

Northwest passage to the Winter Olympics

Apollo Ohno, back for more

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THE OREGONIAN

Apollo Anton Ohno could win four Olympic short-track speedskating medals next month in Turin, Italy, but he'll need every ounce of luck in a sport as capricious as a winter storm.

The 23-year-old from Seattle is stronger and more experienced than in 2002, when he won a gold in the 1,500 meters and silver in the 1,000 at the Salt Lake City Olympic Games. He still sports the distinctive soul patch, and he's more comfortable as the face and ambassador to his sport.

He will be a medal favorite, ranked third in the world behind South Korea's Hyun-Soo Ahn and Ho-Suk Lee.

But Olympic short track throws the odds to the winds. A racer can become an Olympic champion out of last place if his competitors fall, as occurred in Salt Lake. And a favorite can be disqualified for interference that would be invisible to most viewers.

Ohno, the 2001 and 2003 World Cup overall champion, dominated the U.S. short-track trials, qualifying in every event — 500, 1,000, 1,500 and relay.

Raised in Seattle by a single father, Ohno was a national champion indoor in-line skater when he watched short-track speedskating in the 1994 Olympic Games. He immediately was taken by the sport — all speed with a little roller derby

Mindset: Speedskaters are masters of technique and strategy and must be able to read a race and its competition. A fast pace strategy is an attempt to "burn out" the slower skaters, and a slow pace strategy allows skaters to jockey for position in anticipation of a sprint to the finish line.

Lower back: A very strong lower back is required to keep the skater in a tuck position and reduce air friction.

Hips: The sport is less linear than running, requiring greater development of hip muscles that abduct and adduct.

Leg: The quadriceps and gluteus maximus are the main muscles used in speedskating. The lower back



Uniform: 75 percent of the energy is spent on overcoming air resistance. The



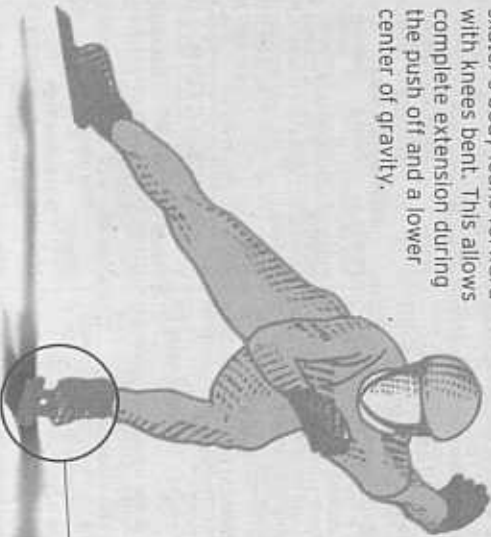
OLYMPIC PROFILE
Next week Northwest
snowboard/cross:
Leslee Olson

medal on the women's side since 1994. She will be joined by teenaged phenom Hyo-Jung Kim, a native of South Korea, who has blown away records in domestic competitions but is adjusting to international competition.

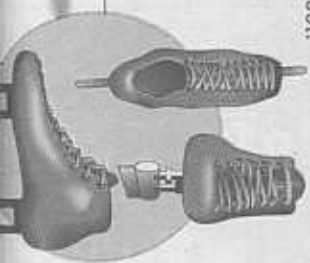
Short-track speedskating

The competition | At the Olympic Games, short-track speedskating consists of eight events. Men and women compete in 500m, 1,000m, and 1,500m. There is a 5,000m relay for men, and a 3,000m relay for women. Skaters compete against each other, not against the clock. Four skaters compete in a race with those finishing first and second advancing to the next round.

Straightaway | The skater's body leans forward with knees bent. This allows complete extension during the push off and a lower center of gravity.



The skates | Short-track skates differ from long-track skates because they are molded to the feet and reinforced in the ankles to offset the centrifugal force of turns. Blades are offset to give greater lean on the outside of each boot.



the track at speeds of up to 30 mph.

Knee: The knee is bent throughout the race. Highly developed muscles surrounding the knee keep it healthy.

Ankle: The muscles and tendons must be strong enough to sustain the centrifugal force of sharp turns.



Applying technology is the key.

Aerodyr fabric (S)

Low fric panel

Padding

Start Judge: Gives the starting signal. Decides false starts and other aspects of the start.

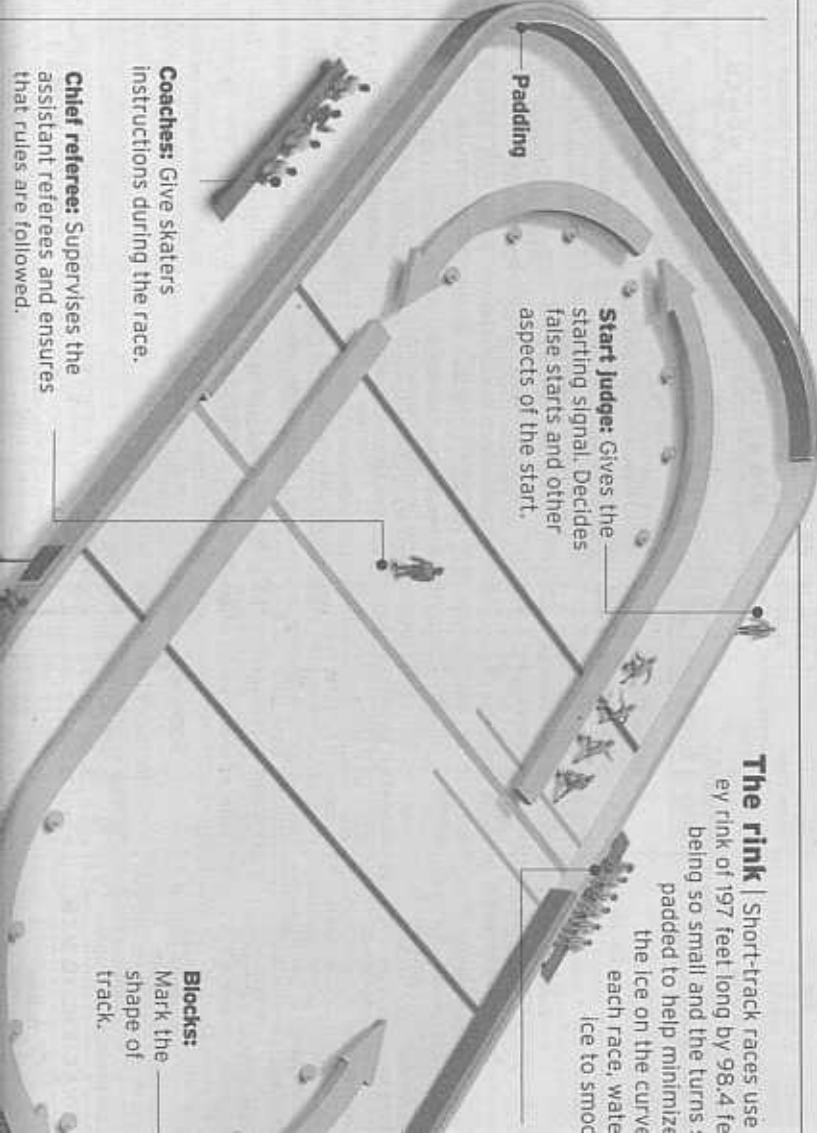
Coaches: Give skaters instructions during the race.

Chief referee: Supervises the assistant referees and ensures that rules are followed.

The rink | Short-track races use a rink of 197 feet long by 98.4 feet wide. The ice is so small and the turns are so tight that the rink is padded to help minimize the ice on the curve.

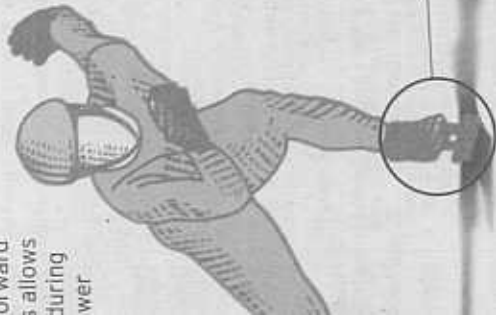
Each race, water is used to smoothen the ice.

Blocks: Mark the shape of the track.

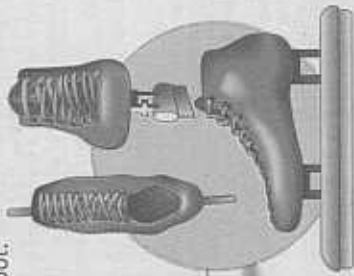


nts. Men and women compete in 500m, 1,000m, and 3,000m relay for men, and a 3,000m relay for women. In each other, not against the clock. Four skaters with those finishing first and second advancing to the

The forward allows during



The skates | Short-track skates differ from long-track skates because they are molded to the feet and reinforced in the ankles to offset the centrifugal force of turns. Blades are offset to give greater lean on the outside of each boot.



The gloves | Made of leather to reduce the risk of cuts. Skaters use their hands to help them maintain balance on the sharp turns. Finger tips are plastic.



ey rink of 197 feet long by 98.4 feet wide. Due to the rink being so small and the turns so sharp, the walls are padded to help minimize injury. During the event, the ice on the curves becomes grooved. After each race, water is sprinkled on the rough ice to smooth the surface.

Judges: Make sure that the electronic timer works properly and can time the race manually.

Start judge: Gives the starting signal. Decides false starts and other aspects of the start.

Padding

Blocks: Mark the shape of track.

Coaches: Give skaters instructions during the race.

Chief referee: Supervises the assistant referees and ensures that rules are followed.

Lap counter: Tells the skaters how many laps are left in race.

Assistant referee: Helps to control the race and spot infractions. There are placed two inside and two outside the rink.

Sources:
USSpeedskating.org,
Nike, www.olympic.org,
John W. O'Keefe M.D.,
Photo reference source:
Associated Press

Who to watch

Hyun-Soo Ahn

Country: S. Korea

Age: 20

Beat Ohno in 500m world championship and is world record holder in 1,500m and 3,000m.



Jin Sun-Yu

Country: S. Korea

Age: 17

Fourth youngest member of any women's short-track national team is the overall leader in women's World Cup standings.



Rules

The pass

must be made cleanly without forcing the passed skater to slow down.

Skater in lead must not interfere with other skaters by using their arms or body to prevent them from passing.

Olympics, Feb. 10-26

Scheduled days of short-track competition

Day	Date	Event
12	SUN	1500m FINAL
13	MON	
14	TUES	
15	WED	1000m PRELIM 5000m RELAY PRELIM
16	THUR	
17	FRI	
18	SAT	1000m FINAL
19	SUN	
20	MON	
21	TUES	
22	WED	500m PRELIM
23	THUR	
24	FRI	
25	SAT	500m FINAL 5000m RELAY FINAL
26	SUN	