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Lausanne, Switzerland

Almaty awaits battle between old guard and new generation

After two fascinating meets in North America – Calgary and Salt Lake City – Short Track heads east to Almaty, Kazakhstan for the third ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating of the season. The event, held at the Halyk Arena from 7 to 9 December 2018, should help to clarify whether a new generation of skaters are ready to challenge for the highest honors or if the established guard will stay on top for a while yet.

The battle to be this season's finest female skater already looks like a two-woman race. The Netherlands' [Suzanne Schulting](#) dominated at the opener in Canada and looks almost unbeatable over 1000m. But at the Utah Oval in Salt Lake City, last year's top skater, the Republic of Korea's [Choi Min Jeong](#), brushed off the cobwebs after a slow start to the term to shoot back to the top of the rankings – particularly impressive in the 1500m. On form, nobody is as consistent over 500m, 1000m and 1500m.

Who might be able to break the duopoly? Poland's [Natalia Maliszewska](#) is still the field's elite sprinter, dominating the 500m (at which she's ranked No.1) – hotly pursued by young Canadian [Alyson Charles](#). Canada's [Kim Boutin](#) remains able to compete across all three races, while [Ekaterina Efremenkova](#) (RUS) is a danger in the 1500m. [Sofia Prosvirnova](#) (RUS) also looks capable of making more podiums.

In the Men's field, it's the Hungarians who have caught the eye most so far this winter. Not only did they shatter the 5000m Men's Relay world record in Calgary, but they've been excelling individually, too. [Shaolin Sandor Liu](#) (HUN) tops the rankings so far, and has looked particularly ruthless in his favored faster distances, the 500m and 1000m. His brother [Shaoang Liu](#) (HUN) isn't far behind – currently ranked fourth in the world. One or other of them always seems to be in contention. In the 1500m, young Republic of Korea athlete [Hwang Dae Heon](#) has been the most consistent.

Also in the mix? [Sjinkie Knegt](#) (NED) and [Charles Hamelin](#) (CAN). Some might point to last year's ISU World Cup in Budapest as the event where Hungary's skaters made a real mark, and in Almaty, Kazakhstan's racers will also want to prove a point on home ice. [Abzal Azhgaliyev](#) (KAZ) has been getting stronger, particularly in the 500m, while [Denis Nikisha](#) (KAZ) can also break into finals. [Anastassiya Krestova](#) (KAZ) leads the female Kazakh contingent.

Almaty itself should certainly impress, too: the Halyk Arena is a state-of-the-art venue built for the 2017 Winter Universiade – it's the perfect place to put #OneHandDown. This weekend's racing will feature 500m, 1000m and 1500m races for both genders. There will be a 3000m Ladies' Relay, 5000m Men's Relay and a 2000m Mixed Gender Relay. World Cup points will be scored, determined by finish. After Almaty, further ISU World Cup events will be held at Dresden (February 1-3) and Torino (February 8-10).

About ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating Series

The World Cup series consists of five Competitions. The competitions have a single distance character and are held in separate sessions. The first day is dedicated to all Qualifying Rounds. On the second and third days the last Qualifying Rounds (if necessary) are taking place preceding the World Cup session that day.

On the distances 500, 1000 and 1500 meters there are A and B Finals. Skaters qualify for A and B Finals only through the Semi-Finals. For the first time, Mixed Gender Relay races over 2000 meters will be held at each World Cup Competition. Mixed Gender Relay Teams shall be formed by four (2 Ladies & 2 Men) to eight (4 Ladies & 4 Men) Skaters, which are all considered as participants. During any Mixed Gender Relay race in a competition, a maximum of four (2 Ladies & 2 Men) Skaters shall compete. Ladies 3000 meters Relay races and Men 5000 meters Relay races are taking place with Teams of four to six Skaters, which are all considered as participants. During any Relay race in a competition, a maximum of four Skaters shall compete. Entries of Teams with less than four or more than six Skaters are not accepted. All Skaters of a team must belong to the same ISU Member.