

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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ISU World Junior Speed Skating Championships 2013 Preview

On February 22 to 24 the ISU World Junior Speed Skating Championships 2013 will be held in Collalbo, Italy. 135 young skaters from 21 countries will gather on the fastest outdoor icerink in the world. There are several titles up for grabs during these Championships, the single distances titles and the prestigious allround title which will be awarded to the strongest skater after four distances.

Since 2009, single distances world titles are given for the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, as well as the 3000m for ladies and 5000m for men and the Team Pursuit has been on the program since 2008. The distances that contribute to the allround points are the 500, 1000, 1500 and 3000m for the Ladies and the 500, 1500, 3000 and 5000m for the Men.

Ladies

Antoinette de Jong (NED) finished fifth at the Essent ISU European Speed Skating Championships for seniors this year and is a strong contender for the allround title. Defending champion Miho Takagi (JPN) participated in the World Allround Championships for seniors and finished tenth. Vanessa Bittner (AUT) has proved strong this season during the Junior World Cup Series and especially in the shorter distances. Korea also has a strong team, including Yoo-Hee Heo and Cho-Won Park. Kaitlyn McGregor from Switzerland is also a strong allround skater.

Men

The Italian junior Andrea Giovannini impressed last week by winning the Junior World Cup 3000m and Team Pursuit. He will compete in his home country which makes him a strong candidate for the title. Strong competition is expected to come from 16-year-old Chinese Junior Fan Yang, Junya Miwa and Shota Nakamura both from Japan. Simen Spieler Nilsen from Norway participated in the senior World Allround Championships and finished fifteenth. Gerben Jorritsma is the main contender for a title from the Netherlands' as Kai Verbij only starts in the three shortest distances. USA's Emery Lehmann is strong in the longer distances and could potentially be on a podium.

Two time reigning Champion Sverre Lunde Pedersen (NOR) now competes as a senior and finished fifth at the World Allround Championships in Hamar last week where the Junior Champions of 2005 (Sven Kramer NED) and 2006 (Håvard Bøkko NOR) were the best. The champions of tomorrow will compete in Collalbo this weekend with the possibility that the winners will not be Norwegian nor Dutch for the first time since 2004.

Full results are available at www.isu.org

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