

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Press release

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ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships #SprintSpeed

Brittany Bowe and Pavel Kulizhnikov will not be able to defend their World Sprint Titles this year. The American and the Russian won the Ladies' and Men's Sprint Titles in the two previous years, but both champions are absent due to injuries. European Sprint Champions Karolina Erbanova (CZE) and Kai Verbij (NED) will try to fill the vacancies, but they will face strong competition, not only from Asia and North America, but from Europe too.

The 48th ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships will be held on the fast ice of the Calgary Olympic Oval in Canada, which will host these Championships for the fifth time in history. Only Heerenveen (NED) hosted the tournament more often (six times).

The United States lead the all-time medal table of the World Sprint Championships with 21 gold medals, ahead of Russia (combined with the Soviet Union) with 16 and host country Canada with 10.

Competition format

The Championships are held over a two-day period, with the skaters racing one 500m and one 1000m each day. The times on those distances are converted to points using the same log system and the skaters are ranked according to the least amount of points.

American Japanese battle for Ladies' title

Heather Bergsma looks to be first in line to succeed her compatriot Bowe as the World Sprint Champion. The 27-year-old American finished second behind Bowe in 2016 and 2015. She also took bronze in 2014. Bergsma confirmed her good form when she won both the 1000m and the 1500m at the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships in Gangneung, Korea, two weeks ago.

Nao Kodaira is Bergsma's main rival. The 31-year-old Japanese skater won this year's 500m World Title in Gangneung, and she took silver in the 1000m. Kodaira's best ever result in the World Sprint Championships is fourth in 2010, but she has been invincible in the 500m this season and her 1000m performance in Gangneung showed that she has enough stamina to compete with the best in the double sprint distance too.

Karolina Erbanova took the crown at the inaugural European Sprint Championships in Heerenveen last January. The 24-year-old Czech skater already grabbed a bronze medal at the World Sprint Championships in 2015. She came fourth in the 500m and fifth in the 1000m at this year's ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships.

Another skater to look out for is Dutch lady Jorien ter Mors. Last year's bronze medal winner had an injury hampered season, but she seems to be back on track and she grabbed silver at this year's European Sprint Championships, in which Russia's Olga Fatkulina took bronze.

Open battle in Men's tournament

With Pavel Kulizhnikov absent, the Men's sprint title will be an open contest with many title

Official Championships Hashtag: #SprintSpeed

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candidates. Dutch Kjeld Nuis came second in last year's ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships and, like Bergsma in the Ladies' tournament, he took the 1000m and 1500m World Titles at the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships in Gangneung two weeks ago.

Nuis' countryman Kai Verbij took bronze in last season's World Sprint Championships, and this season he grabbed the inaugural European Sprint title in Heerenveen, putting forward a strong candidacy for the World Title.

It's not going to be a simple 1-2 for the Netherlands however. German Nico Ihle took bronze at the European Sprint Championships and he has consistently showed to be able to compete for medals throughout the season. Ihle won silver in the 500m and came fourth in the 1000m at the World Single Distances Championships in Gangneung.

In absence of Kulizhnikov Ruslan Murashov will defend the Russian honor after taking a bronze 500m medal in Gangneung two weeks ago. Vincent De Haitre will lead a Canadian powerhouse with top sprinters Laurent Dubreuil and William Dutton at his side. De Haitre showed form when he took silver in the 1000m in Gangneung.

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

About ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships 2017

The 48th ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships are held on the what is considered the "fastest ice in the world" at the Calgary Olympic Oval in Canada, which hosts these Championships for the fifth time. The ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships is a four race tournament, in which skaters compete in two 500m races and two 1000m races over two days, to decide the champion in an overall classification.

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