

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Press release

Heerenveen, January 7, 2017

ISU European Speed Skating Championships

#EuroSpeed

Kai Verbij has won the inaugural Men's European Sprint title to the delight of the home crowd in Heerenveen, the Netherlands, on Day 2 of the ISU European Speed Skating Championships. Compatriot Ireen Wüst also gave the crowd a title to cheer for, when she took her career fifth Ladies' European Allround crown.

Solid racing enough for Men's sprint title

Solid racing and a powerful finish. Kai Verbij was the only one to keep his nerve in the battle to become the first European Sprint Champion in Speed Skating history. The Dutchman finished fourth in the first 500m, second in the first 1000m, second in the second 500m, and third in the final 1000m to seal his title. "The skater who made fewest mistakes won", the self-critical champion said.

Heading into Day 2 of the Men's Sprint tournament Nico Ihle was the closest rival to challenge classification leader Verbij. With a third and fourth place in the first 500m and 1000m respectively, the German was second in the classification, 0.19 seconds behind the Dutchman.

"My second day is always better than my first day and tomorrow I have two inner lanes", Ihle said on Friday. But he threw his title dreams out of the window straight from the start on Saturday. In his second 500m race Ihle had a miss-stroke on the first straight, and he was not able to make up for the loss of speed in the full lap. With 35.51 he finished eighth in the distance to drop to fourth place, 1.16 behind Verbij.

Ihle ended up taking the bronze after coming second in the final 1000m. He thought he would have had a good shot at the title, without the mistake in the 500m. "I had a good start, was ahead of Kai (Verbij), and then I hit the ice with the point of my skate. If I would have skated 35 flat, I would have been in the lead heading into the final 1000m."

Kjeld Nuis won the final 1000m in 1:08.85 to secure a silver medal in the final classification. The Dutchman had also won the first 1000m, but like Ihle, the Dutchman blew his title chances in the 500m, in his case on Friday already. "I'm not happy with the silver medal. I came for the title, but that was over after two meters into the tournament", he said. "I'm happy with my two 1000m races. I'm happy I showed resilience to fight for silver. It is what it is."

Ronald Mulder won both the 500m races in the Men's Sprint tournament, but he lacked stamina for the 1000m and had to settle for seventh place overall after finishing eighth in the double sprint distance twice. He skated his final 1000m race against Ihle. "After 600 meters I felt him coming and I thought, well that's too early", Mulder said.

Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen headed into the final 1000m in second place after coming 6th in both the 500m races and third in the first 1000m. The Norwegian blew his podium chances, when he finished sixth in the final 1000m race. "Before the tournament I would have signed for this result, but after my first three races I had hopes for the podium," he said.

Official Series Hashtag: #EuroSpeed

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Verbij was relieved after he secured the title coming third in the final 1000m. “Being in the lead after the first day, naturally I wanted to keep that position,” he said. “And I know that Ihle can skate a good 500m, but he made that little mistake. I skated a solid 500m. I’ve skated four solid distances, but none of my races was spectacular.” Verbij was happy to have won the first European Sprint title in Speed Skating history. “That means I’m on top of the list forever, but well, maybe

Wüst class of her own

Ireen Wüst was a class of her own at Thialf Stadium. “In hindsight it looks easy, but you still have to do it”, she said after winning the 500m, the 3000m, the 1500m, and coming second in the 5000m to grab the title with a 1.163 point lead over last year’s champion Martina Sáblíková.

Wüst started the second day of the Ladies’ Allround Championships with a 0.551 point lead over second ranked Antoinette de Jong, and a 1.053 point lead over Martina Sáblíková. After the first day Sáblíková already said that the gap was too big to close. In the 1500m Wüst increased her lead significantly, when she powered to the distance victory in 1:56.57. When the dust of Wüst’s 1500m explosion had settled, the gap between the Dutch challenger and the Czech title defender had increased to 1.770 points, 17.7 seconds in the 5000m.

With the title out of sight, Sáblíková had a fight for the silver medal at her hands. Antoinette de Jong (NED) was still second in the ranking, 11.41 seconds behind Wüst, but 6.29 seconds ahead of Sáblíková. De Jong had come second with 1:58.34 in the 1500m and Sáblíková third in 1:58.72.

“Before the tournament I came for first place, but heading into the 5000m, I had to go for second place”, she said. “I’m satisfied. I had too many bad moments to win, but it’s an incredible feeling to skate here in a full Thialf stadium”, she said. With 6:57.47 Sáblíková managed to win the 5000m and secure silver at the cost of De Jong, who came fourth in the 5000m with 7:07.33. Wüst was second in the final distance with 7:03.54 and Yvonne Nauta (NED) came third in 7:05.41. She finished fourth in the final classification. The Netherlands thus took three of the top four spots in the ranking.

Wüst was happy with her fifth European title, but she already looked ahead. “This gives me a lot of confidence towards the World Single Distance Championships and the World Allround Championships, but I have to enjoy this title first. Otherwise I’ll get a reprimand from my mother”, she laughed.

Erbanova leads in Ladies’ Sprint tournament

Karolina Erbanova took the lead on the first day of the inaugural Ladies’ European Sprint Championships. The Czech woman surprised herself with second places in both the 500m and the 1000m. “I had not expected to be on top at this stage,” she said. “I didn’t know what to expect. I missed the first two World Cups, and after that it went better and better, but you never know how it evolves.”

The first four ladies are within half a second from each other in the classification and Erbanova did not want to dream of a medal just yet. “I’m first now, but it’s sprinting and anything can happen. It’s not like an Allround tournament. In sprinting every stroke counts. I think the first four ladies in the classification are still in contention for gold.”

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Olga Fatkulina is second, 0.16 seconds behind Erbanova. The Russian 500m silver medalist from the 2014 Olympic Games won the 500m in 38.16. Erbanova clocked 38.23 and Marrit Leenstra (NED) finished third in 38.55.

Jorien ter Mors won the 1000m in 1:15.58, with Erbanova (1:15.69) and Leenstra (1:15.95) again coming second and third. Despite her win, Ter Mors was not satisfied with both her 500m and her 1000m race. "I had hoped for more, especially in the 1000m," she said. The 1000m World Champion did have a special preparation for the European Sprint Championships. "I kept on my regular training, so you never really know what to expect. It's tough, but we'll see what happens tomorrow." Ter Mors is ranked fourth, 0.47 seconds from the top spot. Leenstra is 0.47 seconds behind in third place.

Kramer on course for ninth Allround title

Sven Kramer laid a solid foundation for a ninth European Allround title when he took the lead in his favorite 5000m on Saturday. His compatriot Jan Blokhuijsen (NED) is second in the classification and Norwegian Sverre Lunde Pedersen third.

Kramer started the tournament with an eighth place in the 500m, traditionally his weakest spot in an allround tournament. "I did not skate a single 500m yet this season, so that's a risk", he said. Having overcome his biggest challenge, Kramer did not want to celebrate early however. "I want to skate a good 1500m tomorrow. My 1500m has been a challenge in the pasts, but I've improved a lot. But in an Allround tournament you have to keep your concentration."

Norway's Sindre Henriksen won the 500m in 36.30. Blokhuijsen came second in 36.43 and Russia's Denis Yuskov third in 36.44. Blokhuijsen also came second in the 5000m. He set a high bar for Kramer when he clocked 6:16.86. "My plan was to skate five seconds faster than Blokhuijsen, but I had not expected him to skate 6.16," Kramer said. But the title defender managed to stick to his plan and was even six seconds faster than his compatriot, when he clocked 6:10.58. Pedersen took third place in the 5000m with 6:20.17.

In tomorrow's 1500m Kramer has a 0.75 second lead over Blokhuijsen and 2.64 seconds over Pedersen. Italy's Andrea Giovannini is 3.78 seconds behind in fourth place.

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

Sprint Men, Day 2

2nd 500m Men's Sprint

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1	Ronald Mulder	NED	35.08
2	Kai Verbij	NED	35.12
3	Alexey Yesin	RUS	35.20

2nd 1000m Men's Sprint

1	Kjeld Nuis	NED	1:08.85
2	Nico Ihle	GER	1:09.20
3	Kai Verbij	NED	1:09.25

Final Classification Men's Sprint

1	Kai Verbij	NED	34.98 (4), 1:09.01 (2), 35.12 (2), 1:09.25 (3), 139.230
2	Kjeld Nuis	NED	35.49 (9), 1:08.77 (1), 35.40 (7), 1:08.85 (1), 139.700
3	Nico Ihle	GER	34.95 (3), 1:09.45 (4), 35.51 (8), 1:09.20 (2), 139.785

Allround Ladies, Day 2

1500m Ladies' Allround

1	Ireen Wüst	NED	1:56.57
2	Antoinette de Jong	NED	1:58.34
3	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	1:58.72

5000m Ladies' Allround

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	6:57.47
2	Ireen Wüst	NED	7:03.54
3	Yvonne Nauta	NED	7:05.41

Final Classification Ladies' Allround

1	Ireen Wüst	NED	39.26 (1), 4:03.93 (1), 1:56.57 (1), 7:03.54 (2), 161.125
2	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	40.18 (5), 4:04.73 (2), 1:58.72 (3), 6:57.47 (1), 162.288
3	Antoinette de Jong	NED	39.56 (2), 4:05.44 (3), 1:58.34 (2), 7:07.33 (4), 162.645

Sprint Ladies, Day 1

1st 500m Ladies' Sprint

1	Olga Fatkulina	RUS	38.16
2	Karolina Erbanova	CZE	38.23
3	Marrit Leenstra	NED	38.55

1st 1000m Ladies' Sprint

1	Jorien ter Mors	NED	1:15.58
2	Karolina Erbanova	CZE	1:15.69

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3	Marrit Leenstra	NED	1:15.95
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Classification Ladies' Sprint, Day 1

1	Karolina Erbanova	CZE	76.075
2	Olga Fatkulina	RUS	76.235
3	Marrit Leenstra	NED	76.525

Allround Men, Day 1

500m Men's Allround

1	Sindre Henriksen	NOR	36.30
2	Jan Blokhuijsen	NED	36.43
3	Denis Yuskov	RUS	36.44

5000m Men's Allround

1	Sven Kramer	NED	6:10.58
2	Jan Blokhuijsen	NED	6:16.86
3	Sverre Lunde Pedersen	NOR	6:20.17

Classification Men's Allround

1	Sven Kramer	NED	73.868
2	Jan Blokhuijsen	NED	74.116
3	Sverre Lunde Pedersen	NOR	74.747