

February 7, 2019

Torino, Italy

## **Fascinating subplots at season's final ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating**

The globe's finest Short Track Speed Skaters head to Torino, Italy this weekend (8-10 February) on a dual mission. They'll be tussling for [ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating 2018/19](#) points and medals, of course – but in the season's last meeting before the [ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships 2019 in Sofia](#), they'll also be looking to sharpen up, and assess their opponents' tactics prior to the calendar's biggest event.

The season so far has been highly enjoyable for neutral fans: you've never quite known where the next surprise winner is going to come from, and the skating has been of the very highest quality.

The Men's Short Track field has included two really consistent skaters this term: Hungary's [Shaoang Liu](#) – who has dominated the overall competition – and China's [Wu Dajing](#), who has proven the man to beat over 500m.

But Dajing missed last weekend's [ISU World Cup event in Dresden](#), while Liu crashed during the heats, breaking three bones in his hand. Dajing won't skate in Torino either, and although he's on the start list, it's uncertain whether Liu will be able to operate at full-tilt this weekend.

Given the additional absence of Dutch dynamo [Sjinkie Knegt](#) after a series of unfortunate off-ice injuries, the door was suddenly left open for other racers to step up and stake a claim in Dresden.

It was the Koreans who rose to the challenge. On Saturday, [Hwang Dae Heon](#) seized gold in the first 1000m, while [Kim Gun Woo](#) cut through the field on the final bend to take victory in the 1500m. The next day, [Lim Hyo Jun](#) grabbed 500m gold, while [Park Ji Won](#) completed a whitewash of Republic of Korea wins in the second 1000m.

Four races, four different Korean winners – and with [Lee June Seo](#) and [Hong Kyung Hwan](#) also featuring heavily this season, the world's strongest Short Track nation just keeps producing the goods.

The unity between their racers is a vital part of it. As Kim Gun Woo said in Dresden: "My teammates are very good, and that makes me better."

They'll be desperate to take that form into Torino and on to the World Championships, but Hungary's [Shaolin Sandor Liu](#), Canada's [Charles Hamelin](#) and Russia's [Semen Elistratov](#) should all play a part in proceedings, too. In short – it's wide open.

The Ladies' races this season have been thrilling for a different reason: an epic, ongoing two-way battle between the Netherlands' [Suzanne Schulting](#) and the Republic of Korea's [Choi Min Jeong](#) to prevail as the season's top racer.

Schulting has ruled over 1000m, while Choi has looked superior over 1500m, but the duo know that they can beat each other over any distance on the day, and will both go into Torino and the World Championships feeling bullish about their medal hopes.

[Sofia Prosvirnova](#) is the main threat to their duopoly: the young Russian is racing with more craft and skill than ever before, and looks full of confidence coming into Torino. She can threaten Choi and Schulting over the longer distances – and also duke it out with [Natalia Maliszewska](#) of Poland and [Petra Jaszapati](#) of Hungary in the 500m.

The gradual renaissance of Great Britain's [Elise Christie](#) is also a fascinating subplot to the season. The 2017 overall World Champion seems to be back in love with Short Track, and her fierce ambition might lead to her peaking at just the right time this season.

Also likely to contend are [Lara van Ruijven](#) (NED), [Kim Boutin](#) (CAN) and [Kim Ji Yoo](#) (KOR). As for the local crowd – they'll be pinning this weekend's medal hopes on sprint specialist [Martina Valcepina](#), who was on great form in Dresden.

All in all, it'll be a fascinating conclusion to a fine World Cup season – and an exciting aperitif for Sofia.

### **About ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series**

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating is a Series of international Speed Skating competitions which takes place annually. The Series started in 1984 and usually consists of six or seven Events including the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final. Skaters can earn points at each competition, and the Skater who has the most points on a given distance at the end of the Series is the World Cup winner of that distance. The World Cup Competitions held from November to December serve as qualifying events for entry quotas at the ISU European, World Single Distances, World Sprint and World Allround Speed Skating Championships. A number of World Cup titles are awarded every season; For Men: 500m, 1000m, 1500m, combined 5000m / 10,000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For Ladies 500m, 1000m, 1500m, the combined 3000m / 5000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint.