

2022 Australian Open Short Track Championship – Day 1 report

Melbourne, September 30 - After two years of waiting, Australia's top speed skaters were back on the ice for the 2022 Australian Open Short Track Championships and at the O'Brien Icehouse they didn't disappoint.

The event's return was declared open by CEO of the Australian Sports Commission and two-time Olympic gold medallist Kieran Perkins and Australian Ice Racing President Frank Anderson.

Pointing to a "green and gold decade" heading towards the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games, Perkins noted, that this is "only a stepping stone, not an end point and with the Winter Olympics coming up in Milan and Cortina we obviously know we also have a lot of important events happening in the winter institute spectrum as well."

Underlining the importance of today's event as one of those, the Australian Open Short Track Championships welcomed athletes from Malaysia, Thailand, New Zealand, Philippines and Singapore.

Given Perkins' success *in* the 1500m it's was apt that today's feature event was the same distance *on* the ice.

In the blue ribbon race Keanu Blunden, back from South Korea to compete, won the Senior Men's and Ladies 1500m in a time of 2:32.173, beating NZ's Lukas MacDonald (2:32.452) and Thailand's Triphop Thongngam (2:37.730).

"I was pretty well prepared but seeing the other skaters like Josh (Kah) and Lucas (Wareham) it gave me a little bit of nervousness; seeing how the competition would go because we haven't raced at the Nationals for a while," Blunden said.

"It's very fun to see everybody again and see their faces having a good time but also you have to be competitive and it's like, who can I beat? Who's going to be tough?"

"I think we might be a bit rusty with racing strategy but after today everyone will be all right, it's like riding a bike, you skate a little bit and it all comes back."

"The 500m tomorrow will be very intense, the starts are very competitive and that determines the race. Lukas MacDonald will have a fast start, Josh (Kah) as well, so it will be a very difficult race and definitely one to watch."

In a talent-packed 1500m final World Championship and World Cup competitor Luke Cullen finished in fourth, Lucas Wareham behind him, Joshua Kah sixth, while Ihan Yoo, who just booked a ticket to his first junior world championships, was penalised into last place.

In the Group 2 Final, Australian representative Siyu Wang was the top-placed female athlete, finishing in third behind victor Prakrit Borvornmongkolsak of Thailand and David Koroknai with fellow green and gold skater Hyojin Kim in seventh.

In the Masters Men's and ladies 1000m, Herbert Labiche finished first, Sashen Chetty behind him with Camilo Montoya in third. Carolyn Phillips finished fourth in the Group 2 Final.

At 80 years young, the Dockland Demon's Anthony Richter (2:22.030) came second in the Group 4 Final beaten only by Scott Kiel-Chisholm (2:15.053) skating for the Blades.

In other races, the Midgets Men's and Ladies 500m Group 1 Final was convincingly won by Artem Kutovoy (59.750) from the Canterbury Alpine Ice Skating Club, NZ, ahead of the strong performing Wings skater Sophie Jeon (1:03.572), with the Arrows' Ethan Kamerman (1:04.031) in third.

In the Junior Men's and Ladies 1000m Group 1 Final, Arjun Mootoosamy (1:52.269) from the Arrows topped the podium, with Thailand's Punpreeda Prempreecha in second and Malaysia's Adam Azlan in third.

The Sub Junior Men and Ladies 777m Group 1 Final was won by Thailand's Janthakorn Maneewannakul (1:16.338), beating Kiwi Anthony Kutovoy (1:19.853) and WFIRC's Joshua Seah (1:24.647).

The Nippers 333m was won by Aaron Dong (40.300), over Yirun Wang (41.673) in second and Emmet Brown (44.155) in third.

In the closing relays, the Roos Ice Racing Club came back from seemingly insurmountable half-a-lap behind to beat the Sydney Wings, while the all-male Olympic Southern Flyers team beat the all-female Docklands Demons Ice Racing Club in the local Victorian derby.