

January 14, 2021

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

Open playing field at ISU European Speed Skating Championships

It will be different in many respects, but the first international Speed Skating event of the Heerenveen Hub is bound to be spectacular. For the first time since 2005 both [Sven Kramer](#) and [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) will not be present at the ISU European Allround Speed Skating Championships. The multiple champions leave the field wide open to eager youngsters, while [Kai Verbij](#) (NED) and [Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT) will face tough competition in defense of their ISU European Sprint Speed Skating Championships title.

Two years ago, [Patrick Roest](#) (NED) seemed to be on track for his career first ISU European Allround Speed Skating title in Collalbo. As reigning ISU World Allround Speed Skating champion, Roest took the lead after day one, but eventually had to settle for silver behind teammate Kramer, who grabbed his record extending tenth ISU European Allround Speed Skating gold.

Competition from Norway

In Heerenveen Roest does not have to worry about his senior teammate, who did not manage to qualify at the Dutch trials in December. With a national record in the 10,000m, Roest himself showed excellent form at these races. As three-fold ISU World Speed Skating Champion, the Dutchman seems to be the natural heir to Kramer's throne, but he'll face tough competition from Norway.

[Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) (NOR) has been Kramer's and Roest's main rival in Allround tournaments for years. After a tough and injury hampered season, the 2019 bronze medalist, is back and ready to take up the challenge again. In the Norwegian team, Pedersen will be accompanied by youngsters [Hallgeir Engebråten](#) and [Peder Kongshaug](#) (NOR).

21-year-old Engebråten won 5000m silver at the ISU World Junior Speed Skating Championships in 2019 and already made his international senior debut in 2018. At age 19, Kongshaug still is eligible as a junior, but he was added to the Norwegian A Team last summer after winning the 1000m ISU World Junior Speed Skating title in 2020.

De Jong aims at back-to-back title

In the ladies' Allround Championships, [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) looks like she's the one to beat. The title holder showed great form at the Dutch trials, when she put her name on the wall as track record holder with a season's best of 3.57,32 in the 3000m.

De Jong doesn't have to worry about [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED), because, like Kramer, the five-time champion failed to qualify. Both Kramer and Wüst will be present at the ISU World Cup Speed Skating races and the ISU World Speed Skating Championships later during the Heerenveen Hub. At the ISU European Speed Skating Championships De Jong faces tough competition from another five-time champion: [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE), while Italian [Francesca Lollobrigida](#) (ITA), who won bronze in 2019, also hopes to have a shot at the podium again.

Question mark Kulizhnikov

The big question mark in the men's Sprint tournament is [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS). The world record holder in both the 500m and the 1000m tested positive for Covid-19 in December and Russia put him on the entry list as a substitute, but he might eventually skate.

Whether Kulizhnikov skates or not, the competition will be fierce for two-time champion and title holder [Kai Verbij](#) (NED). The Dutchman showed great form winning the 500m and taking silver in the 1000m at the Dutch trials in December, but the margin between success and failure is thin, especially in sprinting.

Olympic 500m champion [Håvard Lorentzen](#) is one of Verbij's main rivals. The Norwegian has been struggling with technical issues after his PyeongChang success, but he is back in shape and aiming to challenge Verbij after having come second behind the Dutchman in 2019.

Russia's [Viktor Mushtakov](#) is another contender. He won 500m bronze at the 2019 ISU World Speed Skating Championships in Inzell, but skating four stable races in a championships weekend could be a challenge for the powerful Russian.

Tough battle ahead for Herzog

[Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT) will have to fend off Dutch and Russian competition to defend her ISU European Sprint Speed Skating title successfully. [Jutta Leerdam](#) (NED) seems to be the best bet for the overall Sprint title. Not only did the reigning World and European 1000m champion skate the fastest 1000m this season, she also skated the season's second fastest 500m. Compatriot Femke Kok set the fastest 500m this season so far.

Russia starts with [Angelina Golikova](#), [Daria Kachanova](#) and [Irina Kuznetsova](#). Golikova skated the season's third 500m time in a track record in Kolomna on 24 December, but in the 1000m she only set the 15th fastest time of the season.

Where to Watch

Viewers will be able to watch the ISU Speed Skating competitions that will take place within the hub either 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](#).

All the information is available in the [Where to Watch](#) which will be updated after each competition. The individual announcements and entry lists will be published under the respective events as soon as they are available. For further information regarding the ISU Speed Skating Hub please visit: <https://www.isu.org/heerenveen2021>.

Subscribe to the [ISU Newsletter](#) to receive the latest information from the ISU and you can also subscribe to the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#) to receive notifications when live streams or new videos are published.

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