

March 4, 2021

Dordrecht, The Netherlands

New opportunities as the Netherlands welcomes the world's best Short Track Speed Skaters

The 2021 ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships take place in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, from March 5 to 7. The field is as wide open as it ever has been, following the withdrawal of the Republic of Korea and China teams from the competition.

Men's competition wide open

There have been only four Men's overall champions from outside these two nations this century. The 2019 ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Champion, [Lim Hyojun](#) (KOR) will not get to defend his title, nor will 2019/20 No.1-ranked skater [Park Ji Won](#) (KOR) get a shot at his first.

[Lee June Seo](#) (KOR), [Hwang Dae Heon](#) (KOR), 2016 overall winner [Han Tianyu](#) (CHN) and 500m specialist [Wu Dajing](#) (CHN) will also miss out.

There is added unpredictability due to the pandemic, too. As Israel's [Vladislav Bykanov](#) [told us recently](#), it is normally the first ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating race of the season where you see outsiders making it on to the podium, or big names struggling to get going.

This year, there have been no ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating events meaning the athletes' usual rhythm of peaking for the World Championships has not been possible.

The outcome of this was illustrated at the recent ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Gdansk, Poland, which was many of the continent's men's first race of the season. [Semen Elistratov](#) (RUS) won the title ahead of the Hungarian favorites, [Shaolin Sandor Liu](#) and his younger brother, [Shaoang Liu](#), who didn't seem at their brilliant race-fit best.

Meanwhile, [Pietro Sighel](#) (ITA), with a world ranking of 61st in 2019-20, came out of nowhere to win the 3000m Superfinal in Gdansk and finish second overall, and [Konstantin Ivliev](#) (RUS), ranked 35th, won the 500m.

Elistratov's recent brilliance – particularly in the 1000m and 1500m – and ample big-competition experience perhaps make him the ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships favorite.

But the Liu brothers, despite their uncharacteristic ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championship showing, will also fancy their chances in Dordrecht. The duo work as a team in this most individual of sports, blocking and covering for each other where possible.

It's also an opportunity for Canada's [Steven Dubois](#), who can be competitive in all three distances, to go for his first ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships podium.

The home team should have plenty to cheer too, however. While that will most likely be in the Ladies' field, with [Suzanne Schulting](#) going for the title, their men are also on the up. [Itzhak de Laat](#) has been steadily improving, finishing third overall in the ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships, and their top male racer of the last decade, [Sjinkie Knegt](#), also hinted at a return to form after a couple of years ruined by injuries.

It's a huge outside bet for the 2015 overall ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Champion Kneigt to grab the overall title again on his comeback. But then strange things have been happening for the last 12 months, so who can completely dismiss the possibility? It'd be some scene at the Optisport Sportboulevard if he got anywhere close.

Absence of Asian powerhouses creates opportunity for Schulting

The Ladies' competition will be seen by the most recent overall ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Champion, the Netherlands' [Suzanne Schulting](#), as a golden opportunity to claim a second title.

Schulting claimed her debut overall gold in Sofia, Bulgaria back in 2019, becoming only the second European to win the Ladies' title, after [Elise Christie](#) (GBR) in 2017.

The Dutch skater would have very much fancied her chances of triumphing at the 2020 ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Seoul, Republic of Korea, too, but the pandemic put paid to that opportunity.

The Olympic 1000m champion now has the chance to put that right. Schulting is skating on home ice, in form and brimming with confidence.

She enters the competition having just won her third consecutive ISU European Short Track Speed Skating overall title in Gdansk, Poland, and is the clear standout of the continent's Short Track Speed Skating skaters.

The Republic of Korea's [Choi Min Jeong](#), a three-time ISU World Short Track Speed Skating champion, her teammates [Kim Ji Yoo](#) and [Seo Whi Min](#), and the Chinese racer [Han Yutong](#) would probably have been her main rivals.

Canada's [Kim Boutin](#), the standout racer of 2019/20, has also decided to withdraw and focus on next year's Olympic season, while Christie's Great Britain squad have been ruled out due to travel restrictions.

Who, then, can possibly halt Schulting?

In the 500m, speed specialists [Martina Valcepina](#) (ITA), [Yara van Kerkhof](#) (NED) and [Natalia Maliszewska](#) (POL) will have their eye on gold.

In the 1000m and 1500m – in both of which Schulting is the top-ranked athlete – [Courtney Lee Sarault](#) (CAN) and [Sofia Prosvirnova](#) (RSU) are perhaps best positioned to compete.

[Ekaterina Efremenkova](#) (RSU) and [Xandra Velzeboer](#) (NED) also skated well at the ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Gdansk, Poland.

[Arianna Fontana](#) of Italy, meanwhile, skipped the ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships to concentrate on this competition, and has been training in Hungary to try to find an edge.

As with the Men's event, the unique circumstances of 2021's competition represent the 'X' factor when it comes to predicting winners.

These athletes have not raced each other in over a year and have had to deal with the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic in different ways. Unexpected results should be expected – and should make the welcome return of international Short Track Speed Skating more exciting than ever.

Where to Watch

Viewers will be able to watch the ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships 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](#). For further information regarding the ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships, including the announcement and entry list please visit the dedicated [ISU Event Page](#) and listen to [The Ice Skating Podcast](#).

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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About the International Skating Union

The International Skating Union (ISU), founded in 1892, is the oldest governing international winter sport federation and the exclusive international sport federation recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) administering the sports of Figure Skating (Single & Pair Skating and Ice Dance), Synchronized Skating, Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating worldwide. The objectives of the ISU are to regulate, govern, promote and develop its sports on the basis of friendship and mutual understanding between athletes. Currently three ISU disciplines are included in the Olympic Winter Games program (Figure Skating, Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating).