

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games **Speed Skating Ladies' 5,000m**

The Speed Skating competition continued today at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games in the Adler Arena with the Ladies' 5000m.

Martina Sáblíková (CZE) won the ladies' 5000m title and bettered her own track record set last year in this very venue. Ireen Wüst (NED) took her fourth Sochi 2014 Olympic medal with her third silver. Carien Kleibeuker (NED) almost 36 years old won bronze with a very small margin on the Russian Olga Graf.

Several skaters got close to or broke their personal best time. Shoko Fujimora (JPN) with 7:09.65 was close to her personal best. Anna Chernova (RUS) got a personal best of 7:08.71 and Mari Hemmer (NOR) skated her best time outside Calgary with 7:04.45. Stephanie Beckert, who won silver in Vancouver, had a better race than most of the year, but 7:07.79 brought her only 8th place in the end.

Following the halfway ice preparation break, Carien Kleibeuker (NED), who had won the Dutch Olympic trials, skated a race that started with some fluctuating lap times, but then she was able to steady at 32.8 laps all through the second half of the race. Finishing in a 32.6 lap, she set a personal best of 6:55.66.

Olga Graf (RUS) the 3000m bronze medalist started under Kleibeuker's schedule and continued with 32 laps in a very even race. But gradually Graf – who was never more than 1.11 second faster than Kleibeuker halfway the race, had trouble keeping the 32s and finished with a series of 33.0 laps, giving the advantage away in the final lap, finishing in 6:55.77, a Russian record time. In the next pair the defending champion Sáblíková skated with Wüst. Wüst went fast from the start. Sáblíková started off in mid 32 laps, a bit below Kleibeuker's schedule, but saw Wüst skate two and a half second away from her, with an average of 32.0 in the first three laps. Then slowly Sáblíková reeled her in, gaining a little each lap, and then after 3000m more, as Wüst's lap dropped to 33s, and close to the end even a 34.1. While Sáblíková continued to the end with her 32 laps, she set a new track record 6:51.54 which was good for the victory. Wüst needed to squeeze out a good last lap to stay ahead of Kleibeuker. With a final time of 6:54.28 which is a personal best enough to take the silver medal.

In the final pair, both Yvonne Nauta (NED) and Claudia Pechstein (GER) started well. Pechstein won a total of nine medals in her career, five in this distance every time she participated. After Wüst they had the fastest start, and were in second and third place for the first half of the race. But then their lap times went up. 33 laps, and though Nauta kept Pechstein behind her until the bell rang, in the final lap Nauta had nothing left, and Pechstein managed to dive under 7 with 6:58.39, rank 5, while Nauta finished 6th in 7:01.76.

Olga Graf, fourth: "I am happy that I skated a national record, but I don't like my fourth place. But this is life. I am thirty years old and these were my first Olympics, so I hope I can skate again in four years. All in all, I did well, I won the first bronze for Russia (in the 3000) and am 'a very hero'."

Carien Kleibeuker, bronze, (she competed in Turin then retired, got married had a child and decided to start skating again two years ago): "Because I love skating. I most enjoy to have a few strokes really spot-on in training. I don't skate to prove myself. Sometimes I felt guilty, like after the national championships in November I had to take a leave from my job without payment, and I kind of feared that I was not doing the best for my husband and child. I am so happy with this medal. My race was a good race, a personal best, but

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it wasn't the perfect Olympic race I dreamt of. Šabliková was really much better than me, and maybe I lost silver with my 33.4 lap in the start, but it is awesome to have a medal."

Ireen Wüst, silver, the first Dutch winter Olympian to win as many as four medals in one Olympic Games: "Every silver medal is different. The silver on this distance, like in the 1000m is silver with a little bit of gold, and my 1500m silver is just silver. I am happy with my race and a personal best. This is the only chance I had, to start fast. The 5000 is not my main distance, it is always a hard race for me. The competition was a really good one, tough, and to be on stage was my main goal. Martina is really built for the long distance, and for her it is harder to make speed. I respect her. If I consider my own talent, I'm now three seconds behind, in the past I could lose an advantage of 14 seconds in this distance. It was hard because after Carien skated I knew I had to skate a personal best, and it was a tough task to better my Calgary time."

Martina Šabliková, gold, first Czech lady to win three gold medals in any Games: "It was very hard, Ireen was a very good skater in very good form here in Sochi. I saw her first laps were not as fast as normal, so I thought she might skate an even race, and I pushed everything I had in the last five laps, then it was okay. I hoped after my successes in Vancouver there might come an icerink in Czech Republic, but nothing has been done and I am really sad for the situation. Maybe now, we have to wait a couple of months. The Dutch are so well-prepared and everyone was surprising, so I am happy to win this race."

For more information, full entry lists and results please see: www.sochi2014.com and www.isu.org

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