

Essent ISU World Cup Speed Skating – Inzell (GER) – Day 1

After the Olympic Games, the Essent ISU World Cup continued with the fifth competition of the season in Inzell. Ireen Wüst (NED) skated a track record in the 1500m, Jorrit Bergsma (NED) won the 5000m and his fiancée Heather Richardson (USA) won the 500m. She was not the only skater on the podium from a country that failed to medal in the Olympics. Skating nations Norway and Germany also came to life again. Two skaters set personal best times in the 5000m.

Ladies' 500m

In the Ladies' 500m, two skaters from the top 10 were absent: World Cup leader Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) and Beixing Wang (CHN). All other top skaters were present. Although the Olympic Games were extremely disappointing for the US team, that does not mean that the American skaters cannot get back to winning ways, as was proven by the winner in this distance, Heather Richardson (USA), who beat her pairmate Olga Fatkulina (RUS), winner of Olympic silver, with 37.85 versus 37.89. For Fatkulina, this meant only bronze, as a 31-year-old skater, Judith Hesse (GER), reached the podium for the first time, with 37.86. Hesse fell in the 500m of Sochi.

Thanks to her win, Richardson overtook Fatkulina in the World Cup ranking. Lee leads with 700 points, Heather Richardson (USA) is second with 590 points and Fatkulina third with 580.

Men's 5000m

Sven Kramer had an operation on Thursday and will not skate any more this season. This opened the way to Olympic bronze medallist Jorrit Bergsma to take over the lead in the ranking. Olympic silver medallist Jan Blokhuijsen (NED) was not in Inzell and Seung-Hoon Lee (KOR, third in the ranking) was absent as well. Bart Swings (BEL), next in the ranking, had to withdraw at the last moment, due to stomach problems.

Bergsma skated a strong race, with all his laps below 30 seconds, for a winning time of 6:14.08. There was no Dutch clean sweep, however, as the other podium places went to skaters from countries that had unsuccessful Olympic Games: Norway's Sverre Lunde Pedersen was paired with German Patrick Beckert and they divided silver and bronze. Lunde Pedersen opened with 29.4 and finished with a 30.8 lap, and the intervening laps were between 29.7 and 30.1, a very even race that led him to 6:19.48. Beckert could not match that in the middle part of the race, but with a good finish (29.9) he managed to beat the fastest time from the races before him, the 6:22.88 posted by Douwe de Vries (NED), and take bronze in 6:22.71.

Bergsma overtook Kramer and leads with 350 points, Kramer keeps his 300 points and Lee is still third in the ranking with 230, but Lunde Pedersen and Beckert, on 225 and 221 points respectively, can still reach the final podium.

Bergsma said: “I did not want to force myself. I managed to skate 29.5s for a long time. In the end the laps went up a bit; it was an OK race. Of course you want to win every race. I am happy to skate again, it is the most beautiful thing to do.”

Beckert said: “After Sochi I was a little ill. I am not as fit as in Sochi. It was hard to focus and stay concentrated, but it went pretty well.”

Ladies' 1500m

The 1500m for Ladies was the last distance of the day. Many skaters finished close together. The first skater below 1:57 was Jorien Voorhuis (NED) with 1:56.74; two pairs later, Martina Sáblíková (CZE) with a more even race dived below that and finished in 1:56.69. Then came Olga Graf (RUS), who built her race well and had the fastest last lap with 30.3, but she fell short of the lead with 1:56.76. Marrit Leenstra (NED), fourth in Sochi, also came close with 1:56.79, but the faster skaters were to come in the last three pairs. First Yekaterina Lobysheva (RUS) set a faster time with 1:56.58. But then Olympic bronze winner Lotte van Beek (NED) set a new track record. Her first lap was 28.5, followed by 29.6 and 30.9, which brought her to 1:54.70, while her pairmate Julia Skokova (RUS) reached 1:55.16. Then came Brittany Bowe (USA) and Ireen Wüst in the final pair. They both opened in a similar time to Van Beek, and their first lap was a fast 28.0, followed by a 29.3 for Wüst and 29.5 for Bowe. In the final lap, both lost a little to Van Beek, but Wüst's 31.1 was enough to take back the track record and finish in 1:54.03. Bowe's last lap was 31.9 and that brought her bronze in 1:55.06.

Wüst increased the lead in the World Cup with 380 points, Bowe is still second with 314 and Van Beek is third in the ranking with 310 points.

Tomorrow's schedule has the second 500m and the 3000m for Ladies, and the 500m and 1000m for Men as well as a mass start race for Men over 20 laps.

Essent ISU World Cup Speed Skating – Inzell (GER) - Medal Winners Friday

Ladies' 500m

1	Heather Richardson	USA	37.85
2	Judith Hesse	GER	37.86
3	Olga Fatkulina	RUS	37.89

Men's 5000m

1	Jorrit Bergsma	NED	6:14.08
2	Sverre Lunde Pedersen	NOR	6:19.48
3	Patrick Beckert	GER	6:22.71

Ladies' 1500m

1	Ireen Wüst	NED	1:54.03 TR
2	Lotte van Beek	NED	1:54.70 TR
3	Brittany Bowe	USA	1:55.06

For details of the Essent ISU World Cup, including complete results see www.isu.org .

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