

November 10, 2021

Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Poland

World Cup kicks off in full gear at Arena Lodowa

With the international short track and figure skating competitions already well underway, the long track speed skaters are looking forward to kick off their Olympic season at the Arena Lodowa in Tomaszów Mazowiecki this weekend. After last year's two bubble events in Heerenveen, the [ISU World Cup Speed Skating](#) is back in full gear with four events in November and December 2021 and the World Cup final in Heerenveen in March 2022. Japan was absent last season and will be eager to assess their progress in the international field again.

Japan had decided not to travel to Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic last season. Without some of the world's fastest skaters, new names took center stage and records were set. In two back-to-back weekends at Thialf Stadium, the remote spectators saw five track records and two maiden World Cup wins.

Impressive new kid on the block

In absence of Olympic 500m Champion [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN), [Femke Kok](#) (NED) was in a league of her own last year. The 20-year-old Dutch sprinter won at her A Division debut in the season's first World Cup 500m race, went on to win all four, adding two 1000m bronzes for a total of six, and winning most silverware of all skaters over the course of the two weekends.

With Kodaira back in business, the ladies sprint events will be highly contested this season. Apart from Kok, 2021 world champion [Angelina Golikova](#) (RUS) and 2019 world champion [Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT) are in the mix for the medals.

[Dai Dai Ntab](#) (NED) won the men's 500m world cup last year, after world record holder [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) had crashed. With Japan's [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) and [Yuma Murakami](#) (JPN) back on the international ice, and the Canadian contingent anchored by world champion [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN), the men's 500m is about the most competitive of all events in long track.

Poland looks for Bródka

In middle distances will be highly contested too. Last season, [Brittany Bowe](#) took the world Cup in the ladies' 1000m and 1500m, but [Jutta Leerdam](#) (NED) has stepped up her game. The Dutch already broke Bowe's 1000m Thialf track record at the Dutch national championships in October.

Olympic 1000m champion [Jorien ter Mors](#) (NED) missed out on qualification for the 1000m World Cup this season, but did make it into the 1500m Dutch selection. Olympic 1500m champion [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) qualified for both the 1000m and the 1500m.

The big question mark this season will be how [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) got through a full year without international competition. The 1500m world record holder started the season with Japanese national titles in the 1000m, 1500m and 3000m.

The men's middle distances were dominated by [Thomas Krol](#) and [Kjeld Nuis](#) over the past seasons. With Beijing 2022 on the radar, [Ning Zhongyan](#) (CHN) will try to challenge the two

Dutchmen. The 22-year-old Chinese prodigy already won a 1500m World Cup race in Nur Sultan in 2019.

In Poland all eyes will be on [Zbigniew Bródka](#) (POL). The 2014 Olympic 1500m champion quit speed skating in 2019, but returned to the ice, trying to qualify for the Olympic Games once more.

Long Distance battles

The first World Cup event will feature a 3000m for ladies and a 5000m for men. At the second World Cup in Stavanger, the long distance specialists will skate the only 5000m for ladies and 10.000m for men of this season's World Cup campaign.

[Patrick Roest](#) (NED) won the long distance World Cup in the past two seasons, but he was beaten by [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) in both the 5000m and the 10.000m at the Dutch Championships last October. Three-fold Olympic 5000m champion [Sven Kramer](#) (NED) came fifth, but did qualify for the World Cups.

Apart from the strong Dutch contingent, last year's surprise 5000m and 10.000m world champion [Niels van der Poel](#) (SWE) will also be in the mix. The Swede broke [Graeme Fish](#)'s 10.000m world record and the Canadian, who was absent in last season's international races, will be eager to take on the new challenge.

In the ladies' field [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) had an impressive start to the current season winning both the 3000m and the 5000m in track record times at the Dutch national championships in Heerenveen.

Internationally, Schouten will face competition from 3000m world record holder [Natalya Voronina](#) (RUS), 5000m world holder [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE), as well as Canadians [Ivanie Blondin](#), [Isabelle Weidemann](#).

Mass start and Team Pursuit

Tomaszów Mazowiecki will also feature Mass Start events for men on Saturday, and ladies on Sunday. Competition finishes with the ladies' Team Pursuit on Saturday and the Men's Team Pursuit on Sunday.