

November 2, 2019

Salt Lake City, USA

Short Track legend An anchors Russia to Salt Lake success as World Cup gets underway

Russia went home happiest as the first medals of the new season's ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating were handed out at Salt Lake City, USA, on Saturday.

[Victor An](#), the six-time Olympic champion who has returned from retirement, picked up silver in the Men's 500m before anchoring his country to a thrilling gold medal in the Mixed Gender 2000m relay.

His compatriot [Semen Elistratov](#) won the Men's 1500m with Alexander Shulginov taking bronze over the same distance.

Short Track powerhouse Republic of Korea had a comparatively slow day, but [Hwang Dae Heon](#) did secure gold ahead of An in the Men's 500m, while Kim Dong Wook took Men's 1500m silver on his World Cup debut.

In the Ladies' events, some familiar names graced the podium. [Martina Valcepina](#) (ITA) backed up her strong 2018/19 campaign by sprinting to the first Ladies' 500m gold of the year, while a rejuvenated [Kim Boutin](#), of Canada, showed impressive speed to triumph in the Ladies' 1500m final.

Ladies' 500m (1)

The Ladies' 500m final featured four of last season's top five skaters. Only world champion [Lara van Ruijven](#) (NED) was missing after she finished third in a tough quarterfinal won by Poland's [Natalia Maliszewska](#) ahead of China's five-time world champion over the sprint distance [Fan Kexin](#).

Fan slipped on the last lap of her semifinal to miss out on the opportunity to race for a medal.

The A final saw Italy's Martina Valcepina storm to a blistering start, immediately putting metres between herself and the other skaters. Behind her the scramble to catch up took its toll as Maliszewska crashed out.

"It was a really good race, I felt great," Valcepina said. "My start has always been the best part of my race."

Yara van Kerkhof (NED) was able to hold off Hungary's [Petra Jaszapati](#) for silver.

"Martina always starts fast, so I was prepared," she said. "I thought maybe it was going to happen, and it did, so I could take advantage of that."

Jaszapati was delighted with her bronze medal and her time of 42.962 seconds.

“I was very surprised at my time,” she said. “At home we don’t have a fast track like here. I think I was consistent, which I was happy about.”

Men’s 500m (1)

Hwang Dae Heon and [Wu Dajing](#) renewed their rivalry in the Men’s 500m. Republic of Korea’s Hwang is reigning world champion at this distance while Wu is China’s reigning Olympic champion, and they faced off again in the final at Salt Lake City.

The pair faced stiff competition from reigning European 500m champion [Shaoang Liu](#) (HUN) and Russia’s Victor An.

An qualified for the semifinal as one of the two fastest third-place skaters, and timed his run perfectly to edge out 2019 world bronze medallist [Ren Ziwei](#) (CHN) on the line for a place in the final. The Russian produced another strong performance to pick up silver in the final, coming through Liu and Wu on the line.

Hwang dominated to take gold, while Liu was able to hold off Wu for bronze.

Afterwards Hwang revealed he had been aiming to break his own world record of 39.505, set last year in Salt Lake City. Although he fell short by three-tenths of a second, he said he was still happy with the result.

“Just to win is enough for me,” Hwang said. “I’m more focused for the next race now.”

Bronze medallist Liu said: “There was three legends in the race – not including me. It was hard.

“In the fifth World Cup of last season I got an injury to my hand, so it’s pretty good to come back. My goal’s always top three or top five.”

Ladies’ 1500m

Reigning world and Olympic champion [Choi Min Jeong](#) (KOR) missed out on the final of the Ladies’ 1500m after finishing fourth in a slow semifinal which was controlled superbly by China’s [Han Yutong](#) and eight-time Olympic medallist [Arianna Fontana](#).

In a fascinating final Fontana went out hard but faded as the race progressed. Canadian champion Kim Boutin held off repeated challenges to come through ahead of the rest of the field, trailed by last season’s overall World Cup winner from the Netherlands, [Suzanne Schulting](#), and Han. Han overhauled [Kim Alang](#) (KOR) on the last lap to take bronze.

Schulting said she was impressed with the quality of the contest.

“It was a really strong final,” she said. “The finals are stronger than last year, if you compare to the first World Cup. It’s great to skate the first race and the first final as a final that’s this strong, with these great skaters.

“I’m really happy with my second place. Kim was just a little stronger today.”

Men's 1500m

Korea has sent a team including several World Cup debutants to Salt Lake City, and Park In Wook and Kim Dong Wook underlined the strength in depth in the Republic as they won their respective semifinals in the Men's 1500m.

In the final, Kim showed few signs of nerves as he held position in the middle of the pack. He moved into medal contention in the closing stages and held off a fast-finishing [Alexander Shulginov](#) (RUS) for silver. Park was in with a chance at a medal until the final lap, when a crash brought an end to his hopes.

PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Games bronze medallist Semen Elistratov (RUS) paced the final brilliantly, though, moving through steadily from the back of the pack to take the lead on the 10th lap and hold it for the rest of the final.

"I'm very happy," Elistratov said. "This summer I was training together with team Hungary. Hungary is very, very strong, so thank you so much to team Hungary and to team Russia. There's a lot of emotion."

Shulginov, who had led the race in the early stages, came back strongly on the final lap to take bronze ahead of Canada's [Charles Hamelin](#).

Mixed Gender 2000m relay

China's Fan Kexin led her team out to a strong start in the Mixed Gender 2000m relay, with Republic of Korea and Russia hot on her heels. As the race unfolded Russia eased into second spot, challenging China and putting distance on Korea with every lap.

Victor An was skating Russia's anchor leg and as China's Han Tianyu took a wide line on the final lap, An whipped through on the inside to secure victory.

Korea finished third, with Canada and the USA left trailing.

Russia's [Sofia Prosvirnova](#), who skated the third leg, said having An back on the team made the relay a special occasion.

"I don't race the Mixed Relay much, so it was really exciting, especially with Victor coming back," she said. "I'm glad of the result, I'm really proud of the team."

Where to watch and follow the ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating 2019/20

Viewers will be able to watch via their national broadcaster/channel and for countries where there are no broadcasters, the ISU will offer a live stream on the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#). You will find the full list in the Where to watch news [here](#).

Subscribe to the [ISU Newsletter](#) to receive the latest information and the "Where to Watch" news. You can also subscribe to the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#) to receive notifications when live streams start or new videos are published.

Highlights, clips, interviews, behind the scenes:

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For further information on ISU Short Track Speed Skating visit: <https://www.isu.org/short-track>.

ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating Series events 2019/20:

[Salt Lake City \(USA\) – November 1 - 2](#)

[Montréal \(CAN\) – November 8 – 10](#)

[Nagoya \(JPN\) – November 29 – December 1](#)

[Shanghai \(CHN\) – December 6 – 8](#)

[Dresden \(GER\) – February 7 – 9](#)

[Dordrecht \(NED\) – February 14 – 16](#)

About ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating Series

The World Cup series consists of nine distances 500, 1000 and 1500 meters for Ladies and Men, Ladies 3000 meters Team Relay, Men 5000 meters Team Relay and a Mixed Gender Relay over 2000 meters.

The competitions have a single distance character and are held in separate sessions over three days. Day 1 is dedicated to all Qualifying Rounds. Days 2 and 3 the last Qualifying Rounds (if necessary) take place, followed by the World Cup sessions.

For the Mixed Gender Relay Teams (2 Ladies & 2 Men), the Ladies 3000 meters Relay races and Men 5000 meters Relay races a maximum of four Skaters shall compete and must belong to the same ISU Member.