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For immediate release

## **ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2014/15 - Obihiro (JPN) Day 1**

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating series 2014/15 took off with the Men's 5000m, the 500m for Ladies and Men and the Ladies' 3000m in Obihiro (JPN) on Friday. In both long distances the track record was broken a few times and a total of six skaters set a personal best. The record for the oldest World Cup participant was broken by Martin Hänggi (SUI). The 46-year-old skated in the 5000m in the B-division.

### **Sven Kramer (NED) take 5000m gold and Aleksandr Rumyantsev (RUS) surprises by taking the silver**

Olympic Champion Sven Kramer won the 5000m as expected, but Russian Aleksandr Rumyantsev took the silver to avert a much-feared all-Dutch pedestal. Wouter Olde Heuvel (NED) found his way back to the World Cup podium for the first time since 2011.

Rumyantsev grabbed his first podium finish when he came third in last season's final 5000m World Cup race in Heerenveen. The 27-year-old Russian confirmed his status as an elite skater when he left manifold medalist Bob de Jong (NED) 2.4 seconds behind in the fifth pair. Rumyantsev managed to keep his lap times below 30 seconds until the final two laps, where he missed a stroke and tiredness became visible. With 6:23.56 the Russian was the first to take the track record from Seung-Hoon Lee.

In the next pair Lee did not manage to regain the track record and the first threat to Rumyantsev's time was Wouter Olde Heuvel. The Dutchman started faster, lost ground in the mid-section, but managed to keep his laps below 31 until the very end. He came only 0.48 short to beat Rumyantsev's time.

In the final pair Olympic Champion Sven Kramer secured victory. Although he was less consistent in his lap times, alternating sub-30 and above-30 lap times in the first half of the race, he made the difference in the final four laps to finish in 6:20.90.

### **Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) wins the 500m, Vanessa Bittner revelation for Austria**

Olympic Champion Sang-Hwa Lee won the Ladies' 500m in 38.07, edging out Nao Kodaira (JPN) by only 0.11 seconds. Olga Fatkulina (RUS) took the bronze in 38.50. The track record (38.03) of the retired Jenny Wolf (GER) survived.

Vanessa Bittner (AUT) won the B-division in 38.50, which was the fastest time of the day until Kodaira set 38.18 in the fifth pair of the A-division. Bittner went to the Netherlands to train with coach Marianne Timmer and Olympic bronze medalist Margot Boer (NED), and she managed to beat her tutor. Boer set 38.73 in the A-division to end up fifth. Judith Hesse (GER) got exactly the same time as Boer, but was ranked just above her.

In the final pair the gold and bronze medalists of the Sochi Olympic Games were paired. Lee set 10.43 on the first straight, not her fastest start ever but fast enough to stay ahead of Kodaira, even with a 27.6 lap. Fatkulina finished in 38.50, keeping Hesse off the podium, but slower than Bittner had been in the B-division. The 19-year-old Austrian has a chance to go for the podium in the second 500m race this weekend, when she is allowed to start in the A-division. The American ladies, who had the fastest times this season, did not race.

### **Jan Smeekens (NED) beats Russian youngsters in the 500m**

Jan Smeekens (NED) won the men's first 500m in 35.06, followed by two Russians. World Cup debutant Pavel Kulizhnikov finished in 35.16 and Ruslan Murashov in 35.24. Hein Otterspeer (NED) finished in 35.24 as well, but was ranked fourth at 0.002.

In the B-division Alexej Yesin (RUS) already proved the strength of the Russian team by winning in 35.25, leaving his teammate Artyom Kuznetsov 0.05 behind. In the second pair of the A-division 21-year-old Murashov first clocked 35.26, which was quickly corrected to 35.24. Experienced Keiichiro Nagashima (JPN) could not come close, nor could any of the Canadians, who hold the best season times.

Kulizhnikov, was the first to beat Murashov. The 20-year-old Russian made up for a slow start, with the fastest full lap of the field (25.1).

Smeekens had nothing to fear from the rest of the Dutch team, with Olympic Champion Michel Mulder winning 500m bronze in the World Championships inline skating this very weekend. Quite confidently the silver medalist from Sochi raced to his 16<sup>th</sup> 500m World Cup win. The 2010 Olympic Champion Tae-Bum Mo (KOR) only finished 14<sup>th</sup> in 35.72 and Joji Kato (JPN) took a sabbatical year, thus weakening the Japanese sprint team.

### **Ireen Wüst (NED) strong in the 3000m, Šáblíková settles for silver**

Olympic Champion Ireen Wüst (NED) repeated what she did at the Olympic Games in Sochi, she kept Martina Šáblíková (CZE) off the 3000m gold. Wüst brought the track record to 4:04.91, Šáblíková finished in 4:06.11 and Jorien Voorhuis (NED) took bronze in 4:07.04.

The track record first tumbled in the B-division, when Ivania Blondin (CAN) finished far ahead of the rest in 4:08.23. Her time stood until Diane Valkenburg (NED) skated 4:07.57 in the fourth pair of the A-division. Valkenburg could not enjoy the lead for long, as Voorhuis had a slightly stronger finish and reached 4:07.04 in the fifth pair.

The penultimate pair featured the two best skaters of the past Olympics: Wüst and Šáblíková. Dutch stronghold, who had just travelled to Bangkok to accept the ANOC award for the best female winter athlete in Sochi, started fast to build a lead over the slender Czech woman. With two laps to go, Wüst lost pace and Šáblíková regained half a second. The Czech was aiming for a strong finish, but misjudged the crossover and let Wüst cross in front. Šáblíková lost at least a second and had to settle for silver again. Neither Olympic bronze winner Olga Graf (RUS) nor the 42-year-old German champion Claudia Pechstein could get below 4:10.

For full results of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series 2014/15 please refer to  
<http://www.isuresults.eu/> and <http://www.isu.org/en/speed-skating/series/isu-world-cup-speed-skating>

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series is available as a live stream on the ISU Skating Channel.  
Please note that geoblocking may be required in certain territories  
<http://livemanager.eurovision.edgesuite.net/isu/index.html>

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series continues tomorrow with the Ladies' and Men's 1000 m and the Team Pursuit races.

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### **ISU World Cup Speed Skating Obihiro (JPN) - Medal Winners**

#### **5000 m Men**

<b>1</b>	Sven Kramer	NED	6:20.90 TR
<b>2</b>	Aleksandr Rumyantsev	RUS	6:23.56 TR
<b>3</b>	Wouter Olde Heuvel	NED	6:24.03

#### **500 m Ladies**

<b>1</b>	Sang-Hwa Lee	KOR	38.07
<b>2</b>	Nao Kodaira	JPN	38.18
<b>3</b>	Olga Fatkulina	RUS	38.50

#### **500 m Men**

<b>1</b>	Jan Smeeckens	NED	35.06
<b>2</b>	Pavel Kulizhnikov	RUS	35.16
<b>3</b>	Ruslan Murashov	RUS	35.24

#### **3000 m Ladies**

<b>1</b>	Ireen Wüst	NED	4:04.91 TR
<b>2</b>	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	4:06.11
<b>3</b>	Jorien Voorhuis	NED	4:07.04 TR

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