

Communication No. 2821

Mass Start and Team Races at ISU Speed Skating Events – Safety Measures, Promotion Initiatives and Race Organization

(Complementing ISU Sports Rules Speed Skating 2026 Rule 223, paragraph 1, Rule 253 paragraph 4, Rules 255, 256, 257, and Rule 265 paragraphs 5, 6, 7 and 8)

1. General

This Communication replaces ISU Communication No. 2749 and will apply for the season 2026/2027 and beyond. A more detailed reference to and guidance on safety measures and safety standards is given in ISU Communication No. 2810, Protection Equipment in Speed Skating and Short Track, or any further update of this Communication.

2. Safety Measures and Racing Suit Guidelines

2.1. Control of Safety Measures

Safety measures will be controlled at a “check-in point” before the race at a designated location, if requested by the Referee during the Team Leaders' Meeting.

Each Skater is responsible for wearing skates and protective equipment, included in paragraph 1 above (ISU Communication No. 2810, Protection Equipment in Speed Skating and Short Track, or any further update of this Communication, when appearing at the start and during the entire race). A full body racing/underwear suit, cut resistant level 3, are mandatory for Mass Start and Team Races at ISU Speed Skating Events.

2.2. Racing Suit Design Guidelines for ISU Senior Events

To clearly identify and recognize the athletes and national teams competing in Mass Start and Team races, design guidelines for racing suits as indicated below shall be respected:

- a) Racing suits show a design clearly distinguishing the participating ISU Members (nations).
- b) The racing suits clearly show the national identity/flag colors. Simple artwork will be accepted. For all ISU Members having flags similar to other Members in shape and color (i.e., Netherlands/France, Italy/Hungary/Bulgaria, Germany/Belgium, etc.) a unique artwork design shall be included showing the national colors for the remaining part of the racing suits.
- c) The country name or official ISU abbreviation must be displayed on the back part of the racing suit. The racing suits shall show on the external part of both legs the name of the country or the official ISU abbreviation. The size of the characters must not be smaller than 7 cm high.
- d) For AIN Skaters, ISU Communication No. 2804, paragraph 1.1. applies.

ISU Members may use racing suits with one design for Mass Start and Team competitions and a different design for individual distances.

Indicative design examples of racing suits



3. Distances and Track for Mass Start Races

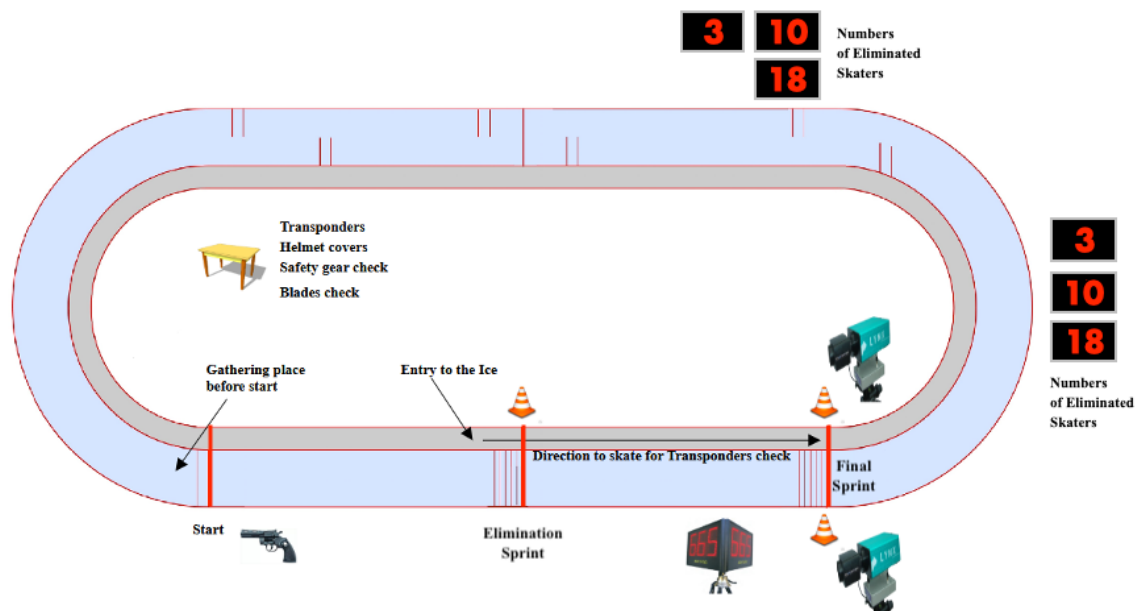
3.1. Distances

- 10-16 laps elimination format for Senior Women and Men.
- 10-12 laps elimination format for Junior Women and Men, and "Neo-Seniors" (Women & Men) competing at ISU Junior World Cup Competitions. For racing rules see Paragraph 4.5 below.

3.2. Track Demarcation

- The competition track generally includes the warm-up lane. However, if deemed necessary to keep an adequate and safe radius of the competition track, a demarcation restricting use of the warm-up lane can be implemented upon a decision of the Referees in consultation with the ISU Speed Skating Technical Committee Representative.
- The 1000m finish line and the main finish line must have the transponder loop in the outer, inner and warmup lane.
- Skaters will be informed about their elimination by a vibrating bracelet and the announcer. There will also be two boards for each eliminated skater. One board is positioned at the apex of the curve after the finishing straight and one at the crossing straight close to the 1500m start line. Both boards are positioned outside the track. The cap number assigned to the eliminated Skaters are displayed on the boards. The elimination will happen at the 1000m finish line.

3.3. Track Organizational Diagram



4. Race Procedures for Mass Start Races

4.1. Technical Competition Equipment of Competitors (Rule 279)

Competitors must wear the following equipment:

- Transponders for timekeeping to be worn on the front of both ankles, not inside or on the skates.
- Helmet covers with numbers corresponding to the start list.
- Vibrating bracelet matched with transponders (only for Elimination Mass Start).
- Other gadgets or devices required to conduct judging and safety of the race (ex. flashing light bracelet, etc.)

4.2. Preparation of the Races

- Start positions are assigned according to the respective ISU Communication.
- Races may be organized with Division A and Division B competitions only with no Semi-Finals, or with Semi-Finals.
- If races are organized with Semi-Finals, entered Skaters will be placed in the Semi-Finals according to their seeding or Ranking, according to the following procedure:
 - Top seeded Skater: Semi-Final 1 – start position 1;
 - 2nd and 3rd seeded Skaters: Semi-Final 2 - start position 1 and 2;
 - 4th and 5th seeded Skaters: Semi-Final 1 – start position 2 and 3, etc.
- If the rules of the Competition restrict the number of Skaters from the same country in each Semi-Final, the allocation of Skaters to the Semi-Finals will be adjusted accordingly.
- The Final shall consist of a limited number of the best ranked Skaters from each Semi-Final, with the same number of Skaters qualifying from each Semi-Final.

However, in case of advancement, additional skater(s) may be added which may exceed the pre-defined limited number of Skaters in the final.

- In the case of withdrawal of a Skater qualified for the Final, this Skater will be replaced in the Final by the next ranked Skater from the Semi-Final concerned:
 - If a qualified Skater from Semi-Final 1 would withdraw from the Final, this Skater will be replaced in the Final with the next ranked Skater from Semi-Final 1;
 - If a qualified Skater from Semi-Final 2 would withdraw from the Final, this Skater will be replaced in the Final with the next ranked Skater from Semi-Final 2.

4.3. Starting Procedures

The Competitors gather at the 500m start area and will then be called to the start line by the Starter or announcer.

- The start will be at the beginning of the finishing straight (500m start line).
- The entire track (warm up, inner and outer lanes) are used for the start rows. Line up at the start in rows of 6 Skaters each, with a distance of at least 1m between each row. For presentation reasons, after the first row (6 Skaters) have been presented, the starter/announcer may call entire rows to the start.

4.4. Race Set Up (Elimination Format)

- a) Number of laps: is set 16 for Seniors and 12 for Juniors;
- b) Maximum 24 skaters at the start
- c) The start will consist of a normal start without the requirement for a slow lap with no acceleration;
- d) Skaters will be eliminated according to below tables;
- e) Each lap that precedes an elimination shall be notified by sound of the bell as indicated in the tables below a bell;
- f) Eliminated Skaters are detected by transponders;
- g) Overtaken Competitors do not abandon the race. The Skaters continue to compete until they are eliminated;
- h) The finish of the race may occur at the end of the finishing straight (500m/main finishing line) with each elimination at the 1000m finishing line.
- i) Competitors are informed about their elimination by a vibrating bracelet/watch and by two boards outside the track: one positioned at the apex of the turn following the 1000m finish line and another board positioned around the 1500m start line. The helmet cover/cap number assigned to the eliminated Skaters are displayed on both boards. Information about elimination can also be done by other devices;
- j) Eliminated skaters must abandon the race immediately and move to the outer part of the track and enter the coaches' box on the crossing straight as soon as possible after they have been eliminated and shall remain in the coaches' box until the race is over;
- k) Transponders will be used to verify the position of the Competitors at each elimination lap. Photo finish and/or transponder will be used for the final sprint.

- l) No coaching is allowed from the ice. Except for medical personnel, (1 medical per team) no team officials, staff or coaches are admitted infield before and during the race;
- m) Competitors who do not abandon the race within one full lap after being eliminated will be disqualified;
- n) The composition of the starting rows of the Final are based on the results of the 2 Semi-Finals: Row 1: 1-1-2-2-3-3; Row 2: 4-4-5-5-6-6; Row 3: 7-7-8-8 etc...
- o) In case of safety reasons, if the race must be stopped by the Referee, the restart will be based on the last elimination lap plus 1 extra lap. Eliminated skaters prior to the stopping of the race will not be allowed in the restart of the race.
- p) The amount of entered Skaters determines the amount of Skaters to be eliminated after each eliminating lap, according to tables below.

SENIORS

Lap number	Number of skaters							
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18	19-20	21-22	23-24
1	9-10	11-12	13-14 	15-16 	17-18 	19-20 	21-22 	23-24 
2	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18	19-20	21-22	23-24
3	9-10	11-12 	12 	14 	16 	18 	19 	21 
4	9-10	11-12	12	14	16	18	19	21
5	9 	10 	11 	12 	14 	16 	16 	18 
6	9	10	11	12	14	16	16	18
7	8 	8 	10 	10 	12 	14 	14 	15 
8	8	8	10	10	12	14	14	15
9	7 	7 	9 	9 	10 	12 	12 	12 
10	7	7	9	9	10	12	12	12
11	6 	6 	8 	8 	8 	10 	10 	10 
12	6	6	8	8	8	10	10	10
13	5 	5 	7 	7 	7 	8 	8 	8 
14	5	5	7	7	7	8	8	8
15	4 	4 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 
16	4 	4 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 

JUNIORS:

Lap number	Number of skaters							
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18	19-20	21-22	23-24
1	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16 	17-18 	19-20 	21-22 	23-24 
2	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18	19-20	21-22	23-24
3	8 	10 	13 	14 	15 	17 	18 	20 
4	8	10	13	14	15	17	18	20
5	7 	9 	12 	12 	12 	14 	15 	16 
6	7	9	12	12	12	14	15	16
7	6 	8 	10 	10 	10 	11 	12 	12 
8	6	8	10	10	10	11	12	12
9	5 	7 	8 	8 	8 	8 	9 	9 
10	5	7	8	8	8	8	9	9
11	4 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 
12	4 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 	6 

4.5. Race Set Up For Short Mass Start (Junior World Cup 2)

- Distances are 100m + 3 laps for Women and Men.
- Short Mass Start may be organized with semi-finals.
- Maximum 36 skaters are eligible to compete based on the results of the 1500m in JWC1.
- Maximum quota for each ISU Member: 3 Competitors per gender.
- Maximum 6 heats with maximum 6 skaters in each heat. Heats are made using the same system as for Mixed Relay. Winner of each heat goes to the final.
- The start will be at the beginning of the finishing straight (500m start line).
- The finish of the race may occur at the end of the finishing straight (main finishing line).
- The entire track (warm up, inner and outer lanes) are used for the start.
- The warm-up lane is considered as part of the racing track (if not otherwise decided by the Referee and the ISU Speed Skating Technical Committee Representative).
- The lap that precedes the final lap shall be indicated by a bell.
- Photo finish equipment and/or transponders will be used to verify the position of the Skaters at the final sprint.
- No coaching is allowed from the ice. Except for medical personnel (1 medical per team) no team officials, staff or coaches are admitted infield before and during the race.
- No World Cup points will be awarded for the Short Mass Start.

5. Mass Start Racing Rules

5.1. General

- "Fair play" as the basic rule: no obstruction of other Competitors.

- Skaters must take care during racing to avoid causing dangerous situations.
- Any unsportsmanlike behavior against other Competitors can lead to disqualification. The Referee has the authority to disqualify the Competitor(s) concerned. An obstructed Competitor may be advanced to the next round at the sole discretion of the Referee.
- The Referee shall stop the race (Rule 216, paragraph 2.h) if there are safety concerns in the case of a fallen or injured Competitor(s). The race will then be stopped by a gunshot or whistle from the Starter or by the Referee. Technical equipment may be used for signalling a stop of the race.
 - The Referee decides if and when a fresh start of the race will be held;
 - The full distance of the race shall be re-skated if the race is stopped for safety concerns and a fresh start will be held;
 - No fresh start will be allowed for Competitors who were disqualified for rule violations, abandoned or were eliminated from the race before the incident happened that caused the stop of the race.
- If a “crash” occurs during the first lap with a large group (6 or more) of Skaters involved, the race will be stopped, and a fresh start will then follow immediately.

5.2. Disqualifications

- Skaters who do not meet the safety requirements (see paragraph 1 above and ISU Communication No. 2810, or any further update of this Communication) will not be allowed to compete or will be disqualified if violating these requirements during the race.
- The Referee, at his discretion, may give a “warning” to a Skater in order to prevent unsportsmanlike behaviour.
- Serious obstructions or other unsportsmanlike behaviour against other Competitor(s) can lead to a disqualification.

6. Elimination Mass Start Ranking Results

The ranking of the last 6 Competitors will be determined by their placement in the final sprint. Places 7 and beyond will be ranked according to their exact rank when eliminated and, in case of a tie between 2 Skaters, according to the Skater's previous intermediate split time. The first eliminated skater will be the lowest ranked skater. Competitors not finishing the race will be ranked according to the number of laps they have completed before being eliminated or otherwise having abandoned the race. If two or more Competitors abandon the race for any reason (e.g. fall, injury, broken skates) on the same lap, they will be ranked according to their last intermediate split time.

7. Distances and Track for Team Races

7.1. Distances

- 3 laps for Team Sprint races;
- 6 laps for Team Pursuit races for Women, Junior Women and "Neo-Senior" Women (competing at ISU Junior World Cup Competitions);

- 8 laps for Team Pursuit races for Men, Junior Men and "Neo-Senior" Men (competing at ISU Junior World Cup Competitions);
- 6 laps for Mixed Relay races.

7.2. Track Demarcation and Set Up

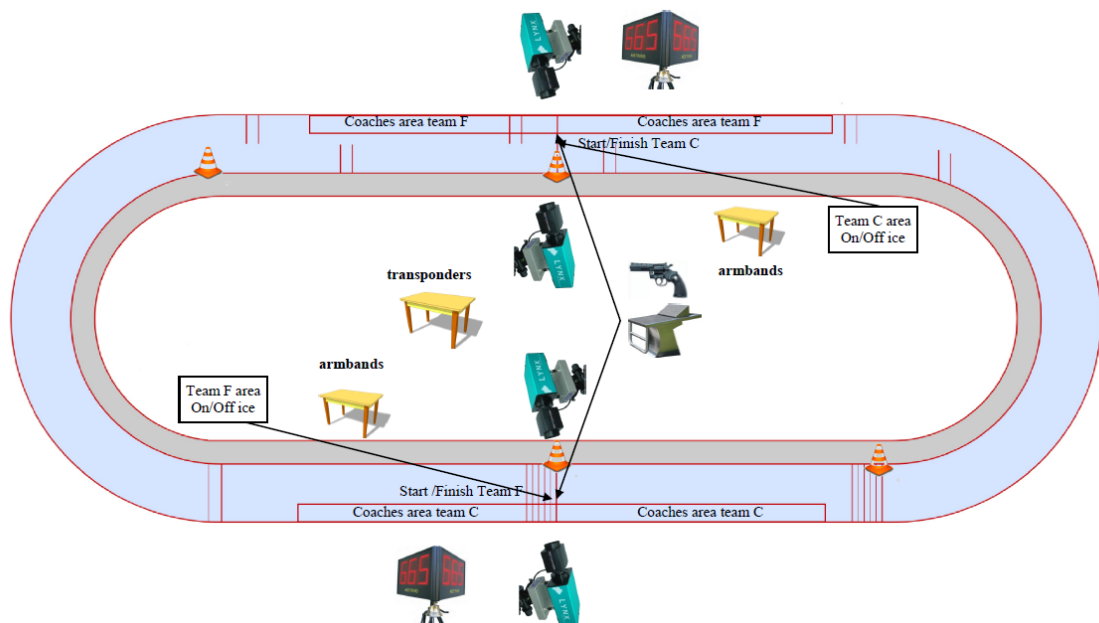
The track must be laid out with only one competition lane, e.g. by making use only of the demarcation between the inner lane and the warm-up lane on a standard track. Two Skaters' preparation areas are installed infield for the Team Pursuit and Team Sprint:

- At the "500m start" – **on/off Ice Team F Area** for teams starting on the finishing straight;
- At the "1500m start" – **on/off Ice Team C Area** for teams starting on the crossing straight.

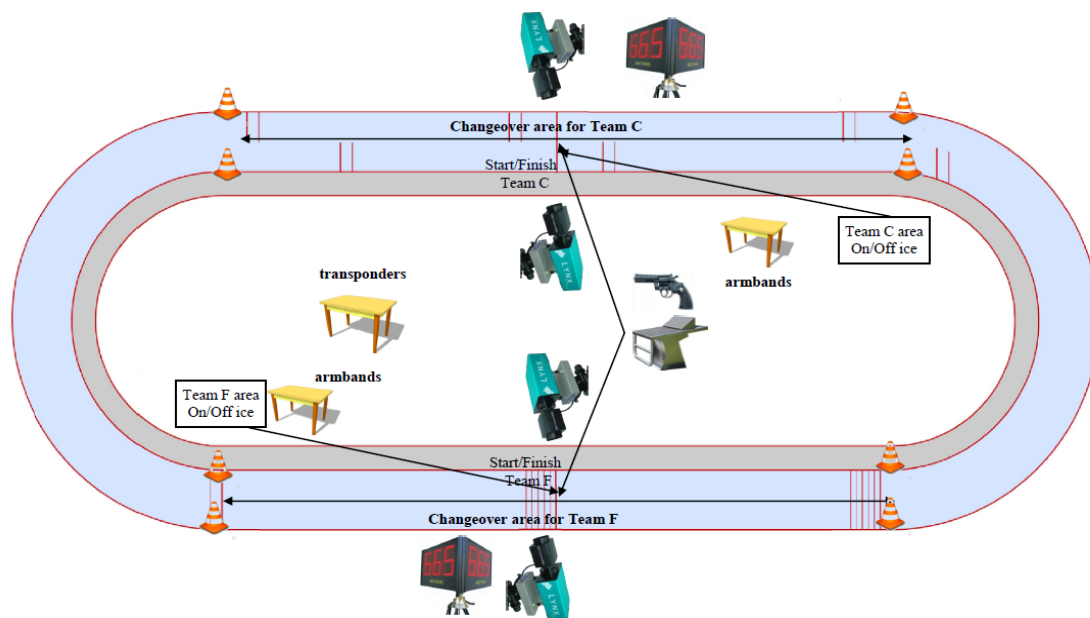
One team preparation area installed infield for the Mixed Relay:

- At or near the "1000m start".

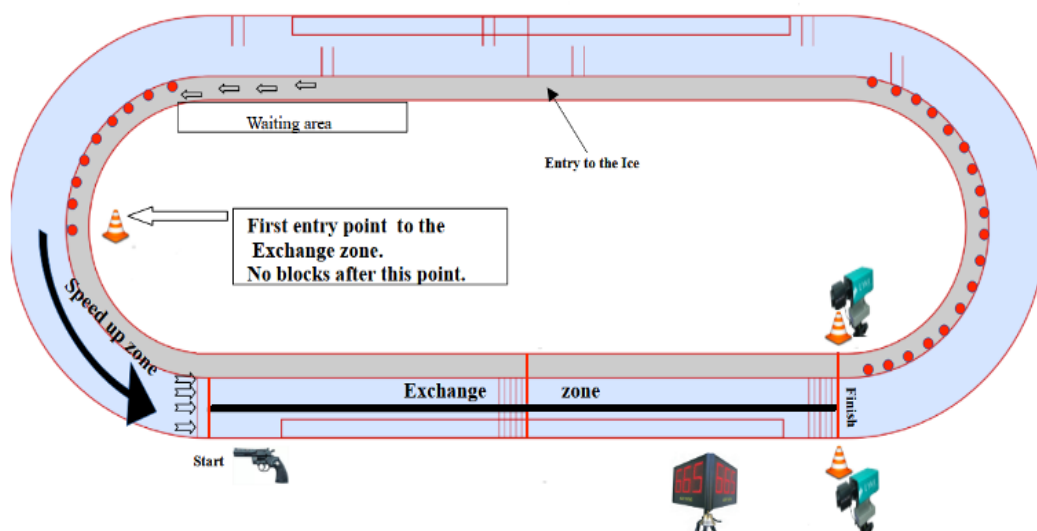
7.3. Track Organizational Diagram for Team Pursuit Races



7.4. Track Organizational Diagram for Team Sprint Races



7.5. Track Organizational Diagram for Mixed Relay Races



8. Race Procedures for Team Races

8.1. Technical Competition Equipment of Competitors (Rule 256)

- Transponders for timekeeping must be worn by Competitors on the front of both ankles, not inside the skates.
- **For Team Pursuit races** – Skater No.1 in the team shall wear white armbands, Skater No.2 shall wear red armbands, Skater No.3 shall wear yellow armbands, Skater No.4 shall wear blue armbands.
- **For Team Sprint races** – each Skater shall wear different identification defining their role in the race. Skater No.1 in the team shall wear white armbands, Skater No.2 shall wear red armbands, Skater No.3 shall wear yellow armbands, Skater No.4 (in the case of 4 Skaters in the team) shall wear blue armbands.
- **For Mixed Relay races** – for each heat, each team shall wear different identification means during the race:
 - Team 1: Shall wear helmet covers with #1;
 - Team 2: Shall wear helmet covers with #2 and so on.
- Rule 279 applies.
- At the discretion of the Referee, helmet covers may be used for identification of the Skaters in each Team for Team Pursuit and Team Sprint instead of armbands.

8.2. Preparation of the Races for Team Pursuit and Team Sprint

- Only the two competing teams (or one if there is only one team racing) are allowed on the ice during a race. All non-competing teams will remain in or near their ON/OFF ICE preparation areas in the infield.
- Teams will be allowed to enter the ice from their preparation area after the conclusion of the previous race. In the case of the first race, the teams will be instructed when to enter the ice (approximately 1-2 minutes before the start time). The teams shall move directly from their preparation area to their respective start lines.
- To enter the ice, Skaters use the designated ON/OFF ICE area. Skaters will have approximately 50m from entering the ice to the starting line. A countdown clock may be used to inform the Skaters when to appear at the start.
- To exit the ice, Skaters use the designated ON/OFF ICE area. After the finish of the race the Skaters will have approximately 350m to exit the ice.
- For Team Pursuit races, coaches are not allowed to pass through the starting area during the starting procedure (after the “go to the start” command) or through the finishing area while the competing teams pass through the finishing area on the final lap. Coaches must stay 20m away from both the Starter and starting line during the starting procedure. The coaches will enter and exit the ice in the same locations as the Skaters. After the race, the coaches will move directly from their coaching area to their respective exit area.
- For Team Sprint races, no coaches are allowed on ice and no coaching allowed from the infield.

8.3. Preparation of the Races for Mixed Relay

- Maximum 4 (four) teams are allowed to compete in one race. All non-competing teams shall remain in/or near the preparation area.
- Teams will be allowed on the ice coming from the preparation area after the conclusion of the previous race. For the first race, the teams will be instructed when to enter the ice (approximately two minutes before the start time). Teams will exit the ice to the preparation area within one lap of finishing the race.
- No coaches are allowed on ice and no coaching allowed from the infield.

8.4. Starting Procedures for Team Pursuit and Team Sprint

- The start will be in the middle of each straight.
- Two teams shall start simultaneously at each side of the track. If the races have been composed according to a ranking of the teams, the best ranked team shall start on the finishing straight. Otherwise, the starting positions will be determined by a draw.
- Order and position of the Skaters at the start are at the discretion of the teams.

8.5. Starting Procedures for Mixed Relay

- The start will be at 500m starting line.
- The starting procedure will be according to Rule 253. Only one false start is allowed per race. The Team of the Skater committing the second false start will be disqualified.

9. Team Races – Racing Rules (see also Rule 256)

- During **Team Pursuit races** tactics and changeover are at the discretion of the teams.
- During **Team Sprint races** the first leg is skated with the Skater assigned as No. 1 leading the team, with the other Skaters of the team staying behind. At the end of each leg, the Skater leading the team has to leave to the outer part of the track, and the next assigned Skater (assigned as No.2) has to lead the team during the next leg. The last assigned Skater shall skate the last leg alone and finish the race for the team. Changeover to the next assigned Skater in the team must take place between the beginning of the finishing straight of the team and before the entry to the curve. The leading Skater has to clearly show, by moving to the outer lane and standing up, that the changeover has taken place and they have removed themselves from the race (even if the teammate(s) have not moved ahead of the removed Skater before the end of the changeover zone). Cones may mark the beginning and end of the changeover area.
- The **Mixed Relay races** will use the competition format based on Sport Rules 256, paragraph 3.4 (Competition format C):
 - Each team consist of two (2) Skaters, one woman and one man.
 - Each heat (race) includes maximum four (4) Teams.
 - Start of the race: At the 500m starting line.
 - Finish of the race: At the 500m/main finishing line.
 - Racing sequence:

- 1st leg: 1 lap by woman skater
 - 2nd leg: 2 laps by man skater
 - 3rd leg: 2 laps by woman skater
 - 4th leg: 1 lap by man skater
- Exchange zone: Beginning at the 500m start line; relay must be completed before the 500m finishing line. Skaters can enter the ice at the apex/middle of the curve before the exchange zone to gain speed for the exchange. The beginning and end of the exchange zone will be marked with cones.
- During races, tactics and changeover (relaying) are at the discretion of the teams as far as the below mentioned racing rules are respected.
- The relay to the other Skater in the team has to take place with a touch and that touch has to be obvious, clearly shown so that the Referee or Assistant Referees can easily see it. It is possible to relay like in Short Track (push from behind). The Referee shall decide when a touch has been “obvious” and is responsible for observing all relaying for this particular purpose, with the support of the Assistant Referee.
- After having passed the relay to his/her teammate, the Skaters shall stay on their line and move to the warm-up lane only when all other teams have passed to avoid interference or if it is safe enough to avoid interference from a Skater coming from behind.
- Skaters ready to take over the relay shall accelerate in the warm-up lane (the Skater can determine the distance they want to start accelerating from) and are allowed to enter the racing lane only starting at the apex/middle of the curve before the exchange zone (this point will be marked with a cone). It is recommended that the leading team have the outer position for the changeover (relaying), the second place team has the second outer position, etc.
- Changeover (relaying) to the next Skater in the team must take place between the 500m start line and before the 500m finish line (exchange zone identified by cones) according to Rule 256, paragraph 3.4.
- Breach of any of the above-mentioned racing rules or unsportsmanlike behaviour against other Competitors (Rule 257, paragraph 4.5) can lead to disqualification of the Team.

10. Liability

ISU Competition & Event Regulations article 17.3.2 applies.

September 1, 2026

Jae Youl Kim, President

Colin Smith, Director General