

November 16, 2014

For immediate release

ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2014/15 - Obihiro (JPN) Day 3

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating series continued with the 1500m, the second 500m and the Mass Start for both Ladies and Men on Sunday. Both 1500m and 500m races were won in track record times and five skaters improved their personal best, bringing this weekend's total to 17. Vanessa Bittner even set a new national record for Austria in the 500m: 38.33.

Ireen Wüst (NED) wins 1500m to clinch third gold

After winning the 3000m and the Team Pursuit and taking silver in the 1000m, Ireen Wüst took another gold in the 1500m in a track record time of 1:56.93. Marrit Leenstra (NED), who won the 1000m on Saturday, finished in second place, followed by Julia Skokova (RUS).

Yesterday's surprise Qishi Li (CHN) already set a track record in the B-division (1:58.95), which would have been good enough for fourth place in division A. Skokova was the first skater in the A-division beat Li's time in 1:58.10. She couldn't enjoy it for long though, because Wüst destroyed the record in the next pair. With 1:57.77 in the final pair, Leenstra was no real threat for Wüst.

A strong Ida Njåtun (NOR) finished in fourth place with 1:59.06. Olympic Champion Jorien ter Mors (NED) did not participate.

Kjeld Nuis tops all-Dutch podium in the 1500m

In the men's 1500m, Kjeld Nuis (NED) was the strongest with 1:45.97. His countrymen Wouter Olde Heuvel and Koen Verweij took silver and bronze.

In the B-division winner Bailin Li (CHN) set a new track record with a personal best in 1:48.44, which unlike Li's performance in the Ladies' B-division, was not even a top-12 time. In the second pair of division A, Wouter Olde Heuvel, bronze medalist in the men's 5000m on Friday, set 1:46.52, thus celebrating a successful comeback after a nagging knee injury. Nuis started faster and managed to hang on to his advantage despite a tough final lap, in which he was half a second slower than Olde Heuvel.

In pair eight, Olympic 1500m silver medalist Koen Verweij (NED) faced Olympic 1500m bronze medalist Denny Morrison (CAN). Verweij started slower, but managed to catch the fast Canadian on the final straight. Morrison ended up fourth. Triple World Champion Shani Davis(USA) kept Sven Kramer (NED) behind in the penultimate pair and finished fifth. Olympic Champion Zbigniew Bródka (POL) disappointingly finished in 14th place.

Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) takes track record in the 500m, Bittner (AUT) to podium

In the second 500m for ladies, Olympic Champion Sang-Hwa Lee won again. She took the track record from retired Jenny Wolf (GER) below 38 seconds in 37.92. Nao Kodaira (JPN) again took silver with 38.06 and Vanessa Bittner beat pair mate Olga Fatkulina (RUS) in an Austrian record time of 38.33, to take the bronze medal.

It was the first World Cup podium for 19-year-old Bittner, who had already impressed in the B-division races in the previous days. The reigning Junior World Champion in the 500m set the best World Cup result for an Austrian Lady in the 500m, surpassing Emese Hunyady's fifth place in 1987. Olympic bronze medalist Margot Boer (NED) was fourth, just ahead of Japanese champion Maki Tsuji.

Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) goes on to win 500m, Ryohei Haga (JPN) grabs podium

Kulizhnikov took the Men's 500m victory, equaling the track record of 34.96. The Russian youngster left Friday's winner Jan Smeeckens (NED) behind. Ryohei Haga won bronze.

After Kulizhnikov took silver in his first 500m World Cup on Friday, he went on to win the 1000m on Saturday. On Sunday he was 0.3 seconds faster in the first straight than he was in his first 500m race and, in spite of some mistakes in the last inner lane, his last lap was the fastest of the field.

With 34.96 Kulizhnikov was the only one under 35 seconds. Silver medalist Smeeckens finished in 35.09 and Haga made up for the weak performance of the Japanese men in the first race, when he secured bronze in 35.17.

Ruslan Murashov (RUS) finished in fourth. Vancouver 2010 Olympic Champion Tae-Bum Mo (KOR) and a happy Espen Hvammen (NOR) both set 35.26, to take fifth and sixth place.

Ivanie Blondin (CAN) wins Mass Start Ladies

Ivanie Blondin (CAN) won the first Mass Start event new style, ahead of Nana Takagi (JPN) and Irene Schouten (NED). The Mass start now has a maximum of two skaters per country and mandatory protective clothing and helmets.

The Japanese sisters Takagi skated well on home ice. Miho gathered points in the intermediate sprints, which brought her to rank four. Nana was well in front and managed to overtake Schouten, who lost her balance coming out of the last turn. Blondin however, was the strongest and grabbed her first World Cup Mass Start gold.

Double Korean victory in Mass Start Men

Seung-Hoon Lee (KOR) won the Men's mass start race ahead of teammate Cheol-Min Kim. Bart Swings (BEL) took the bronze medal.

A crash with one lap to go disturbed some other strong skaters, but the three leaders could hardly have been overtaken. Alexej Baumgärtner (GER) and Patrick Beckert (GER) finished fourth and fifth. The German skaters had taken points in the third intermediate sprint and had a good chance to stay away from the pack. Beckert tried to make the escape work, but Baumgärtner slowed down after the sprint and both men were caught. Tactics can still be refined as skaters will get more experience with the new format.

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series continues in Seoul (KOR) on November 21-23, 2014.

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>



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

1500m Ladies

1	Ireen Wüst	NED	1:56.93 TR
2	Marrit Leenstra	NED	1:57.76
3	Julia Skokova	RUS	1:58.10 TR

1500m Men

1	Kjeld Nuis	NED	1:45.97 TR
2	Wouter Olde Heuvel	NED	1:46.52 TR
3	Koen Verweij	NED	1:46.90

500m Ladies

1	Sang-Hwa Lee	KOR	37.92 TR
2	Nao Kodaira	JPN	38.06
3	Vanessa Bittner	AUT	38.33 NR

500m Men

1	Pavel Kulizhnikov	RUS	34.96 = TR
2	Jan Smeekeens	NED	35.09
3	Ryohei Haga	JPN	35.17

Mass Start Ladies

1	Ivanie Blondin	CAN	8:33.24
2	Nana Takagi	JPN	8:33.44
3	Irene Schouten	NED	8:33.54

Mass Start Men

1	Seung-Hoon Lee	KOR	8:16.99
2	Cheol-Min Kim	KOR	8:17.23
3	Bart Swings	BEL	8:17.28

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