

February 13, 2020

Salt Lake City, USA

Men seek to break magic barriers on fastest ice of the planet

The pinnacle of the 2019/20 season will be held on the fastest ice of the world. It should be a recipe for world records, but there are no guarantees. Last season the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final at the Utah Olympic Oval in Salt Lake City (USA) featured three world records in the Men's competition. Multiple skaters could break the magic 1:06 barrier in the 1000m, after Nuis set the world record at 1.06,18 last year. Nuis and his team mate Thomas Krol (NED) are a bit more tentative about record speeds. "It all depends on the conditions," Krol said. The lower the air pressure, the better it is for speed.

5000m: rivals are closing in on Roest

The Men's tournament kicks-off with the 5000m on Thursday. [Patrick Roest](#) (NED) has won all three ISU World Cup Speed Skating races in this distance this season, but his rivals are closing in. [Ted-Jan Bloemen](#) (CAN) came only 0.2 seconds short of Roest at the fifth leg of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating last weekend. "Roest has dominated the 5000m this whole season, and now I'm so close. That gives me a lot of confidence for Salt Lake City," the Canadian said.

Another contender who found his form just in time for the biggest race of the season, is [Sven Kramer](#) (NED). The three time Olympic and eight-time ISU World Speed Skating Champion in the 5000m seems to have left his struggles with a back injury behind. At the Calgary ISU World Cup Speed Skating Kramer competed in the B Division. He skated at world record pace but quit after 3000m.

"Everybody [in the A Division] skates to win, but nobody wants to hurt himself badly less than a week before the World Championships," Kramer said. "I would not have done this if I had skated in the A Division," he said. "But skating in the non-televised B Division I felt that I could experiment a bit. "I wanted to skate the lap times I need for a world record next week, but I did not want to hurt myself. And if you want to do that, you have to quit in time. "I'm really happy with how I felt on the ice. This was the ideal way to get ready for next week."

Outsiders for the title are [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) (NOR) and [Denis Yuskov](#) (RUS). The Norwegian defends his title after last year's gold in Inzell, but he has struggled to overcome the ramifications of a bike accident in September for the first half of the season and is still searching for the top form.

Yuskov has turned back his attention to the 1500m and 5000m instead of the 1000m and the 1500m this season. The Russian took two 5000m bronze medals so far this season, but saved his legs skipping the 5000m in Calgary last week.

Bloemen holds the current world record with 6:01.86 (Salt Lake City, 2017).

Team Sprint: Netherlands defend title

After the 5000m, the Utah Olympic Oval prepares for fast action in the Team Sprint to conclude Thursday's racing. The Netherlands will defend their title, and they also won this season's ISU World Cup Speed Skating, but Russia have a superfast squad too, if they get their act together. The Russians crashed in the last ISU World Cup Speed Skating Team Sprint event this season in Nur-Sultan.

Canada still holds the Team Sprint World record with 1:17.31 (Calgary, 2017).

10000m: Bergsma hopes to bounce back

Friday's action starts with the Men's 10000m. [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) will defend his title, but the Dutchman has not been able to shine in his favorite distance so far this season. His compatriot [Patrick Roest](#) won the only ISU World Cup Speed Skating race in the 10000m this season, with Bergsma ending up in a disappointing fifth place.

Russia's [Aleksandr Rumyantsev](#) and [Danila Semerikov](#) hope to be able to challenge the Dutchmen as does [Ted-Jan Bloemen](#). The Canadian holds the world record with 12:36.30 (Salt Lake City, 2015).

500m: Russian troika aims at podium

Just like on Thursday Friday's endurance racing will be followed by the fast and he furious. [Ruslan Murashov](#) (RUS) will defend his 500m title, with team mates [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) and [Viktor Mushtakov](#) as main rivals. At the ISU World Cup Speed Skating in Calgary last week, Murashov, Kulizhnikov and Mushtkov swept the 500m podium in that order.

[Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) challenges the Russians together with Dutch [Dai Dai Ntab](#) and Canadians [Alex Boisvert-Lacroix](#) and [Laurent Dubreuil](#).

The Japanese ace is the only skater apart from world record holder Kulizhnikov to have skated under 34 seconds. At last year's ISU World Cup Speed Skating in Salt Lake City Shinhama clocked a world record time of 33.83, only to be beaten by Kulizhnikov in 33.61 a few minutes later.

1000m: Kulizhnikov man to beat

The Men's 1000m on Saturday will be one of the most interesting distances in the Men's tournament. [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) is the man to beat. After having won the ISU European Speed Skating title in Heerenveen in January, the Russian outskated Dutch silver [Thomas Krol](#) and [Kjeld Nuis](#) by more than half a second at the Calgary ISU World Cup Speed Skating last week.

"The gap [with Kulizhnikov] is smaller than at the European Championships [last January]," Krol said in an effort to emphasize the positive side. Nuis, who had a tough time recovering from illness in December, also took a positive note from the Calgary race. "We still have to go half a second faster, but I was not too impressed by his [Kulizhnikov's] time. I've skated 1:06.51 here three years ago, he's just 0.02 faster. On the other hand the big margin [between Kulizhnikov and himself] did impress me. Half a second is quite a lot, but I still have a week to work on that."

[Kai Verbij](#) (NED) will defend his 1000m title, but the reigning champion has not been able to really challenge Kulizhnikov, Krol and Nuis this season.

Nuis holds the world record with 1:06.18 (Salt Lake City, 2019).

Team Pursuit: Netherlands look to prolong streak

The second Men's event on Saturday is the Team Pursuit. The Netherlands have won ten out of the eleven previous ISU World Speed Skating titles in this event, with Team USA being the odd one out in 2011.

The Dutch are not as dominant as they seem in the Team Pursuit, however. Norway took the Olympic title in 2018, and Russia won this season's ISU World Cup Speed Skating, ahead of Japan and Canada. The Dutch, who skated in different line-ups in each event, ended up fifth, behind fourth ranked Italy.

1500m: Race of the Kings

Sunday starts with the Race of the Kings. The 1500m arguably is the hardest event of them all. Skaters have to find a fine balance between explosive speed and prolonged pace. At last season's ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final [Kjeld Nuis](#) and [Thomas Krol](#) both beat [Denis Yuskov](#)'s previous world record skating against each other in the same pair.

Nuis clocked 1:40.17 and Krol finished in 1:40.54. If the conditions are well, the Dutchman might be able to break the 1:40 barrier. They both decided to skip last week's ISU World Cup Speed Skating 1500m to save energy.

Yuskov did skate the 1500m in Calgary and won in 1:43.23, a time that doesn't worry the Dutchmen too much. ISU World Cup Speed Skating leader [Ning Zhongyan](#) (CHN) is another contender in the 1500m.

Mass Start: Mantia on home soil

The ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships concludes with the Mass Start on Sunday. Two-time world champion [Joey Mantia](#) (USA) will defend last year's title on home soil. The Florida native moved to Salt Lake City in pursuit of Speed Skating glory and had his fair share of success since.

As a former world champion in inline skating, Mantia never really got used to the time trial format in Long Track Speed Skating. The Mass Start therefore is Mantia's favorite event. He once called it 'the ace up my sleeve' in Speed Skating.

By its nature, the Mass Start is a more chaotic race, than the classic time-trial distances, which makes up for unpredictable races. It's a race for the skillful and the smart. Belgium's [Bart Swings](#) has proven to be able to win it at the ISU European Speed Skating Championships last January, but the Dutch couple [Jorrit Bergsma](#) and [Arjan Stroetinga](#) might be able to play out clever team tactics.

Mantia and Swings are on top of the current ISU World Cup Speed Skating ranking, with [Andrea Giovannini](#) (ITA) in third.

For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships please visit the [Championships Page](#) on ISU.org. Click [here for results](#).

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](#).

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About ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships

The ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships consists of single distance races. The 2020 Championships take place in Salt Lake City (USA). 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.