

January 8, 2020

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

Heerenveen ready to host fourteen title fights of ISU European Speed Skating Championships

After having been home to the ISU European Allround Speed Skating Championships fifteen times in history, Heerenveen (NED) will host the ISU European Speed Skating Championships in single distances format for the first time this weekend. A total of fourteen titles will be up for grabs in three days of exciting competition in the Dutch Speed Skating Mekka.

Since 2017 the yearly ISU European Speed Skating Championships have a different format in alternating years, with a combined Sprint and Allround tournament in the odd years and a Single Distance tournament in the even years. Heerenveen hosted the first combined Sprint and Allround Championships in 2017 and Kolomna (RUS) was home to the inaugural ISU European Single Distances Speed Skating Championships in 2018.

Russia was successful on home soil two years ago, winning five titles and a total of 14 medals across the men's and ladies' events. The Netherlands won a total of 13 medals, but topped the medal ranking because they seized six gold medals across the board.

The Heerenveen tournament is likely to see another clash between the two European Speed Skating power houses, but there are contenders from many other countries too. Austria's [Vanesse Herzog](#), [Martina Sáblíková](#) from the Czech Republic, Italy's [Francesca Lollobrigida](#), [Bart Swings](#) from Belgium and Norwegians [Håvard Lorentzen](#) and [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) are all names to look out for.

Race of the Kings

The tournament starts with the ladies' and men's 1500m on Friday night. Last time out in Kolomna [Lotte van Beek](#) (NED) ran away with gold in the ladies' mile, but she won't compete in Heerenveen. Being hampered by asthma during the first half of the season, she was not able to qualify at the Dutch national championships in December.

[Yekaterina Shikhova](#) (RUS) won silver in Kolomna and she will be one of the favorites in Heerenveen too. She'll face strong rivals in compatriot [Yevgenia Lalenkova](#) and the Dutch couple [Melissa Wijfje](#) and [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED). The latter leads the ISU World Cup Speed Skating ranking but was surprisingly beaten by Wijfje at the Dutch national championships, which were also held in Heerenveen.

[Denis Yuskov](#) (RUS) will defend his title in the men's Race of the Kings. Two years ago he beat [Thomas Krol](#) (NED) by a 0.67 margin, but the Dutchman raised his game since and seized the 1500m ISU World Speed Skating title in Inzell last year. Krol is currently second in the ISU World Cup Speed Skating ranking, behind [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED), who will not skate in Heerenveen. Nuis did not qualify because he skipped the Dutch national championships due to illness.

Friday's action will conclude with Russia defending their titles in the men's and ladies' Team Sprint events. Having won both the men's and ladies' Team Sprint World Cup, the Netherlands are favorite to win another two titles.

Sprinter's morning on Saturday

Vanessa Herzog has made a special mark in her calendar on Saturday early afternoon. The Austrian sprinter hopes to retain her ISU European Speed Skating 500m title, but she has not had a very prolific season yet. Russia's [Olga Fatkulina](#), [Angelina Golikova](#), and [Daria Kachanova](#) are all higher up in this season's ISU World Cup Speed Skating than Herzog.

Albeit without the strong Japanese, Canadian, Chinese and Korean sprinters, the men's 500m is still competitive and strong. Olympic champion [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) wants to make amends for a disappointing first half of the season and world record holder [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) hopes to have left his injury woes behind in 2020. [Dai Dai Ntab](#) (NED) showed excellent form when he won the Dutch national championships convincingly in 34.37, the third time ever skated in Thialf and only 0.06 above the track record.

From newbie to favorite

When the sprinters have left the rink on Saturday, it's time for stamina with the ladies 3000m and the men's 5000m. Two years ago then 21-year-old [Esmee Visser](#) (NED) took the title out of nowhere, as a prelude to her surprising Olympic 5000m title later that season. In Heerenveen Visser will be one of the favorites, together with five-time 3000m ISU World Speed Skating Champion [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE).

[Patrick Roest](#) (NED) is the man to watch in the 5000m. The Dutchman won all the 5000m races he skated this season, with track records at the ISU World Cups in Minsk and Tomaszów-Mazowiecki. [Danila Semerikov](#) (RUS), who leads this season's long distance ISU World Cup Speed Skating because Roest skipped the fourth event in Nagano, hopes to challenge Roest after having finished second behind the Dutchman twice this season.

Netherlands versus Russia on final day

The final day in Heerenveen brings excitement with the Team Pursuit, the 1000m and the Mass Start races.

Two years ago, the Netherlands won both the men's and ladies' Team Pursuit events, but Russia seems to have the best hand coming to Heerenveen. The Russian men won this season's Team Pursuit World Cup, while their lady compatriots came second behind Canada but before bronze medal winners the Netherlands.

With [Olga Fatkulina](#), [Angelina Golikova](#), and [Daria Kachanova](#) Russia is likely to grab silverware in the ladies' 1000m too. [Jutta Leerdam](#) (NED) hopes to be able to squeeze onto the podium as well.

The men's 1000m will be another showdown between the Netherlands and Russia with [Thomas Krol](#), [Dai Dai Ntab](#) and [Kai Verbij](#) for the home nation and [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#), [Viktor Mushtakov](#) and [Arefyev](#) for the visitors.

Unusual race patterns

The ladies' Mass Start could be exciting without the usual rivalry between [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) and [Ivanie Blondin](#) (CAN). In absence of her Canadian nemesis, Schouten may face a different race pattern and she surely has to look out for other challengers. Title defender [Francesca Lollobrigida](#) (ITA) will not give in easily.

The men's Mass Start races have not had usual patterns at all this season. Every ISU World Cup Speed Skating race unfolded differently, with American [Joey Mantia](#) turning out on top of the ranking after three ISU World Cup Speed Skating weekends. Belgium's [Bart Swings](#) (BEL) and Italy's [Andrea](#)

[Giovannini](#) (ITA) are second and third, but the Dutch will have a strong team, stayer [Jorrit Bergsma](#) and sprinter [Arjan Stroetinga](#) have complementary qualities and they know each other very well.

Where to Watch

Viewers will be able to watch either via their national broadcaster / channel and for countries where there are no broadcasters, the ISU will offer a live stream on the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#). You will find the full list in the [Where to Watch news here](#).

Subscribe to the [ISU Newsletter](#) to receive the latest information and the “[Where to Watch](#)” news. You can also subscribe to the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#) to receive notifications when live streams start or new videos are published.

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About the International Skating Union

The International Skating Union (ISU), founded in 1892, is the oldest governing international winter sport federation and the exclusive international sport federation recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) administering the sports of Figure Skating (Single & Pair Skating and Ice Dance), Synchronized Skating, Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating worldwide. The objectives of the ISU are to regulate, govern, promote and develop its sports on the basis of friendship and mutual understanding between athletes. Currently three ISU disciplines are included in the Olympic Winter Games program (Figure Skating, Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating). For further information please visit isu.org.