not start the race.