

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games **Short Track Speed Skating Men's 1500 m**

Charles Hamelin (CAN) won the first Short track Speed Skating medal of the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games in the Men's 1500m and showed without contestation that he was the strongest skater. China's Tianyu Han was the surprise of the race by taking gold while Victor An (RUS) brought Russia the first medal in Short track skating history with his bronze medal.

Most 1500m heats went as expected. The world record holder, Jinkyu Noh (KOR) broke his elbow earlier in training and therefore could not compete. The first ever participant from Hong-Kong made his Olympic appearance, but did not qualify for the next round. There was a disqualification of Yuzo Takamido (JPN), that helped Sjinkie Knegt (NED) make top-3, and Roberto Pukitis (LAT) was advanced. In the fastest heat (2:13.848) Niels Kerstholt (NED) won, the third place needed a photo-finish, which brought Thibaut Fauconnet (FRA) into the next round with only 0.001 second win over Sandor Shaolin Liu (HUN). Chris Creveling (USA) tried to sneak his way past Dequan Chen (CHN) in the last meter of the last heat, but he did not succeed.

In the semifinals there was some more nail biting races. In the first semifinal Tianyu Han and Victor An qualified for the final. Kerstholt fell and Fauconnet got a penalty for impeding. Se-Yeong Park (KOR) and Charles Hamelin's brother François Hamelin made it to the B-final.

In the second semifinal race the two Koreans Da-Woon Sin and Han-Bin Lee were leading, followed closely by JR Celski (USA). Then Sin fell taking Lee with him which opened the way for Celski to take the win. Chen also made it to the A-final. Michael Gilday (CAN) finished third but got a penalty for impeding, so Sebastien Lepape (FRA) and Sin went into the B-final, while Han-Bin Lee was advanced to the A-final.

In the last semifinal American Eduardo Alvarez got a penalty. Charles Hamelin won this race, while Jack Whelbourne (GBR) managed to keep Knegt behind him. Knegt and Semen Elistratov (RUS) reached the B-final.

In the B-final, three skaters battle for the lead, Knegt, Park tried to move to the front with 3 laps to go and to pass Knegt but fell and knocked Knegt out. The third skater was Lepape, who found the road freed to B-final victory. François Hamelin and Sin finished second and third respectively.

Seven skaters from six different countries qualified for the A-final, only China was represented by two skaters, Han and Chen, who did better than expected. Hamelin and Celski joined them and it was really tight at the head of the race. Also Whelbourne fought well. Only Lee, who was advanced to the final could not really pull something off after his earlier fall. With four laps to go, Whelbourne was pushed, fell and left the ice holding his ankle. Although the finish was close it was clear that Charles Hamelin won the Olympic gold but a photo finish determined the order of the other skaters. Han finished in second securing China's first medal of Sochi 2014. An brought Russia its first Short Track speed skating medal in history with his bronze medal. An had won gold on this distance in 2006 when he was still skating for Korea. and Celski finished fourth.

Charles Hamelin, gold: "For me, and even more for Canada, gold in the 1,500 is real important because we were a little disappointed with how we did in Vancouver in that distance, and we wanted to come back and

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have good results. The work I did with my coaches and teammates paid off in the races today and in [winning] the gold medal.”

Tianyu Han, silver: “It's my first Olympic Winter Games, I'm a little bit nervous. I didn't think very much. I never thought I could make it to the finals, let alone stand on the podium. I took every round as my final, and tried my best to compete.”

Victor An, bronze: “My greatest desire was to win the gold. We are working hard, dreaming of getting the gold. I don't have dissatisfaction over the fact the medal is not gold, that it is bronze. I believe at the other distances I'll be able to cover them in a much cooler mode. I think now my physical state is best for the 500, and that will show in the results. I felt the support of the fans in the stadium. That played a significant role in my accomplishment.”

JR Celski, fourth place: “I was in a good position to try to win, but unfortunately that happens sometimes. I think the race was still slow enough to make moves like that, and unfortunately I lost my speed and got fourth. It's the longest race, so endurance plays a big factor. It's kind of like a progressive speed, and once that speed gets shoved back a little bit, it's hard to recover and try to get the momentum back up again. The 1500 is really unpredictable. It's very strategic. If the race is slow enough, people are able to make moves like that. I got unlucky in that one.”

HEATS Ladies' 500m

The first heat of the ladies' 500m started with two false starts from Tatjana Borodulina (RUS) which resulted in a penalty and disqualification. In a later heat Jessica Smith (USA) fell and is out while her teammate Alyson Dudek got a penalty, only Emily Scott made it to the next round for the US team. Martina Valcepina (ITA) also misses the next round, she was overtaken by Charlotte Gilmartin (GBR), giving the British team two skaters in the next round. The fastest time in the heats was set by Kexin Fan (CHN), one of the main candidates to win this race: 43.356.

Semifinal Ladies' 3000 Relay

The ladies' Relay semifinal had two heats. In the first Korea and Canada qualified easily for the finals and left Russia in third and Hungary in fourth. In the other heat, China was clearly the fastest. Behind them, the Italian and Dutch team were battling for the second place, with Japan on their tails. With ten laps to go, the Dutch managed to take the lead over Italy. However at the next relay when the Italians managed to push their skater ahead and next to them the Dutch lost balance. The referee issued a penalty to the Netherlands, who are out of the ladies' relay team. The final will be between KOR-CHN-CAN-ITA.

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

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