

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: AVENUE JUSTE-OLIVIER 17 CH 1006 LAUSANNE SWITZERLAND
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 77 E-MAIL: media@isu.ch

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For immediate release

ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2015/16 – Calgary (CAN) Day 1

When Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) took the ice at the Calgary Olympic Oval on Friday, everybody held his breath. Would the Russian youngster be able to beat the 34 second barrier in the Men's 500m on the first day of the first World Cup event of the 2015/2016 season? He wasn't, but Kulizhnikov sure set a mark when he destroyed the field with a Russian national record in 34.11.

Martina Sáblíková (CZE) started her campaign for a tenth consecutive long distance World Cup victory with a gold medal in the first 3000m race of the season. Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) won the Ladies 500m and Sven Kramer (NED) took gold in the Men's 5000m on Friday. Calgary's Olympic Oval again proved to be one of the fastest 400m rinks in the world. In total ten national records and 67 personal bests were set on the first of three competition days in Canada.

Kulizhnikov

Mika Poutala (FIN) set the mark in the first pair of the men's 500m. The 32-year-old sprinter broke his own Finnish national record when he beat Kjeld Nuis (NED) in 34.28. Poutala's explosion increased the expectations about a possible world record, but one after the other skater bit the dust in their efforts to beat the Fin's 34.28. Home skater William Dutton (CAN) came closest when he set 36.46 in the third pair.

Only when Kulizhnikov entered the rink in the penultimate pair Poutala had to bow his head. The Russian opened in 9.64, made a minor mistake in the first corner, but still set the third best time ever: 34.11. Only Jeremy Wotherspoon (CAN) was faster with 34.03 in Salt Lake City (2007) and 34.05 in Calgary (2008). Ronald Mulder (NED) and Laurent Dubreuil (CAN) were not able to reach the podium with 34.48 (4th) and 34.69 (8th) in the final pair. Poutala thus took silver and Dutton bronze.

Sáblíková picks up where she left off

Martina Sáblíková picked up her skating skills easily after she qualified as a cyclist for the Olympic Summer Games 2016 in Rio de Janeiro last September. The Czech endurance specialist took gold in the 3000m in 3:57.21 to win her fourth 3000m/5000m World Cup race in a row. Only two other skaters managed to stay under 4 minutes. Irene Schouten (NED) finished second in 3:58.39 (PB) and Natalya Voronina (RUS) third in 3:58.78. Voronina's time was a Russian national record.

Before Sáblíková took the ice in the penultimate pair, Marije Joling (NED) attacked the times of Schouten and Voronina. The Dutch lady was at world record pace halfway her race against Ivanie Blondin (CAN), could not maintain that speed but still managed to set a personal best in 4:00.48 to end up sixth. Blondin also set a personal best to finish seventh in 4:02.19. Dutch ladies Jorien Voorhuis (4:00.39) and Annouk van der Weijden (4:00.45, PB) finished 4th and 5th.

Marina Zuyeva set a Belarussian record when she skated 4:08.95 in the B Division.

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Lee reigns in 500m again

Sang-Hwa Lee was the only woman to skate below 37 seconds (36.96), when she beat Brittany Bowe (USA) in the penultimate pair of the Ladies 500m. The double Olympic 500m champion is back to her success coach in Calgary and seems more dominant than last season. Bowe skated a personal best in 37.22 to grab a bronze medal. China's Hong Zhang took the silver medal in 37.18.

Last season's 500m World Cup winner Nao Kodaira (JPN) skated a disappointing 38.01 in the final pair to end up 11th. Heather Richardson (USA), who finished 3rd in last season's 500m World Cup defeated Jorien ter Mors (NED) with 37.29 in the third last pair and ended up fourth. Ter Mors, who skated at the ISU World Cup Short Track in Toronto last week, ended up ninth after crushing her personal best with almost a second (37.82) in the ninth 500m race of her career. Vanessa Bittner finished fifth in a new Austrian record: 37.49.

Kramer takes 31st long distance win

In the final event of the first World Cup day in Calgary Ted-Jan Bloemen took the second Canadian medal in the history of the 5000m. He set a national record of 6:12.72 in the first pair and his time proved to be good enough for the bronze medal. Belgian Bart Swings (6:14.04) came close in the sixth pair but he had to settle for the fifth place after the favourites took the ice in the two final pairs.

Jorrit Bergsma set the mark for compatriot Sven Kramer, when he skated 6:10.44 in the penultimate pair. In his slipstream Patrick Beckert (GER) managed the fourth time, 6:13.14, barely missing the national record. Kramer faced Sverre Lunde Pedersen (NOR), who had shown early season form with the fastest ever 3000m in a test race last week. The Norwegian however was not able to threaten Kramer. He finished seventh in 6:17.53 and saw Kramer finish far ahead in 6:08.61. It was Kramer's 31st 5000m/10000m World Cup gold, which is a record. No other skater has won more than 22.

In the B Division of the Men's 5000m another four national records were set. Iñigo Vidondo (ESP) skated a Spanish best in 6:43.71. Peter Michael (NZL) just beat Shane Dobbin's old New Zealand's mark with 6:15.19 and after eight years, Vitalij Mikhailov (BLR) brought his own NR down to 6:22.52. Viktor Hald Thorup brought the Danish NR to 6:22.40.

Additional information

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Results: <http://www.isureresults.eu/>

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For further information please contact

ISU Media Coordinator

Selina Vanier

Phone: +41 21 612 66 66

email: vanier@isu.ch

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ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2015/16 – Calgary (CAN) Day 1, medal winners

3000m Ladies

| | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----|-----------|
| 1 | Martina Sáblíková | CZE | 3:57.21 |
| 2 | Irene Schouten | NED | 3:58.39 P |
| 3 | Natalya Voronina | RUS | 3:58.78 N |

500m Ladies

| | | | |
|---|---------------|-----|---------|
| 1 | Sang-Hwa Lee | KOR | 36.96 |
| 2 | Hong Zhang | CHN | 37.18 P |
| 3 | Brittany Bowe | USA | 37.22 P |

500m Men

| | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----|---------|
| 1 | Pavel Kulizhnikov | RUS | 34.11 N |
| 2 | Mika Poutala | FIN | 34.28 N |
| 3 | William Dutton | CAN | 34.46 |

5000m Men

| | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----|-----------|
| 1 | Sven Kramer | NED | 6:08.61 |
| 2 | Jorrit Bergsma | NED | 6:10.44 |
| 3 | Ted-Jan Bloemen | CAN | 6:12.72 N |