

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: CHEMIN DE PRIMEROSE 2 - CH 1007 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 7 E-MAIL: info@isu.ch

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Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games **Speed Skating Ladies' 500m**

Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) won gold in the ladies' 500m speed skating event in two Olympic record times; once in her second 500m race (37.28) and another in her total over two races (74.70). Not only did she improve Catriona LeMay-Doan's (CAN) record, wins the first medal for South Korea but is also the third female skater in Olympic history to win the title twice in a row. In second place came Olga Fatkulina (RUS) and the bronze medal went to Margot Boer (NED). Boer became the first Dutch woman in history to win a medal in the 500m, the only distance that was lacking in the Dutch medal collection.

In the first half of the first 500m, Angelina Golikova (RUS) started well, with a personal best time 38.82, after Olga Graf (RUS) the second personal best of these Games. Hong Zhang (CHN) came out in a new track record, 37.58. Zhang is known for doing good lap times (this time 26.79), but her openings have usually not very fast, and this time it was 10.79. Her reaction at the start was very fast today.

In the second half the higher ranked skaters took to the ice. Karolina Erbanová did well with 38.24, and the next ones below 38 were Jenny Wolf (GER) and Heather Richardson (USA) in pair 15 (out of 18). Richardson won her pair in 37.73; Wolf finished in 37.94. However Beixing Wang (CHN) opened in 10.39, Olga Fatkulina (RUS) in 10.46. Then followed a great lap (27.11) by Fatkulina who came past Wang in the last inner turn and the Russian was 0.01 faster than Zhang with 37.57, a minor improvement of the track record. 2010 Olympic silver medalist Wang finished in 37.82. Nao Kodaira (JPN) and Margot Boer (NED) in the penultimate pair both opened 10.4 and Boer took the race in 37.77, Kodaira finished in 37.88. In the final pair, Sang-Hwa Lee opened in 10.33, and with a 27.0 lap and took the victory in 37.42 which is a new track record. Brittany Bowe (USA) skated 38.81.

In the second run the skaters switched lane and the last five pairs saw the top-5 skaters. Margot Boer, who was fifth after the first race skated with Laurine van Riessen (NED) and saw how Van Riessen started with 10.37. With a good (27.1) lap after a 10.52 opener Boer finished in 37.71 and a total of 75.48 over two races. In the next race, Richardson lost more than the 0.04 she had on Boer and finished in 38.02, with a total of 75.75 finishing behind Boer. Then Hong Zhang who was ranked third after the first race opened in 10.77 but finished in 38.00, a total of 75.58, also behind Boer. She was paired with Jenny Wolf who this time had last inner and used it well to keep Zhang behind her. Wolf opened with the fastest time in 10.29, but did not have the power to continue equally strong. But with 37.73 she managed to climb up above Richardson, although Zhang stayed out of her reach. In the pre-last pair, Olga Fatkulina skated fast in 37.49, a total of 75.06. Her pair mate Kodaira also did better than the first race, now 37.73 and with 75.61 and moved up in the ranking. In the final pair Sang-Hwa Lee and Beixing Wang were paired. Lee started better and faster than anyone in 10.17. After such a strong opening, she finished in 37.28, breaking Catriona LeMay-Doan's Olympic record time of 37.30 and being 0.05 below the former total. Wang, after opening 10.40 had not a fast lap and dropped in the ranking to 7th with 37.86 and 75.68 her total.

Margot Boer, Bronze medalist said: "When I saw that Richardson finished behind me, I thought: "I'm not going to end up in fourth place again, am I!? I thought after my first race that if Ronald (Mulder NED who won bronze in the Men's 500m) could move up from behind to the podium, then I should also do that. It is really a surprise that I won a medal, it feels like I won. I had to wait long but I am really, really happy with it."

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Olga Fatkulina, Silver commented: "This medal gives a lot of self-confidence. This is not the end, silver medal is not the top, I am certain I can do even more, I do my utmost to do well. In my first race I had wanted to open 10.35 or 10.38 and when my coach showed the 4 I did not like it, I was a bit angry and used all the remaining forces into the last meters. My silver medal must be shared with the crowd, for 60% their support was the source. Many people inspired me, first of all my team, we have worked together for four years and I don't want to lose my team. After the Olympics we will not see each other so often, but all the time they shared my emotions and have faith in me."

Sang-Hwa Lee, Gold medalist told the press: "I like beating the Olympic record, but I did not know that I could do that. I wasn't sure that I could get a gold medal because my left knee was hurting and other competitors had pretty good results in the season. I was very surprised that there have been no medals for the Korean men. Of course I thought of everyone and this made me even more determined to get the gold medal for Korea."

Kevin Crocket, coach of Sang-Hwa Lee: "Her first race was not so good, her second race was more like how she can race. She needs a strong opponent, she is a racer. I said: You need to open well, and work on your last corner with maximum effort. She did what I said. She responds well to the pressure."

Hong Zhang, 4th place: "This was my best result over two races, I am satisfied with that. I worked hard on my start."

Nao Kodaira, 5th place: "I am happy, it was my best performance today, but I am also a little bit sad. It was close. But I am happy that my good friend Margot won a medal."

Beixing Wang, 7th place: "I am pretty sad, I can do better. In the last week I fell two or three times and have become a bit nervous in the turns. I also felt tired after the first 300m."

Heather Richardson, 8th place: "My first 500 was good, I have reached the podium only three times, and Sang-Hwa Lee wasn't there then."

Sang-Hwa Lee	KOR	37.42 (1) + 37.28 OR (1) = 74.70
Olga Fatkulina	RUS	37.57 TR (2) + 37.49 (2) = 75.06
Margot Boer	NED	37.77 (5) + 37.71 (3) = 75.48.

Additional fact: The first medal handed out in this event is the 200th medal for a lady in Olympic Winter Games speed skating history. While the silver medal won by Jan Smeekens (NED) the previous day was the 300th medal for a men in Olympic speed skating history and the third medal handed out was the 500th medal all in all.

Men's 1000m

Tomorrow, the men will compete in the 1000m. An exciting pair is pair 18 where two favorites race together, Shani Davis (USA), double winner in previous Olympics, and Koen Verweij (NED). In this race Michel Mulder (NED) who was crowned Men's 500m Olympic Champion yesterday will participate as well as world champion Denis Kuzin (KAZ). Tae-Bum Mo (KOR) will want revenge for his fourth place in the 500m and he is paired with another strong American, Brian Hansen (USA).

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

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For further information please contact:

Selina Vanier, ISU Media Coordinator

Telephone: +7 938 454 2132

email: vanier@isu.ch