

Press release

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Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Dordrecht, NED, Day 1

Canada's skaters laid down a significant marker on day one of the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating event in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, showing the watching world that the home nation will not have it all their own way at the looming PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

A haul of two golds, two silvers and a bronze medal was a fine return for the Canadian team, particularly after the Republic of Korea had swept all but one gold in the season-opening event in Budapest last weekend.

The evergreen Marianne St-Gelais (CAN) led the way with a stunning display in the ladies' 500m. The 27-year-old, who is aiming to compete in her third Olympic Games next year, flew round the rink bringing home compatriot Kim Boutin in the silver medal position, with Italy's Martina Valcepina in third. For St-Gelais, it was the ideal preparation for a goal that consumes her every waking hour.

"You have to think about PyeongChang 2018 every move, every step is for the Games," she said. "We don't have many races left against our opponents, so when you have the shot, you have to take it."

With woman-of-the-moment, Choi Min Jeong (KOR) – four-time gold medallist last weekend – missing out on the final after picking up a penalty in her semi-final, and overall 2017 ISU World Champion Elise Christie (GBR) also absent due to a recurring thigh injury, St-Gelais was free to stamp her authority on the sprint event.

"Honestly, I like having the Games in mind. I wake up every morning knowing it is my last shot. I am getting old," she added with a glint in her eye. "It doesn't stress me, it gives me wings. I don't want any regrets."

Compatriot Samuel Girard (CAN) was equally relieved to park his lingering regrets as he stormed to 500m gold in the men's A final. The 2016 ISU World Championship overall bronze medallist was penalised in the first men's final of the day, the 1500m. A decision he was phlegmatic, if disappointed about.

"It was the ref's call. I can't change it, it is part of the game," Girard said. Perhaps fuelled by a certain sense of injustice, the Canadian was in total control of the 500m from the gun.

"It was good, I really controlled the pace from the start, it was the perfect execution of my strategy," he said.

The 2017 ISU 500m World Champion, Sjinkie Knegt (NED), sent the Dutch crowd wild with a huge last lap propelling him into the silver medal position by the tightest of margins. After a photo-finish, the Dutchman took the fans' acclaim, finishing 0.004 seconds ahead of Hwang Dae Heon (KOR).

“It’s amazing to skate in front of such a crowd, it gives me a little bit extra,” Knegt said with a smile.

Hwang had already enjoyed the top of the podium, with a powerful closing two laps to claim victory in the men’s 1500m final. After finishing second twice in Budapest, it was an important step for another of the Republic of Korea’s outstanding talents.

In contrast, Hungary’s Shaolin Sandor Liu was delighted to take silver, his performance representing a considerable step up from what he produced in Budapest.

“Last weekend I was eighth, so I was just pleased there were only six in this final!” laughed Liu. “I felt much stronger at the end but I was a bit scared to risk it all (on the last lap).

“Most people say second place is the first loser, but I am happy with that.”

With 32 PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Games qualification places up for grabs during the four-event 2017 Audi ISU World Cup Short Track series, Liu knows every race is vital.

Canadian veteran Charles Hamelin continued to defy his 33 years, sealing third place in the men’s 1500m.

The day had started as many expected with the Republic of Korea’s irrepressible Choi seeming to float round the rink as she won gold in the ladies’ 1500m. Cryptically, the young skater revealed afterwards that she “didn’t expect to win” – in which case she was in a minority.

“I do feel great,” Choi said, “Not unbeatable, but great. I was just doing my best. I am trying to feel more calm, with less pressure on the ice.”

Compatriot Shim Suk Hee (KOR) took bronze, separated from Choi by Canada’s Valerie Maltais.

It proved a tough day for Great Britain’s world champion, Elise Christie. Suffering from a thigh injury she picked up in Budapest, Christie fell in the 1500m and was subsequently unable to compete.

“It’s very weak. It hurts as soon as I go in the racing position. I tried but I couldn’t do it,” she said. “It’s nothing too serious. I am not worried, I expect to make a full recovery by the Asian World Cup events (in November). I just want to get home and get it better.”

The action continues tomorrow with the ladies’ 1000m the first final.

Full [results and classifications](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using **#WCShortTrack** and **#ShortTrackSkating** and watch the live stream on the [ISU Skating Channel](#).

About Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating 2017/18 Series and qualification system for PyeongChang 2018

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The Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating consists of four events during the Olympic season; Budapest (September 28-October 1), Dordrecht (October 5-8), Shanghai (November 9-12) and Seoul (November 16-19). The 2017/18 Series is also the Olympic Qualifying events for the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games.

The competitions have a single distance character and are held in separate sessions. The first two days of the event are dedicated to all Qualifying Rounds. On the third and fourth days the last Qualifying Rounds take place before the World Cup session. A and B Finals are held for each distance 500m, 1000m and 1500m. Skaters qualify for A and B Finals only through the Semi-Finals. Men and Ladies also compete in the Team Relay races, 3000m for Ladies and 5000m for Men. Each team consists of four competing Skaters. Skaters gain World Cup points from each distance they compete in during the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating series. The Skater with the most World Cup points at the end of the season wins the distance World Cup.

A total of 110 Olympic spaces are up for grabs during the four Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating events. As the host country, the Republic of Korea automatically qualifies five Ladies and five Men. However, all other ISU Members must compete in the Audi ISU World Cup series in order to qualify up to five Ladies and five Men (quota including a qualified Relay Team), or up to three Ladies and three Men (quota excluding a qualified Relay Team).

Quota places per gender are earned based on the results achieved by the ISU Members competing at the four Audi ISU World Cup Events. Skaters ranked within the top 32 (top eight for the Team Relay) in the World Cup classification of the individual distances will qualify for PyeongChang 2018. If an ISU Member has more than 3 Skaters ranked in the top 32 or decides not to use a spot, skaters on the waiting list will qualify (e.g. athlete ranked 33 in a distance World Cup Classification will take the next available spot).