

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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For immediate release

Essent ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 2013 Sochi, Russia - Preview

The 15th Essent ISU World Single Distance Championships will take place from March 21-24 in the new Adler Arena ice rink in Sochi and is the official Speed Skating test event for the 2014 Olympic Winter Games.

On Thursday afternoon March 21 the men will compete in the 1500m and the ladies in the 3000m. On Friday the distances are the 1000m and 5000m for men and 1500m for ladies. On Saturday the 1000m and 5000m for ladies, as well as the 10,000m for men. On the final day, Sunday March 24, the 500m for ladies and men will be skated twice as in the Olympics, followed by the Team Pursuit for ladies and men. There are 12 pairs in most distances, the exception is 10,000m for men and the 5000m for ladies, where only 8 pairs compete. The Team Pursuit is held for the 8 best teams.

For each distance, skaters qualified through the World Cup ranking or by a time ranking. Although a winner of a World Cup distance is a contender for a medal at the Essent ISU World Singled Distance Championships in some cases, such a winner is past his or her top shape at this end of the season. Others may have had a poor season start and are now reaching their peak. This is the case with Ireen Wüst (NED) who is in top shape however her compatriot Marrit Leenstra, who won the World Cup, is not participating as her current level is no longer as high. The same goes for 1000m winner Hein Otterspeer (NED) and Heather Richardson (USA) who was in better shape before she won the World Sprint title.

A total of 16 participants attained one or more world titles in the past. If the Team Pursuit is taken into account as an individual participation then Sven Kramer (NED) leads with 11 titles. If taken out then Kramer, Bob de Jong (NED) and Martina Sáblíková (CZE) all have 7 titles. Shani Davis (USA) has 6 while Claudia Pechstein (GER) 5. Ireen Wüst, Jenny Wolf (GER) and Christine Nesbitt (CAN) have one, Cindy Klassen (CAN) and Kang-Seok Lee (KOR) have 2 and Sang-Hwa Lee, Kyou-Hyuk Lee, Tae-Bum Mo (all KOR), Joji Kato (JPN), Håvard Bøkko (NOR), and Stefan Groothuis (NED) have one. Pechstein has competed in every World Single Distances Championships since its creation in 1996 except for 2009. Bob de Jong has participated 13 times.

There are a number of skaters who are contenders for the podium and they include:

Ladies:

500m Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) reigning champion, Beixing Wang (CHN), Jing Yu (CHN), Olga Fatkulina (RUS), Jenny Wolf (GER)

1000m Christine Nesbitt (CAN) 2012 champion, Heather Richardson (USA), Brittany Bowe (USA), Hong Zhang (CHN)

1500m Christine Nesbitt (CAN) reigning champion, Ireen Wüst (NED), Yekaterina Shikhova (RUS), Lotte van Beek (NED)

3000m Ireen Wüst (NED), defending champion Martina Sáblíková

5000m Martina Sáblíková 2012 champion

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Men:

500m Jan Smeeckens (NED), Joji Kato (JPN), Michel Mulder (NED), Ronald Mulder (NED), Jamie Gregg (CAN)

1000m Stefan Groothuis (NED) 2012 champion, Shani Davis (USA), Kjeld Nuis (NED)

1500m World Cup winner Zbigniew Bródka (POL); Bart Swings (BEL) won the last race. Last year's champion Denny Morrison (CAN) is recovering from a broken leg. Denis Yuskov (RUS) is the home favorite.

5000m Sven Kramer (NED) defending champion

10,000m Bob de Jong (NED) reigning champion, Sven Kramer (NED), Jorrit Bergsma (NED)

For the Team Pursuit, the Ladies and Men Dutch teams are strong and both won the World Cup. But in their home country the Russian teams could take the victory, Canada and Korea are also strong contenders.

Full results are available at www.isu.org

For further information please contact

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