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For immediate release

ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2014/15 - Hamar (NOR) Day 1

Heather Richardson (USA) and her boyfriend Jorrit Bergsma (NED) took gold on the first day of World Cup competition in 2015. The ladies competed in the 1500m, the men in the 5000m at the Vikingship rink in Hamar, Norway. On Sunday the men will race the 1500m and the ladies the 3000m.

With his 5000m win Bergsma gave the Netherlands its 100th World Cup gold in that distance. It is the first World Cup distance in which this milestone is reached. In the ladies' 1500m the USA took the double again with Brittany Bowe securing silver behind Richardson. They repeated their 1500m result from Heerenveen in December. Five skaters improved their personal best times.

For the first time in history a World Cup weekend will determine the quota for the World Allround Championships, which will take place in Calgary in March. A top-24 with a maximum of three skaters per country will qualify, with eight places for ladies and eleven for men pre-qualified. Sunday will be D-day for a couple of skaters.

American domination in 1500m ladies

In absence of Dutch Ireen Wüst and Marrit Leenstra, there was not much competition for the American ladies. Kali Christ (CAN) was the first in the A-division to skate under 2:00 with 1:59.28. The Canadian finished top-8 just behind Luiza Zlotkowska (POL), who set 1:59.03.

In the next pair Dutch skater Marije Joling was the first to beat the top two of the B-division, in which winner Carlijn Achtereekte had skated a personal best of 1:58.32 and number two Jorien Voorhuis set 1:58.70. Joling finished in a strong 1:57.51, leaving Julia Skokova (RUS) behind in 1:58.48.

Joling did not enjoy her lead for long however. In the next pair Bowe, opened much faster, lost a bit of her advantage in the final laps but still finished in 1:57.30. Her pair mate Linda de Vries (NED) finished 0.01 behind Skokova. Martina Sáblíková (CZE) set 1:58.60 to finish sixth between Zlotkowska and De Vries.

In the final pair Richardson smashed the rest of the field including compatriot Bowe, when she rushed to 1:56.30. She already took her full second advantage over Bowe in the first 300m and held on to it for the rest of the race. With a first full lap of 28.7 she even skated below the track record, but conditions were too hard to maintain track record pace towards the finish. Her pair mate Ida Njåtun (NOR) finished in a disappointing 2:00.27 for ninth place.

In spite of not competing in the 1500m, Wüst still leads the World Cup with 340 points, followed by Leenstra with 320. Richardson (280 points) passed Njåtun, who has 228 points. Bowe is gaining

on her rapidly and has 220 points. The American ladies are still catching up after being absent at the first two World Cup weekends.

Another 5000m win for Bergsma

In absence of Olympic 5000m champion Sven Kramer, Olympic 10,000m champion Jorrit Bergsma won the 5000m in 6:17.89. The ice conditions in Hamar were too tough to set a flat race towards the end, but he did not need it to win.

Denis Yuskov (RUS) was the first to take the lead. With 6:24.20 he kept Håvard Bøkko (NOR) behind, but he was slower than the winner of the B-division: Alexis Contin (FRA), who set 6:23.68.

In pair five, Patrick Beckert (GER) started a bit more careful than Wouter Olde Heuvel (NED), who is battling for the third Dutch ticket to the World Championships with Bergsma and Douwe de Vries. The absent Kramer and Koen Verweij (NED) were pre-qualified for Calgary. Olde Heuvel could not keep the pace of low 30 laps, whereas the more prudent Beckert never set a lap time above 30.5 to finish in 6:23.99. Olde Heuvel set 6:25.67, behind Yuskov.

The next pair featured Bergsma and De Vries, with Bergsma taking the lead. De Vries could follow with 29 laps until 1800m, when his laps went up to 30.8. Bergsma managed to hang on to 29s until the last three laps, but with 6:17.89 he had a good margin on the rest of the field. De Vries' 6:23.04 was still faster than Beckert's time.

Sverre Lunde Pedersen, who dreamt of a repeat of the Berlin World Cup where he finished second between Bergsma and De Vries, was on schedule all the way. The race was one lap too long however, and a final 31.3 lap cost him second place. His 6:23.21 got him the bronze medal.

In the final pair World Cup leader Bob de Jong (NED) could not impress. He saw Alexandr Rumyantsev (RUS) skate away with low 30s. The Russian could smell the podium with three laps to go, but then dropped with a 30.7, 31.2 and 32.1 to sixth with 6:25.15. De Jong finished in 6:31.68.

With his disappointing eleventh place De Jong just managed to hang on to the World Cup lead with 301 points. Lunde Pedersen (295 points) passed Rumyantsev (285 points) and Bergsma jumped up to fourth with 280.

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 in Hamar for Ladies and Men with the Ladies' 3000m and the Men's 1500m as well as the Mass Start.

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ISU World Cup Speed Skating Hamar (NOR) - Medal Winners day 1

1500 m Ladies

1	Heather Richardson	USA	1:56.30
2	Brittany Bowe	USA	1:57.30
3	Marije Joling	NED	1:57.51

5000 m Men

1	Jorrit Bergsma	NED	6:17.89
2	Douwe de Vries	NED	6:23.04
3	Sverre Lunde Pedersen	NOR	6:23.21

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