

February, 6 2022

Beijing, China

Ireen Wüst starts her final Olympic campaign in 1500m **Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games**

Speed Skating legend [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) will start her final Olympic campaign chasing a career third 1500m title and a sixth Olympic gold in total at the National Speed Skating Oval on February 7. Four years ago Wüst beat [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) by 0.20s to seize her second Olympic 1500m gold. Takagi will again be one of her main rivals at the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games. “There’s Takagi, ([Brittany Bowe](#) (USA), [Antoinette \(de Jong, NED\)](#)...”, Wüst named her rivals. “I’m in the mix too.”

Wüst relaxed and focused

Since rocketing herself into the Olympic theatre as a nineteen-year-old with a 3000m gold and a 1500m bronze, she went on collecting a total of eleven medals in four Olympics (5G, 5S, 1B) to become the most decorated skater in history. Being an Olympic legend does not make a difference in the way she approaches her fifth Games. “The Chinese people came up to me here in Beijing to take pictures, telling me I’m a legend and all. It’s a bit awkward because we’re not used to that in the Netherlands (worshipping top athletes). I just say thank you, but I’m focused on my racing.”

At age 35, a month before she hangs up her blades, Wüst does not want to look back on her career just yet. There are medals at stake in Beijing and the veteran Olympian relies on her experience and her famous ability to rise to the occasion: “If I skate a good one and keep my composure, I could be up for something really special. I’ll go for it and we’ll see. I’ve got nothing to lose and that’s chill, but when I’m at the starting line, I want to win of course. That’s what counts at the moment.”

Season-best for Takagi

Miho Takagi knows all about Wüst’s ability to give something extra at the Olympics. The Japanese star was the major title favorite in the 1500m heading into the PyeongChang 2018 Games, but had to settle for silver. With the season-best time (1.49,99) behind her name, and having won all three ISU World Cup races she skated this season, Takagi will be the women to beat again at the National Speed Skating Oval in Beijing. Although Takagi won all her 1500m ISU World Cup races this season, her compatriot [Ayano Sato](#) (JPN) leads the World Cup ranking, because she stood on the podium four times, while Takagi skipped the last race. Sato did not win that fourth race, because Brittany Bowe stepped up to seize the gold in Calgary (CAN) last December.

Flag bearer Bowe

Bowe has won about everything she can win in Speed Skating, but only came away with one bronze medal in the Team Pursuit in 2018. The 33-year-old showed true Olympic spirit when she gave up her own Olympic spot in the 500m to ISU World Cup leader [Erin Jackson](#) (USA), who failed to qualify herself after slipping away at the start of her race at the US Trials. Bowe’s sacrifice earned her the honor of being the USA flag bearer at the Beijing 2022 Opening Ceremony. Whereas Ireen Wüst kindly wove aside the offer to carry the Dutch flag in order to prepare for her 1500m race on day 3 of the Games, Bowe proudly accepted the chance to carry the USA flag into the Bird’s Nest during the Opening Ceremony.

De Jong grew to love the 1500m

Antoinette de Jong hopes to make amends after a disappointing eighth place in the 3000m on the opening day of the Beijing 2022 Games. She has come to appreciate the 1500m over the years, which

showed at the ISU European Speed Skating Championships in Heerenveen (NED) last January, when she ran away with the title. “Two years ago I would not have imagined that this (the 1500m) would ever be my main distance,” De Jong commented. “I always felt frustrated when I crossed the finish line, but now I’ve grown to love it. I think that the 1500m (more than the 3000m) is the distance in which it has to happen for me (in Beijing).”

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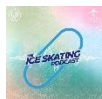
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What's next ?

Sunday, February 6, 2022
Men's 5000m, 16:30 (local time), National Speed Skating Oval

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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](#).