



## Press release

20 February 2018

### **Crowd hopes for Korean climax in ladies' relay**

Tuesday night's Short Track program builds up to a climax, with the ladies' 1000m heats, the men's 500m heats and the ladies' 3000m Relay Finals B and A. The crowd will look forward to Team Korea, who qualified for the Final A in spectacular fashion. Korea will face China, Italy and Canada in the battle for gold.

#### **Intense chase**

The title defending home country is favorite, but Minjeong Choi, Yejin Kim, Yubin Lee and Sukhee Shim had to fight hard for their ticket to the Final A. In the semifinals they fell early in the race. After an intense chase they not only managed to catch up, but they even finished in a new Olympic Record time of 4:06.387. Team Canada led most of the race until the Koreans caught up and eventually overtook them, making the local crowd go wild.

Canada joined Korea into the Final A and Marianne St Gelais was happy with her team's tactics: "We put ourselves in front. We were out of trouble the whole race. We did our own things. We had control and speed, we were relaxed and we had good exchanges. If we do the same race in the final, we can think about the gold medal for sure. I think we're going to stick to the same plan, because it paid off today."

To win gold, Canada has to defy the odds. Korea and China have dominated the 3000m relay for a long time. Of the last 25 times this event was held at world championships or Olympic Winter Games, China took 13 gold medals and Korea 11. The sole exception in this series was Canada at the ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Beijing in 2005.

#### **China also skates Olympic record**

After Korea's display of power, China, who won the relay title in 2010, put forward their candidacy for the gold medal too. With Kexin Fan, Yutong Han and Chunyu Qu joining 2010 champion Yang Zhou on the ice, China won the second semifinal race on the first day of the PyeongChang 2018 Games, breaking the Olympic record the Korean ladies had set in the previous race. China finished in 4:05.315, ahead of Italy and the Netherlands who were neck-and-neck. A photo finish determined that Italy would join China in the Final A. The Netherlands will compete against Hungary, Olympic Athletes from Russia and Japan in the Final B.

#### **Who breaks China and Korea's 1000m reign?**

Before the climax of events in the Ladies' 3000m Relay, Tuesday's Short Track program starts with the ladies' 1000m heats. Korea's Relay skaters Minjeong Choi and Sukhee Shim will try to qualify for the quarterfinals in heat two and three of eight. China's Relay skaters Yutong Han and Chunyu Qu will also skate in the 1000m, in the first and the second heat respectively.

China and Korea are the only nations to have won the ladies' Olympic 1000m in the past. Sochi 2014 Champion Jianrou Li (CHN), retired from international competition and her successors have not shown great results in this season's World Cup, with Yutong Han being the best-ranked Chinese lady in 17<sup>th</sup> place. By contrast, Korea's Minjeong Choi won the 1000m at two of four World Cup meetings this season, in Budapest and Seoul.

Kim Boutin (CAN) won the 1000m World Cup, ahead of Choi and her compatriot Sukhee Shim. The Canadian finished in the top three in this event in three of four World Cup meetings this season. She already won bronze in the ladies' 500m and 1500m at the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

Choi already won gold in the ladies' 1500m at PyeongChang 2018. Arianna Fontana (ITA), who was tenth in this year's 1000m World Cup, seized her career first Olympic gold in the 500m on Tuesday 13 February, to bring her Olympic medal total up to six.

Suzanne Schulting (NED) finished third in this event at the most recent ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships in 2017. She can give Netherlands its second Olympic medal in a ladies' event in short track, after Yara van Kerkhof took silver in the ladies' 500m on Tuesday 13 February. Van Kerkhof also skates the 1000m.

Elise Christie (GBR) returned to training for the first time since a crash on Saturday February 17 night at Gangneung Ice Arena. Christie crashed into the pads in the ladies' 1500m and was taken to hospital for X-rays on her ankle, which revealed no broken bones. She is still hoping to be fit enough to compete in the ladies' 1000m on Tuesday. On Monday afternoon a spokesperson from Team GB said: "Elise Christie has made good progress and was on the ice today. Team GB staff will continue to assess, support and monitor her overnight and tomorrow, before a final decision is taken."

### **Dominant Wu aims at Olympic glory in Men's 500m**

The Men's 500m also features eight heats of highspeed action. Dajing Wu (CHN) hopes to win China's first gold medal in this event. China has two Olympic medals in the Men's 500m, both silver. Following the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games, Wu won 10 men's 500m races at the ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships and in the World Cup. No other skater won this event more than four times in that span.

Wu faces tough competition from Shaolin Sandor Liu (HUN), who has won three men's 500m World Cup races, since the start of the 2016/17 World Cup season. Hungary has yet to win an Olympic medal in Short Track.

Vancouver 2010 Olympic champion Charles Hamelin, who will retire after PyeongChang 2018, hopes to become the first skater to win the Men's 500m more than once.

Sjinkie Knegt (NED), who took silver in the 1500m is the reigning world champion in this event. He got Netherlands its first Olympic medal in Short Track, with bronze in the men's 1000m at Sochi 2014,



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and he can become the first athlete from Netherlands to win three medals in a sport other than Speed Skating at the Winter Games. Knecht and figure skater Sjoukje Dijkstra have two Olympic medals.

Hyojun Lim (KOR) won the men's 1500m and Samuel Girard (CAN) the men's 1000m at the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games. One of them could become the third man to win two gold medals in individual events in short track at a single Winter Games, after Lee Jungsu (KOR, 2010) and Victor AN (KOR/RUS, 2006 and 2014).

Daeheon Hwang and Yira Seo (KOR) will be cheered on by the home crowd while Tianyu Han (CHN) should not be overlooked either.

For more information, schedules, full entries and results please refer to the [ISU website](#) and the [official website](#) of the Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang.