

# INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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**Press release**

**Astana, December 4, 2016**

## **ISU Speed Skating World Cup Astana Day 3 #WCSpeed**

China's Jing Yu and Japan's Miho Takagi took their second gold medal of the ISU Speed Skating World Cup in Astana on Sunday. Russia dominated the Men's events with gold for Ruslan Murashov in the 500m and Denis Yuskov in the 1500m.

### **Yu spearheads Asian Ladies in sprint**

Asia reigns Ladies' sprinting this World Cup season. China's Jing Yu won the 500m on Friday and Sunday, after Japan's Nao Kodaira had taken gold in the first three 500m World Cup races in Harbin and Nagano earlier this season. Japan's Maki Tsuji and Erina Kamiya took silver and bronze in Astana on Sunday. The first five skaters came from China and Japan.

Kamiya was the first to break the 38 second barrier with 37.88 in the second last pair versus compatriot Arisa Go, who clocked 38.00 to finish fifth. Despite setting the fastest full lap (27.1) again on Sunday, China's Hong Zhang was a little slower than Kamiya in the penultimate pair: 37.94. Zhang eventually finished fourth.

The Ladies' 500m ended with a climax, when Yu and Tsuji fought for gold in the close last pair. Tsuji opened a bit faster with 10.30 versus 10.38, but Yu countered with a 27.2 full lap to finish in 37.64. Tsuji clocked 27.82 after a 27.5 full lap.

Korea's 500m World Champion Sang-Hwa Lee, who finished third on Friday, skipped Sunday's race. She dropped to fourth place in the World Cup ranking with 275 points. The absent Kodaira dropped to third place with 300 points. Tsuji climbed to second with 325 points and Yu tops the list with 372 points.

### **Third career World Cup gold for Murashov**

Ruslan Murashov took his career third World Cup win in the Men's 500m. The Russian edged out compatriot Pavel Kulizhnikov and Poland's Artur Wás. With 34.52 Murashov equaled the track record Dai Dai Ntab set on Saturday. The Dutchman clocked 34.74 to finish fourth on Sunday.

Murashov took full advantage of finishing in his favorite outer lane. The 23-year-old Russian skated the fastest full lap in 24.8 after a 9.65 split at the first straight. Wás was the fastest starter with a 9.45 opener in a close race versus Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen. The Polish sprinter did not have Lorentzen's speed in the full lap, but finished ahead of the Norwegian. Wás clocked 34.68 and Lorentzen crossed the line in 34.87 to finish tenth. The first thirteen skaters all skated under 35 seconds.

Kulizhnikov also had the outer lane finish on Sunday. He opened in 9.66, but could not match Murashov's full lap and finished in 34.59. Despite having won only one of the five 500m races this season, the Russian stays well on top of the World Cup ranking with 380 points. Ntab climbed to second place with 227 points. Finnish Mika Poutala, who was ninth on Sunday, is third with 208 points, followed by Murashov with 205 points.

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## **Super weekend for Takagi**

After winning her first individual World Cup gold in the 1000m on Saturday, Miho Takagi immediately took her second victory in the 1500m on Sunday. With 1:56.36 the 22-year-old Japanese lady left silver and bronze to Dutch Marrit Leenstra (1:56.89) and Jorien ter Mors (1:57.28).

Ter Mors, who made her first World Cup appearance this season in Astana, had to skate solo in the first heat. Being a little sick, the reigning World Champion had doubts about skating on Sunday, but she decided to start in order to save an A division spot for next week's World Cup weekend in Heerenveen. Despite her physical problems, Ter Mors' 1:57.28 stood on top until the penultimate pair with Takagi.

Takagi started slower many and she was 0.12 seconds down on Ter Mors at the 1100m spit, but with 31.3, she cruised past Ter Mors in her final lap. Marrit Leenstra challenged Takagi with faster 300m, 700m and 1100m splits, but her 32.7 in the final lap proved a little too slow in the final lap.

Leenstra did take the lead from absent Heather Bergsma with 230 points in the 1500m World Cup standings. Takagi also passed the American and climbed to second with 200 points. After having won the first two 1500m races in Harbin and Nagano, Bergsma now comes third with 200 points.

## **Yuskov superior in 1500m**

Denis Yuskov did not leave any doubts on the Astana rink. The twofold Russian 1500m World Champion was the only one to skate under 1:46 in the Men's 1500m, when he clocked 1:45.50. Shota Nakamura took his first individual World Cup medal winning silver in 1:46.24 and Joey Mantia took bronze in 1:46.54.

Yuskov took on Saturday's 1000m winner Vincent De Haitre in the penultimate pair. The Russian started cautiously and had to hold back at the first crossing to give his Canadian opponent priority from the outer lane. De Haitre had the fastest spits of the field at 300m, 700m and 1100m, but Yuskov chased him down easily in the final lap. De Haitre's lap time went from 27.8 to 30.1, whereas Yuskov went from 26.9 to 28.0 in his last two laps. The Canadian eventually clocked 1:47.57 to finish 15<sup>th</sup>.

In the final pair 1500m World Cup leader Joey Mantia faced compatriot Shani Davis. The Americans were close to Yuskov's split times in the first half of the race, but could not keep up with the Russian in the second part. Mantia not only had to bow his head for Yuskov, but also for Nakamura. The Japanese prodigy skated a balanced race with a 23.9 opener and 26.5, 27.3 and 28.3 laps.

Mantia retained his lead with 220 points in the 1500m World cup classification. Yuskov climbed to 2<sup>nd</sup> place with 180 points and absent Sven Kramer is still third with 145.

## **Blondin sprints to victory**

Ivanie Blondin took her second Mass Start World Cup win of the 2016/17 season. The Canadian dominated the sprint after a fast race. Nana Takagi (JPN) finished second and Bo-Reum Kim (KOR) third.

Claudia Pechstein made pace in the first laps. Dutch Annouk van der Weijden countered a lot of

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attacks in order guide compatriot Irene Schouten to a final sprint. Heading into the penultimate lap Van der Weijden made pace, but instead of Schouten, Blondin and Francesca Lollobrigida jumped behind her back. Schouten could not catch up after she missed the decisive moment and struggled to eventually cross the line twelfth. Blondin entered the final straight leading the pack and she did not give way to Takagi, who almost crashed after a miss-stroke on the final straight. Kim sprinted to bronze on the outside.

With two golds and one silver medal (280 points), Blondin confidently leads the World Cup standings. Kim is second with 240 points and Francesca Lollobrigida, who finished 7<sup>th</sup>, is third with 190 points.

## **Mass Start Men**

Andrea Giovannini surprised the pack in the Men's Mass Start to take his second career World Cup win. Dutch Evert Hoolwerf finished second and Korea's Seung-Hoon Lee took the bronze.

Peter Michael took the initiative in the Men's race. The 27-year-old former Inline Skating World Champion, who won New Zealand's first ever World Cup gold in speed skating in the 5000m on Friday, attacked time and again. Dutch Arjen Stroetinga countered and he got help from Seung-Hoon Lee to catch Michael. After the last intermediate sprint, the pace dropped dramatically and Giovannini took advantage. The Italian jumped and instantly took a 80m gap.

Evert Hoolwerf tried to chase Giovannini down, but his effort was too little too late. The Dutchman had to settle for silver and Seung-Hoon Lee retained his World cup lead winning bronze. The Korean has 182 points. Fabio Francolini (ITA) is second with 141 points, followed by compatriot Giovannini with 140 points.

For full results of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series 2016/17 please refer to <http://www.isureults.eu/> and <http://www.isu.org/en/speed-skating/series/isu-world-cup-speed-skating>

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series continues next week in Heerenveen (NED).

## **About ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2016/17 Series**

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating circuit consists of six events across Asia and Europe. The series starts in Harbin (CHN) on November 11-13 and moves to Nagano (JPN) on November 18-20. In December the Series goes to Europe stopping in Astana (KAZ) on December 2-4 and to Heerenveen (NED) on December 9-11. On January 27-19 2017 the fifth leg of the event will be in Berlin (GER) and the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final will take place in Chelyabinsk (RUS) on March 10-12. The full ISU Calendar of Events is available here:

<http://www.isu.org/en/news-and-events/calendar-of-events>

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>

## **ISU World Cup Speed Skating Astana (KAZ) medalists**

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## 500m Ladies

1	Jing Yu	CHN	37.64
2	Maki Tsuji	JPN	37.82
3	Erina Kamiya	JPN	37.88

## 500m Men

1	Ruslan Murashov	RUS	34.52 =TR
2	Pavel Kulizhnikov	RUS	34.59
3	Artur Wás	POL	34.68

## 1500m Ladies

1	Miho Takagi	JPN	1:56.36
2	Marrit Leenstra	NED	1:56.89
3	Jorien ter Mors	NED	1:57.28

## 1500m Men

1	Denis Yuskov	RUS	1:45.50
2	Shota Nakamura	JPN	1:46.24
3	Joey Mantia	USA	1:46.54

## Mass Start Ladies

1	Ivanie Blondin	CAN	8:29.28
2	Nana Takagi	JPN	8:29.46
3	Bo-Reum Kim	KOR	8:29.51

## Mass Start Men

1	Andrea Giovannini	ITA	7:31.57
2	Evert Hoolwerf	NED	7:34.28
3	Seung-Hoon Lee	KOR	7:34.79