

February 14, 2022

Beijing, China

Anything is possible at the Team Pursuit Finals when three Skaters look like one

Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games

Skating is very much a solitary sport. The athletes compete in separate lanes, in a physical and mental struggle against the clock. There's one exception: the Team Pursuit. It's not just about the fastest Skaters, it's about working together or, as [Ethan Cepuran](#) (USA) put it after the quarter finals: "(make) three Skaters look like one, and just become one unit." After the quarter finals on Saturday (Women) and on Sunday (Men), the Semis and Finals for both genders are scheduled for Tuesday.

No more borrowed skates

Team USA qualified as second best for the Finals in a time of 3 minutes and 37.51 seconds, only 0.04s behind defending Champions Norway. [Casey Dawson](#) led the Americans with [Cepuran](#) in second position and [Emery Lehman](#) in third. Dawson was happy to have settled in Beijing after arriving late because of a positive Covid-test in January. Flying in on the same morning he had to skate the 1500m last Tuesday. He raced on borrowed skates, because his luggage had gone missing. It did not hamper him in the Team Pursuit anymore. "I finally got my blades back. I got some new clothes on, so I'm ready to go for these upcoming races," he said after the quarter finals on Sunday.

Lucky to have four

Skating in a fixed formation with the Skaters pushing each other from the back instead of changing up front, is a relatively new tactic which requires precision, teamwork and above all practice. "We trained together every single day, and it shows today", Cepuran said. Apart from Dawson, Cepuran and Lehman the Americans have [Joey Mantia](#) as the extra ace up their sleeve. When Team USA set a world record (3:34.47s) at the ISU Speed Skating World Cup in Salt Lake City (USA) last December, Mantia was up front, with Dawson and Lehman in his back.

Mantia does not train with the other three on a daily basis, but he's a much part of the team as anyone else. Watching the others skate the quarter finals, he had been nervous but confident. "I have a lot of faith in these guys. I've seen them work together practice day in and day out. Because these three are skating together every day. I probably have more confidence in them than they do in themselves. So it was just interesting watching and I was more inspired."

Which line-up the Americans will field in the semifinals will be a gameday decision. "Two days from now, we have no idea how we're going to be feeling. We're definitely all gonna be skating," said Lehman. "We're lucky to have four Skaters that can skate really well together, any combo, any day of the week," Cepuran added, "We're not the strongest Skaters in the world, but together, we're one of the strongest teams in the world."

The Americans will face Team ROC in the semifinals. The athletes representing the Russian Olympic Committee came in third in the quarter finals. Olympic Champions Norway, who set (3:37.47s) in the quarter

finals with [Hallgeir Engebråten](#), [Peder Kongshaug](#) and [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) will take on the Netherlands, who were the last to grab a semifinal ticket finishing fourth trailing Norway by 1.43s. The Dutch fielded [Marcel Bosker](#), [Patrick Roest](#) and [Sven Kramer](#). The latter will also skate the Mass Start on Saturday, but he thinks that the Team Pursuit provided him with a better chance to conclude his career with a tenth Olympic medal. The Dutch semi-final did not look smooth, however. "It was just two or three tenths of a second too slow in each lap", Kramer said. "It's not as if we're through (to the Semis) by the skin of our teeth, but it doesn't feel comfortable either."

Teamwork versus individual strength

In the Women's field, Olympic Champions Japan and this season's World Cup winners Canada showed the Netherlands what teamwork was all about. Skating with three as one, the Takagi sisters [Miho](#) and [Nana Takagi](#) (JPN), accompanied by [Ayano Sato](#) (JPN), broke their own 2018 Olympic record by 0.28s, finishing in 2:53.61s. Canada's [Ivanie Blondin](#), [Valérie Maltais](#) and [Isabelle Weidemann](#) clocked 2:53.97s to come in second position, while the Dutch Team finished 3.65s adrift in third place. Exercising a change-up tactics instead of pushing, the train of Beijing 2022 gold medalists [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) and [Irene Schouten](#) (NED), as well as bronze medal medalist [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) fell apart a couple of times. "It was one of our worst Team Pursuits," Wüst said. "We really have to sit together and look into it as we have to improve, big time. Hopefully we can do better on Tuesday (Semifinals)."

The Netherlands will face Canada in the Semifinals and Maltais (CAN) was more than happy with the way the Canadian squad had operated in the quarters. "It was a good race. (...) We started hard for what we're able to do as a team and maintained the lap-times, which I'm really proud of. That was our goal going into the race today: to keep everything smooth, nice and relaxed with powerful pushes."

Japan takes on the athletes from the Russian Olympic Committee in the Semis. "I am very happy we passed the quarterfinals and broke the Olympic record, which will give us more confidence for our following races," Miho Takagi said. The main engine of the Japanese train got another confidence boost when she seized a surprise silver in Sunday's 500m, after already having grabbed a 1500m silver last week.

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What's next ?

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

Women's Team Pursuit, Semifinals, 14:30 (local time)

Men's Team Pursuit, Semifinals, 14:30 (local time)

Women's Team Pursuit, Final D, 14:30 (local time)

Women's Team Pursuit, Final C, 14:30 (local time)

Men's Team Pursuit, Final D, 14:30 (local time)

Men's Team Pursuit, Final C, 14:30 (local time)

Women's Team Pursuit, Final B, 16:22 (local time)

Women's Team Pursuit, Final A, 16:22 (local time)

Men's Team Pursuit, Final B, 16:41 (local time)

Men's Team Pursuit, Final A, 16:47 (local time)

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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](#).