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Montreal, Canada

ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships - Montreal (CAN) - Review Day 1

There were several big names on the podium, and some newcomers too, as the first day of medal events took place at the 2022 ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships at the Maurice-Richard Arena, Montreal.

Medals were awarded in the 500m and 1500m in the Men's and Women's competitions, with the 1000m, 3000m Women's Relay and 5000m Men's Relay to be decided on Sunday. Points won during the individual distances plus a 3000m Super-Final will accumulate to crown the overall champion.

Liu Shaoang (HUN) wins two gold medals on opening day

Te No brother, no problem. [Liu Shaoang](#) (HUN), competing without his usual on-ice teammate and brother, skated his way to two gold medals in the first two events of the World Short Track Championships in Montreal.

The reigning world champion leads the overall standings going into the final day after claiming victories in the 500m and 1500m finals. Liu crossed first in every one of his quarter and semifinal races on Saturday.

It was not as easy as it looked. "My body was already tired but my head, my mentality, is overdosed," said Liu.

The Hungarian skater had to be his own coach between races to power through.

"To be honest, it's really hard because I am alone. None of my brother or coach is here, so it is pretty tiring to keep focusing. I was just telling myself, it is only me here so you have to do it. If not you, then who can do it? That is how I keep my mind together," said Liu.

The two gold medals are the third and fourth of Liu's world championship career. He also claimed gold in the 500m at the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022.

The absence of 1500m Olympic gold medallist [Hwang Dae Heon](#) (KOR) — and the Chinese and Russian teams — left the door open for some new medallists.

[Stijn Desmet](#) (BEL) claimed bronze in the 1500m for his first world championship medal and then followed it up with another bronze in the 500m. The results surprised even Desmet, although he knew he was ready to make the leap.

"I felt like I made good progress in training and was ready to compete for the wins and the finals. I am happy. With short track there is a lot of luck involved, and I avoided all the bad luck, and got nice results," said Desmet.

Desmet was inspired by his sister, [Hanne Desmet](#) (BEL), a fellow short track skater who claimed bronze at Beijing 2022.

“She has been putting the pressure on me, saying it is your time to shine, which is nice motivation. She really wants me to do well, so that is extra motivation for me,” said Desmet.

[Quentin Fercoq](#) (FRA) rounded out the podium with silver in the 500m, while hometown favorite [Pascal Dion](#) (CAN) powered through the pain to win silver in the 1500m.

“You never get through it, the hurt of short track,” said Dion. “You have to live with it. Just focus on your strategy even if it hurts. I think that is the key goal of short track.”

Dion also helped the Canadian team to qualify for the final in the 5000m relay in front of the raucous crowd. The relay final will be the last race for the legendary [Charles Hamelin](#) (CAN), who will be attempting to end his career with a 15th world championship gold medal. Hamelin received multiple cheers from the supportive crowd in his home province of Quebec.

The Republic of Korea, Hungary and the Netherlands will round out the field for the final in the 5000m relay on Sunday.

The loud cheers for Hamelin were not the only touching moments from the crowd. Skater [Oleh Handei](#) (UKR) also received a rousing standing ovation before taking the ice in the 500m quarterfinals.

[Boutin \(CAN\) bounces to win two silver after disappointing Olympic Games](#)

Less than two hours from her hometown, [Kim Boutin](#) (CAN) is trying to bounce back in Montreal.

Boutin left the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 with a single bronze medal, a disappointing haul after winning three medals at PyeongChang 2018.

Well, bounce back she did.

Boutin won silver in the 500m and 1500m distances on the first day of finals at the World Short Track Championships.

“For me it is nice after the (Olympic) Games,” Boutin said. “Those Games were kind of hard for me. So to just jump on the podium again was fun. Now I am just enjoying the crowd and having fun.”

The Canadian spent the month after the Olympics preparing for these kinds of results. “I just wanted to feel happy at the (Olympic) Games and enjoy the moment. Now I pushed myself a little bit more to perform again and I think I am there now,” she said.

Boutin leads the overall standings going into the final day, but she knows a target is on her back.

“For sure I want the World Championship. I have never done that. Being in that position is kind of challenging so I am going to do my best and fight and enjoy my race,” said Boutin.

The overall title is up for grabs after 2021 champion [Suzanne Schulting](#) (NED) tested positive for Covid-19 this week and is unable to compete in Montreal. Boutin leads [Choi Min Jeong](#) (KOR) by three points in the overall standings.

Choi had her own eventful day on the track. A multiple world champion, Choi cruised to gold in the 1500m final, while settling for a victory in the B final in the 500m. Her teammate [Seo Whi Min](#) (KOR) claimed bronze in the 1500m.

Choi looked strong in the heats, but got stuck in the back of the pack in her 500m semifinal. She made a late charge, but failed to qualify for the A final after losing in a photo finish to [Yara van Kerkhof](#) (NED), who went on to win bronze in the final.

[Xandra Velzeboer](#) (NED) put together a strong race to claim an unexpected gold in the 500m. It was the first individual World Championship gold for the 20-year-old.

“It’s amazing. It’s unbelievable. I know I can skate good 500s, but I didn’t really expect this to happen,” said Velzeboer.

The Dutch youngster made a nice move to find the lead and did not look back.

“I had so much speed and used it so well. I was very calm during the race. So when I came in to the lead it was just like, okay, finish this well and stay on my feet. When I came over the line, it was amazing,” said Velzeboer.

She went on to help the Dutch team qualify for the A final in the Women’s 3000m relay. Republic of Korea, Italy, and Canada round out the rest of the field for Sunday’s race.

Choi and Boutin will go head-to-head again in the 3000m superfinal and 1000m, as they race for the overall world champion title. Velzeboer could steal it from both of them with another big day.

* Following the IOC recommendation, in order to protect the integrity of ice skating competitions and for the safety of all the participants of international ice skating competitions, the ISU Council based on Article 17.1.q) i) of the ISU Constitution, agreed that with immediate effect and until further notice, no Skaters belonging to the ISU Members in Russia (Russian Skating Union and the Figure Skating Federation of Russia) and Belarus (Skating Union of Belarus) shall be invited or allowed to participate in international ice skating Competitions including ISU Championships and other ISU Events (Full [Statement](#) to be read on ISU website).

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