

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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2014 Sochi Olympic Winter Games **Short Track Speed Skating Ladies 500 m**

The Short Track Speed Skating competition at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games continued on Thursday with the Ladies' 500 m final, the Men's 1000 m Heats and Men's 5000 m Relay semi-finals.

Ladies' 500 m

Jianrou Li (CHN) took the title followed by Arianna Fontana (ITA) who had won bronze in Vancouver in the same distance and in Turin for the Ladies' Relay. Seung-Hi Park (KOR) got the bronze medal.

The short track competition started with the quarter finals and eight strong skaters qualified for the semifinals including the Chinese trio Jianrou Li, Qihong and Kexin Fan who also skated the fastest. Seung-Hi Park (KOR), Arianna Fontana (ITA), Marianne St-Gelais (CAN), Jorien ter Mors (NED) and Christie Elise (GBR) also qualified.

During the semifinals the favorite Fan fell when the point of her blade stuck into the ice and was therefore not qualified for the Final. The skaters to qualify for the A Final were Park, Fontana, Li and Christie. The 2010 Olympic silver-medalist Marianne St-Gelais (CAN) did not qualify for the A final as she finished third in her race.

In the A Final Christie tried to pass in the second lap, however it was too tight and as she fell she took Li and Park with her. Christie and Li got up quickly and Park fell again while trying to get on her feet. Li was first to cross the line, then came Christie, Li and Park. However, Christie got a penalty for impeding and the reigning 500 m bronze medalist Fontana advanced to second place to get the silver medal and Park got the bronze. Christie's penalty brought the winner of the exciting B-final, Qihong Liu, to fourth place, Kexin Wang finished behind her teammate in 5th. Jorien ter Mors was 6th, St-Gelais 7th.

Jianrou Li, 500 m winner: "I was confident, I believed in miracles, and now it came true. I hugged my coach, and I was crying. I cried because I was so excited. My coach told me this medal is for Wang Meng as well (reigning Olympic champion who has to forfeit her trip to Sochi due to injury). I felt very moved. Because I had no past experience, my preparation was for a longer distance. This gold medal is a big boost for me for future performances." On making the A final ahead of other, more accomplished Chinese skaters Li said "They have more experience and had more chances to be in the final, it's true, but they failed. At that moment, I was thinking I should be very quick and overtake the other contenders and be in the final."

Arianna Fontana told the press: "I'm really happy. I came here with a goal to be in the A final and try to win. I knew that I could have won, but I fell. So, for me, this silver medal is equal to a gold medal. I better not say what I was thinking when I fell (laughs). But then I saw the Korean (bronze medalist Seung-Hi Park) fall, too, and I said to myself, 'I have to get up and try to do something to fix it.'"

Seung-Hi Park, bronze medalist commented: "It was a tough day for the Korean team. The boys were not so lucky either. We still have lots of competition waiting for us, lots of opportunities for good results."

Heats Men 1000m

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In the Men's 1000 m heats Chris Creveling (USA) had no trouble qualifying and neither did JR Celski (USA). Eduardo Alvarez had a harder job, as Wenhao Liang (CHN) and Charles Hamelin (CAN) battled for the lead in the heat but Liang stumbled and dropped to the back of the pack enabling Alvarez to qualify just before Jack Whelbourne (GBR), who skated with an ankle injury. The A final will take place on Saturday February 15.

Semifinal Men 5000 m Relay

There were two huge shocks in the men's 5000m relay semifinals. Neither defending champions Canada nor 2010 silver medalists Korea will be in the A final. Netherlands, Republic of Korea, USA and Kazakhstan competed in the first race and it seemed that USA and Korea would qualify without too much difficulty however with just five laps remaining, the ice broke under the skate of Eduardo Alvarez (USA) and both he and Ho-Suk Lee (KOR) went crashing into the pads. The race referees reviewed the video footage after the race, and advanced USA to the A final, with Korea making the B final. In the second semifinal China lead the race until the last lap when Viktor An (RUS) took over the Chinese. Francois Hamelin (CAN) crashed with 23 laps left to go and team Canada could not catch up to qualify for the A final.

5 teams qualified for the A final, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, USA, China and Russia which will take place on Friday February 21.

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

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