

February 7, 2014

For immediate release

ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2014/15 - Heerenveen (NED)

Saturday - Day 1

Heather Richardson (USA) showed great form one week ahead of the World Single Distance Championships in the Thialf speed skating Arena in Heerenveen. On the first day of the Sprint World Cup she won both the 500m and the 1000m in Heerenveen as well. This season's sprint revelation Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) won the 500m, but he had to settle for silver in the 1000m behind Kjeld Nuis (NED), who beat him in the final pair of the longest sprint distance. Junior Vanessa Bittner (AUT) skated a national record of 38.26. Two ladies and three men improved their personal best times.

Richardson dominant in strong 500m field

Brittany Bowe (USA) was the first of the top-12 to compete in the strong Ladies' 500m field. She impressed with a 27.5 full lap to set 38.21.

In the sixth pair Bittner came close when she set a new Austrian of 38.26, with a 10.55 opener and a 27.7 lap. In pair eight Heather Richardson set an unprecedented 27.1 lap after a 10.67 opening to set 37.82. Richardson was the first to skate below 38 seconds and eventually proved to be the only one.

In the final pair World Cup leader Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) faced Nao Kodaira (JPN), who was faster in the opening and held on to her advantage in the full lap. Kodaira opened in 10.49 versus 10.54 for Lee and Kodaira even gained a bit more in her 27.6 lap to set 38.14. She took her second victory over Lee, but it was not enough to beat Richardson. Lee finished in 38.29 and ended up in a disappointing fifth place.

Bowe took bronze and Bittner ended up fourth. Lee still leads the World Cup with 800 points. Kodaira follows with 690 in second place. Richardson passed Judith Hesse (GER) and Margot Boer (NED) to move up to rank three with 410 points.

Richardson and Bowe top the 1000m once again

Just like in December Heather Richardson and Brittany Bowe took gold and silver in the 1000m in Heerenveen again.

Kali Christ (CAN) set the first sub-1:17 in pair three when she set 1:16.90 with a 29.5 final lap. With only three pairs to go she still led the pack, but in pair eight the American duo Richardson and Bowe crushed the rest of the field with a first lap of 27.7. Richardson concluded with a 29.3 lap to set 1:14.87 and Bowe stopped the clock at 1:15.38.

In the next pair Karolina Erbanová (CZE) outskated Ireen Wüst (NED) and to finish in 1:15.95. Wüst had to settle for 1:16.32.

In the final pair the best two skaters in the World Cup ranking took the ice: Qishi Li (CHN) and Marrit Leenstra (NED). The 21-year-old Chinese was best of the rest in 1:15.89 to take bronze. Erbanova had to settle for rank 4 and Leenstra finished between Wüst and Christ in 6th place with 1:16.36.

Li still leads the World Cup with 380 points, Leenstra retained second place with 321 and Richardson moved up to third with 280 points, Erbanová dropped to fourth, then follow Bowe and Wüst.

Richardson is confident for the World Single Distance Championships next week: "It felt good, I was just trying to be relaxed and confident and it worked out. I am excited to see what I'm able to do; I'm really happy with the 500m right now. I am able to maintain my speed better as I skate more relaxed. I should be able to do what I have shown now. It will be fun."

Kulizhnikov strikes again in 500m

It almost becomes a habit: Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) wins the 500m and Artur Was (POL) is second. The other skaters compete for the bronze. The Sprint World Cup on Saturday proved no different than the last two races in Heerenveen.

Olympic Champion Michel Mulder is slowly getting back in shape after winning an inline world title in November. He skated 35.15 in pair four and was in the lead until the top six ranked skaters appeared on the ice.

Was and Nico Ihle (GER) both neated Mulder's time. Was finished in 34.97, with the fastest opener of the day in 9.59. Ihle finished in 35.11. Neither Jan Smeekens (NED) nor Tae-Bum Mo (KOR) could kick Mulder off the podium, but Pavel Kulizhnikov was yet to come. He edged out Was with 34.93 with a superb 25.1 full lap. Laurent Dubreuil (CAN), second in the World Cup, had to settle for sixth place behind Rusland Murashov (RUS), who reached 35.20. Was shook his head with a smile and sighed: 'it was really close'.

Kulizhnikov retained the lead in the World Cup with 680 points, Dubreuil held on to second place with 516, and Was moved past Smeekens and Mo up to third place with 440 points.

Nuis takes revenge in the 1000m

In the 1000m Kjeld Nuis managed to beat Pavel Kulizhnikov for the first time this season. They Both opened in 16.3 and continued with a 25.2 lap, faster than everybody else. In the final lap Nuis pulled out a 27.1 versus 27.3 for Kulizhnikov. Nuis took gold with 1:08.76 and Kulizhnikov finished in second place with 1:08.76.

Denny Morrison (CAN) set a mark of 1:09.35 in pair six and his time was challenged in the last three pairs. Hein Otterspeer beat Olympic Champion Stefan Groothuis (NED) and took over the lead with 1:09.17. Groothuis finished right behind Morrison with 1:09.45.

In the next pair Ihle started with 16.3 edged out Otterspeer with 1:09.06 to take the lead. Eventually he had to settle for bronze after Nuis and Kulizhnikov broke the 1:09.00 barrier in the final pair.

Nothing changed in the order of the top 7 skaters in the World Cup: Kulizhnikov leads with 430 points. Nuis is second with 351, Schwarz and Ihle follow with 281 and 266.

Kjeld Nuis said: "I finally beat that guy. I saw him make a couple of mistakes in the 500m. Starting in the outerlane, I knew I had to stay close from the start. My coach doesn't show laps, but I looked at the Russian board and saw 16.3. Then I knew it went well. I am confident towards the World Championships because 'he' is beatable."

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 continues tomorrow February 8 in Heerenveen with the same program.

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ISU World Cup Speed Skating Heerenveen (NED) - Medal Winners day 1

500 m Ladies

1	Heather Richardson	USA	37.82
2	Nao Kodaira	JPN	38.14
3	Brittany Bowe	USA	38.21

500 m Men

1	Pavel Kulizhnikov	RUS	34.93
2	Artur Was	POL	34.97
3	Nico Ihle	GER	35.11

1000 m Ladies

1	Heather Richardson	USA	1:14.87
2	Brittany Bowe	USA	1:15.38

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3	Qishi Li	CHN	1:15.89
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1000 m Men

1	Kjeld Nuis	NED	1:08.76
2	Pavel Kulizhnikov	RUS	1:08.97
3	Nico Ihle	GER	1:09.06

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