

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Press Release

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ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships #EuroShortTrack

The 2017 ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships kicked off today in Torino, Italy with the qualification heats for the following three individual distances: Ladies and Men 500 m, 1000 m, 1500 m. There were also qualification heats for the relay distances. These championships are held at the Palavela rink marking a return of short track speed skating to the Olympic venue for the first time since the 2006 Winter Games.

The reigning European ISU Short Track Speed Skating Champion, Semen Elistratov from Russia, was off to a great start today in his quest towards defending his title. He finished first in each of the individual races he competed in today and skated the fastest time in the 500 m. His teammate, Victor An, a former ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Champion, was also successful through the qualifying heats in each of the individual distances. He skated the third fastest time in the 1000 m distance and should never be underestimated in the other two distances. Sjinkie Knegt (NED) who is a two-time ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Champion, set the fastest time in the 1500 m distance today and qualified through to the next rounds in all three distances. The Liu brothers from Hungary, Shaolin Sandor and Shaoang also had a successful qualification day: Shaolin Sandor set the fastest time in the 1000 m distance and the third fastest times in both the 500 m and 1500 m distances, while Shaoang was the second fastest in the 1500 m distance. Shaolin Sandor looked very strong today as he's hoping to improve on his performance from last year's ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships where he finished second overall. Vladislav Bynakov (ISR) had a solid day of racing, qualifying ninth or better in each of the individual distances today. He has skated extremely well this past fall in the first four World Cup events.

On the Ladies' side, Arianna Fontana (ITA), a five-time ISU European Short Track Speed Champion, had a strong start to the championships, qualifying for all three individual distances, and setting the fifth fastest time in the 500 m and 1000 m distances. The local fans will be looking forward to cheering her on tomorrow and Sunday as she aims to win a sixth overall title and a second one on home ice. The three skaters from the Netherlands, Suzanne Schulting, Yara van Kerkhof and Rianne de Vries, all qualified through the next round in the three individual distances. Suzanne Schulting was the strongest of the three today, setting top-three fastest times in each distance. Although the reigning European champion is not competing this weekend, her teammate Charlotte Gilmartin (GBR) is and hoping to improve on her second-place finish in the overall standings from last year's championships. Gilmartin qualified for the next round of racing in all three distances. Finally, an eye should also be kept on the three skaters from Russia: Sofia Prosvirnova, Tatiana Borodulina and Ekaterina Konstantinova all qualified for the next round in each of the individual distances.

The championship contenders in the Men and Ladies competition all managed to get through successfully in today's qualification heats. The same is true for the championship contenders for the relay events. In the Ladies relay, Netherlands, Hungary and France will be joined by Russia, Italy, Poland, Czech Republic and Belarus. On the Men's side, Russia, Hungary and Netherlands will be joined by France, Italy, Great Britain, Belarus and Belgium.

Official Hashtag: #EuroShortTrack

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For full results of the ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships 2017 please refer to <http://www.isu.org/en/short-track-speed-skating/results/201617/isu-european-short-track-speed-skating-championships>

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