



# SPEED SKATING



International  
Skating  
Union (ISU)

## Origin

The history of speed skating began in the 17th century. In the Netherlands they organised the first round trip on skates, from town to town on frozen canals in 1676. In England in 1763 there was a skating match held over courses of 10 and 20 miles. In Leeuwarden (Netherlands) they organised a skating competition on a straight course of a shorter distance, for women only. There were speed skating championships with 130 enthusiastic entries. The first modern speed skating competition was held in Norway on 1 March 1863, over a course of 1500 metres. Sweden organised competitions from 1882, Finland from 1883, Russia from 1884. The first international speed skating competition was held in Hamburg in 1885. Organisers in Amsterdam invited to World Championships in the years 1889, 1890 and 1891. Considering the difficulties of communications in those days a great number of competitors, from many countries interested in speed skating, took part. In 1892, world championships were announced but could not take place owing to the very mild winter. The International Skating Union (ISU) was founded in July 1892 in Scheveningen (Netherlands) and is the oldest worldwide international Federation governing a winter sport. The first World Speed Skating Championships, for men only, was held in 1893. World Championships for Women all round were introduced in



*The Utah Olympic Oval ice rink.*

the 1930s. From 1970 ISU has also organised annually World Sprint Championships (500 and 1000 m combination), and from 1996 World Single Distances Championships. Since 1985 ISU organises a World Cup in Speed Skating with about 10 competitions every season.

## At the Olympic Games

From the beginning of the history of the Olympic Winter Games Speed Skating has been one of the Winter Olympic sports. In the first Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix in 1924 there were single distance competitions (500, 1500, 5000, 10000 m) and all round competition for men only. From 1928 till 1972 only the four single distances remained, but as from 1976 a fifth distance (1000 m) was added. Ladies entered the competitions in Squaw Valley in 1960, with the four distances (500, 1000, 15000 and 3000 metres). From 1988 a fifth distance (5000 m) was added to the programme. The same five distances remain, but since Nagano 1998 the 500 m race has been skated twice for one title 'Olympic Champion at

500 m'. In Salt Lake City, there are 10 events on the Olympic programme: five for men and five for women.

## Salt Lake City Olympic venue

With a capacity of 4,600, the Utah Olympic Oval, about 22 km (14 miles) downtown Salt Lake City, will be home to speed skating. Located at 1,425 metres (4,675 feet), this skating arena is the world's highest-altitude indoor skating arena. Moreover, the combination of elevation and dry thin air create some of the fastest ice in the world.



*Ottavio Cincunata,  
President*



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