

# INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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**Press release**

**Heerenveen, January 6, 2017**

## **ISU European Speed Skating Championships**

### **#EuroSpeed**

Dutchman Kai Verbij is on course to win the inaugural Men's European Sprint title, but he still faces tough competition. His compatriot Ireen Wüst took a big lead in the Ladies' allround tournament on Day 1 of the ISU European Speed Skating Championships.

#### **Wüst on track for Ladies' Allround title**

"I think everything can congratulate her", Martina Sáblíková (CZE) said after the first day of the Ladies' Allround tournament. The defending champion thinks it is almost impossible to retain her title after Irene Wüst's exploit on Friday. The Dutchwoman left no room for doubt about her ambitions to recapture the European Allround title, a crown she already took four times before.

Wüst drew first blood in the 500m, which she won in 39.26. Sáblíková clocked 40.18 to end up fifth, but the Czech lady is a long distance specialist. Being 5.52 behind Wüst did not necessarily scare her off, but when Wüst rushed away like a rocket the 3000m, Sáblíková was surprised at least.

"When I saw 19.3 as her opening on the scoreboard I thought, that's a 200m time I usually skate in a 1000m. I managed to make up a little in the last three laps, but she was too far away." Wüst finished in 4:03.93, leaving her Czech opponent 0.8 seconds adrift, which was not even that much considering that Wüst had a five minute gap at the 1800m split. The difference between Sáblíková and Wüst at the start of Saturday's 1500m is 3.16 seconds. "I don't give up, but I'm a realist and I think that's it impossible for me to win", she said.

Wüst was a little less outspoken. "It's a very good start, but an Allround tournament has four distances", she said. "I have to recover well, cool down on the bike, eat something, get a massage and sleep well."

Sáblíková did not seem to be very disappointed. "I'm happy that Ireen is back and not only Ireen. There are more contenders and the more contenders there are, the more interesting the sport gets and I love the sport."

One of those contenders was Antoinette de Jong. The 21-year-old Dutch prodigy, who already won bronze last year in Minsk, is second behind Wüst, but ahead of Sáblíková, who is ranked third after the first day. She did not think she could really challenge Wüst on Saturday. "Ireen is very fast at the moment, but I will do everything I can to hold on to second place. That's difficult enough because Sáblíková can skate a very good 1500m and 5000m." The gap between De Jong and Sáblíková at the start of the 1500m is 1.5 seconds.

#### **Verbij leads with a small margin in Men's Sprint tournament**

With Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) absent due to a groin injury, the Men's inaugural European Sprint tournament started as an open battle and it still is after the first day. Kai Verbij leads the classification after coming fourth in the 500m and second in the 1000m. "I'm satisfied with two solid races", he said. "I'm on course for the title, but in sprinting anything can happen, so I will give it my best and we'll see where that leaves me tomorrow", the Dutchman said.

**Official Series Hashtag: #EuroSpeed**

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Verbij faces a tough challenge. After the first two distances the difference between him and number two Nico Ihle (GER) is only 0.19 seconds in the 500m. Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen (NOR) is third with 0.29 seconds to make up and Kjeld Nuis is fourth with a 0.39 second gap.

Ronald Mulder (NED) on the first 500m, when he beat Rusland Murashov by 0.01. The Russian withdrew with a fever after the first distance however. Mulder had to skate his 1000m race without an opponent, and he could match his 500m explosion in the double distance. With an eighth place in the 1000m he found his name back on the sixth place of the ranking after day 1.

Nico Ihle is Verbij's most important rival for the inaugural title on Saturday. The German is very happy about the new event. "I really love the European Sprint Championships. I'm very happy we have a tournament like this for sprinters in Europe. I looked forward to this tournament for the whole summer." He came to Heerenveen well prepared and goes to bed in a confident mood. "My second day is always better than my first day and tomorrow I have two inner lanes, which in the 1000m is a huge advantage because your opponent is ahead of you in the last turn so you can chase him down."

For full results of the ISU European Speed Skating Championships 2017 please refer to <http://www.isuresults.eu/>

## About ISU European Speed Skating Championships 2017

The ISU European Speed Skating Championships 2017 combines for the first time a Sprint and Allround formats. Unlike the World Cup, in which Skaters race for single distance titles, at the European Sprint and Allround Championships performances in four distances add up to the final ranking. In both formats times are calculated based on the 500m, for example the 1500m time will be divided by 3. In the Allround tournament the Men will skate 500m, 5000m, 1500m and 10,000m. The Ladies Allround competition features 500m, 3000m, 1500m, 5000m races. In the Sprint competition both the Men and the Ladies race the 500m and the 1000m twice.

### ISU European Speed Skating Championships Heerenveen (NED)

#### 500m Ladies Allround

|   |                    |     |       |
|---|--------------------|-----|-------|
| 1 | Ireen Wüst         | NED | 39.26 |
| 2 | Antoinette de Jong | NED | 39.56 |
| 3 | Natalia Czerwonka  | POL | 39.85 |

#### 3000m Ladies Allround

|   |                   |     |         |
|---|-------------------|-----|---------|
| 1 | Ireen Wüst        | NED | 4:03.73 |
| 2 | Martina Sáblíková | CZE | 4:04.73 |

#### Ladies Allround Classification after Day 1

|   |                    |     |        |
|---|--------------------|-----|--------|
| 1 | Ireen Wüst         | NED | 79.915 |
| 2 | Antoinette de Jong | NED | 80.466 |
| 3 | Martina Sáblíková  | CZE | 80.968 |

#### 500m Men Sprint

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|   |                 |     |       |
|---|-----------------|-----|-------|
| 1 | Ronald Mulder   | NED | 34.87 |
| 2 | Ruslan Murashov | RUS | 34.88 |
| 3 | Nico Ihle       | GER | 34.95 |

## 1000m Men Sprint

|   |                             |     |         |
|---|-----------------------------|-----|---------|
| 1 | Kjeld Nuis                  | NED | 1:08.77 |
| 2 | Kai Verbij                  | NED | 1:09.01 |
| 3 | Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen | NOR | 1:09.23 |

## Men Allround Classification after Day 1

|   |                             |     |        |
|---|-----------------------------|-----|--------|
| 1 | Kai Verbij                  | NED | 69.485 |
| 2 | Nico Ihle                   | GER | 69.675 |
| 3 | Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen | NOR | 69.775 |