New Year in China for many years means international skiing at a high level and it won’t be any different in 2019 when the China Tour de Ski opens with a great ski sprint in Changbai Mountain on the first of January. Changes within the Board of the national Chinese Ski Association have resulted in a smaller-than-usual tour this season, but the highlight remains Vasaloppet China in Changchun’s Jingyuetan Park and this for the 17th edition already. The classic-style ski marathon is now also part of the World Loppet Series on 4 January.

As always, a selection of top skiers from Europe and the Americas will square off against skiers from the Chinese National Team. That team is of course in total build-up for the 2022 Olympics in Beijing, and this year’s China Tour de Ski may shed some light on who the up-and-coming home talents are for those Games. In Changbai Mountain and in Changchun, the competition will be intense and we are happy to see the return of last year’s overall tour winner Jacqueline Lockner in the women’s category. The Swedish skier excels in the sprint races and had a tough day in the forest during Vasaloppet China last year. A repeat overall win is therefore anything but guaranteed. In particular because Russia’s Marina Chernousova is also back on the start grid and she is last year’s winner of the 50k ski marathon in Changchun. On paper, Lockner versus Chernousova appears like a fantastic dual for this year’s overall Tour, but obviously many other skiers will want to have their say in the victory debate. The Chinese women are traditionally doing well, and there’s also Sweden’s Maria Gräfnings. She has been racing successfully in the national team of her home country for years, and has recently shifted her focus on long distance having changed allegiance to Norway.

In the men’s category, we have a more open competition perhaps with America’s Reese Hanneman one of the top favourites. He is a national champion in the ski sprint and also represented his country in the last Winter Olympics in South Korea two years ago. If he does well in the ski sprint in Changbai Mountain, he will face a stern challenge in Vasaloppet China by the likes of Fabian Stocek from the Czech Republic and Mikhail Sosnin from Russia. They were third and fourth respectively in Changchun a year ago. However, the man to watch may be Norway’s Peter Soleng Svinstad. He won the World Loppet race in Canada last season and may set the pace during the 50k classic style race here in China.
With one ski sprint and one ski marathon the winner of the 2019 China Tour de Ski tour will therefore be someone who can blend both disciplines best. Looking forward to find out!

Sprint
Vasaloppet China start

ski in Jingyuetan forest park