

Press release

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Decision time for Olympic quotas in Calgary and Salt Lake City

Japan leads the medal table with ten gold medals after two of the six events into the 2017/18 ISU World Cup speed skating series. Norway and the Netherlands both took four gold medals. After fierce competition at the sea-level rinks of Heerenveen (NED) and Stavanger (NOR), the high-altitude tracks of Calgary (1-3 December) and Salt Lake City (8-10 December) are ready for some superfast racing.

With the first four World Cups determining the quota places per NOC for the Olympic Winter Games 2018 in PyeongChang, there's a lot at stake in the next two weeks.

Kodaira (JPN) in record breaking form

Japan collected a total of 14 medals in the first two World Cup legs, thirteen of which in the ladies' events. [Daichi Yamanaka](#)'s 500m silver in Stavanger was the only Japanese medal in the men's competition so far.

[Nao Kodaira](#) was Japan's main supplier of gold medals, winning all four 500m races and the two 1000m races as well. She's on a streak of twelve consecutive 500m World Cup wins at the moment.

The 31-year-old 500m World Champion could be off to a world record in Calgary or Salt Lake City. She posted a track record 37.07 at sea-level Stavanger. [Sang-Hwa Lee](#)'s 2013 high altitude Salt Lake City world record is 36,36.

After a season of injuries Lee seems to be back on track, but Kodaira is in a league of her own at the moment.

"She's fast, but I'm slowly catching up", Lee said in Stavanger. The 28-year-old Olympic champion is second in the 500m World Cup ranking.

Bergsma (USA) to challenge Takagi (JPN)

Kodaira's compatriot [Miho Takagi](#) has dominated the 1500m so far this season. She is chased by Dutch [Lotte van Beek](#) and [Heather Bergsma](#) (USA), who are second and third in the standings.

Bergsma has not reached her usual top level yet, but she may find new inspiration back on the North American continent.

Bergsma is confident that her form will grow into the season: "I need a little more rest. I did two [skating] marathons before the season and last weekend a mass start. It all adds up. Once I rest a little, my laps will become better."



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Blondin (CAN) on home ice

In Calgary both the 500m and the 1500m are scheduled on Sunday. The event starts with the endurance specialists in the ladies' 3000m and the men's 5000m on Friday.

Due to a back injury, [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE) has not been able to dominate the longer distances like she did in the past couple of years. She came 7th in the 3000m in Heerenveen, and 3rd in the 5000m in Stavanger.

[Claudia Pechstein](#) was the surprise 5000m winner in Norway. "Some of the other athletes could be my daughters," she laughed.

In Calgary the endurance specialists face a 3000m, in which Pechstein probably lacks the speed of some of her younger opponents.

[Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) won the Heerenveen 3000m and is keen to add another World Cup gold to her belt, but [Ivanie Blondin](#) (CAN) is in pole position. The Canadian starts as the 3000/5000m World Cup leader on home ice.

Kramer (NED) versus Bloemen (CAN)

The men will face a 5000m in Calgary, with [Sven Kramer](#) (NED) confidently leading the 5000m/10000m World Cup

Canada's [Ted-Jan Bloemen](#) had to bow his head in both Heerenveen (5000m) and Stavanger (10000m), but he's not far behind and the Calgary home ice might give him an extra edge.

[Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) has been one of Kramer's main challengers since many years, but he didn't quite find his form yet this season.

After the Dutch men came tenth in the Team Pursuit in Heerenveen because Bergsma couldn't keep up with the starting pace, the Olympic 10000m champion was cut from the team for the Calgary World Cup. He will be eager to show something at the 5000m and the mass start in Canada.

Fast Norwegian men

The men's shorter distances seem to be anyone's game this season, but Norway has been the most successful nation so far this season.

[Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen](#) (NOR) won two 500m races, with [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) and [Ronald Mulder](#) (NED) taking the other two 500m golds.

Dubreuil explained how competitive this event has become this season:

"In the second 500m at the World Cup in Stavanger the gap between the winner and the number 16 was only 0.4 seconds.

"There's no room for mistakes, you need to bring it every day. There's at least 15 guys contending for an Olympic gold medal."



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There's at least 15 guys who can win the Calgary 500m too, and [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) is one of them. The world record holder skipped the Stavanger World Cup due to a groin injury, but he is on the start list for the races in Canada.

With Lorentzen on top in the 500m, Norway's men dominated the 1500m with four skaters in the top ten in Stavanger. [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) took gold and [Sindre Henriksen](#) bronze, while prodigy [Allan Dahl Johansson](#) and veteran [Håvard Bøkko](#) took sixth and tenth place.

Russia's [Denis Yuskov](#), who had won the Heerenveen 1500m, did not skate in Stavanger, but he'll be back in Calgary. [Joey Mantia](#) (USA) who came 5th in Heerenveen and 2nd in Stavanger, leads the 1500m World Cup ranking.

[Shani Davis](#)' (USA) Salt Lake City 1500m world record (1.41,04) is eight years old. Davis himself is 11th in the current World Cup ranking.

Team Pursuit

In the Men's Team Pursuit Olympic champion the Netherlands is under pressure. After their tenth place in Heerenveen, they have to set the record straight in Calgary and Salt Lake City to qualify for PyeongChang.

Korea is in the driver's seat after their Heerenveen gold, with Norway second and New Zealand third.

In the ladies' event Japan, who won the Team Pursuit World Cup in the past two seasons, are on top. Netherlands and Canada are second and third.

ISU World Cup Speed Skating World Cup Series and PyeongChang 2018

The first four World Cup events of the 2017/18 season, Heerenveen (Nov 10 - Nov 12), Stavanger (Nov 17 - Nov 19), Calgary (Dec 01 - Dec 03) and Salt Lake City (Dec 08 - Dec 10, 2017), will decide the quota places for each country at the ISU European Skating Championships 2018 in Kolomna and the XXIII Olympic Winter Games 2018 in PyeongChang.

At the PyeongChang a maximum of 180 total speed skaters will compete, 100 men and 80 women. Participants must be born before July 1, 2002 to be eligible. The overall quota per NOC/NF will be restricted, maximum 10 for women and 10 for men for NOCs/NFs that have been allocated quota places for all events/distances, including the Mass start and Team Pursuit events, and maximum 8 for women and 8 for men for other NOCs/NFs

The quota places for each country will be partially allocated, first based on the points ranking and then on the times ranking. Each country can earn a maximum of three quota places each for the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, men's 5000m and women's 3000m races. Two quota places per country are allowed for the men's 10,000m, women's 5000m and mass start races, and one team in the team pursuit race.



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