

February 5, 2022

Beijing, China

Van der Poel aiming to dethrone Kramer **Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games**

“[Nils van der Poel](#) (SWE) is the big favorite,” said [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) two days before the Men’s 5000m in Beijing. The Swedish world record holder has been in a league of his own in the long distances so far this season, but Bergsma will not settle for second just yet: “These are the Olympics and you never know.” Triple Olympic 5000m champion [Sven Kramer](#) (NED) knows all about it. The Dutch legend is chasing a career tenth medal in his final individual Olympic race at his fifth Games in Beijing.

Van der Poel’s inscrutable ways

Before conquering the world in the long distances last season, Van der Poel had taken a break from Speed Skating, after missing out on the Olympic qualification back in 2018. The Swede signed up for the army and went ultrarunning, only to switch his attention back to the ice ahead of the 2020/21 season.

The stamina he developed in ultrarunning, paid off big time on skates. In his first international appearance after two-year away from the ice, Van der Poel stunned the world breaking the nine-year-old 10,000m track record at a training race on the famous indoor rink in Inzell (GER). He went on to win the 5000m and 10,000m world titles at the ISU World Speed Skating Championships in 2021 in Heerenveen (NED). “There are a lot of different ways that lead to Rome”, Van der Poel said.

If Van der Poel manages to live up to the expectations in Beijing, he will be the first Swedish medalist in Speed Skating since Tomas Gustafson won the 5000m and 10,000m at the Calgary 1988 Games. But, as unbeatable as he seemed to be over the season, things do not always go his way. After breaking the 5000m world record (6:01.56s) in Salt Lake City (USA) on December 3, 2021, he aimed at another milestone a week later at the ISU World Cup Speed Skating in Calgary (CAN). “I wanted to try to go under six (minutes),” he said. “That was the reason we went (to Calgary) and gave it a shot and I realized quite soon that that wasn’t the shape of the day.” He won the distance in six minutes and 4.29 seconds but was not satisfied. “It did not really play out the way I thought it would.”

Bergsma, Bloemen and Roest

Bergsma is ready to step up after a bit of a precarious season so far. “I’m feeling well, both physically and technically,” he said. The 2014 Olympic 10,000m champion is always a bit insecure about his abilities in the 5000m, adding: “The 10,000m comes more natural to me. I’m always searching for a rhythm and in the 5000m, you simply have less time to find it.”

[Ted-Jan Bloemen](#) (CAN) is another challenger for Van der Poel. The 2018 Olympic 10,000m champion and 5000m silver medalist has been working on many details to close the gap this season, and after he won the 5000m at the ISU Four Continents Speed Skating Championships on December 16, he felt confident heading into his final preparations for Beijing: “I tried something today and worked out pretty well. It hurt me in the end, but I need to get a little stronger. I have a couple of weeks to train on that.”

[Patrick Roest](#) (NED) is also in the mix for a podium spot. The Dutchman comes in second in the season's 5000m ranking with his ISU World Cup Salt Lake City (USA) race in 6:04.41s and he qualified first in the 5000m at the Dutch trials, ahead of Bergsma and Kramer.

Kramer and the end of an era

Whatever the result in Beijing, the 5000m will mark the end of the Sven Kramer era. Since taking 5000m silver at the Torino 2006 Olympic Winter Games as a nineteen-year-old, he went on to win the distance a record three consecutive Olympics. With a career total of nine medals, the Dutchman collected the all-time most silverware in Speed Skating. Having already announced his farewell from the sport after Beijing 2022, he strives to add a tenth. After having qualified for the Olympic 5000m by the skin of his teeth, Kramer faces an uphill battle against so many strong contenders. "It would be amazing if I could win the fifth Olympic title of my career during these Games and I think my biggest chance would be in the Team Pursuit," he said.

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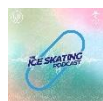
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The International Skating Union (ISU), founded in 1892, is the oldest governing international winter sport federation and the exclusive international sport federation recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) administering the sports 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). For further information please visit isu.org.

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