



2013 female China Tour de Ski champion Lisa Svensson is only one outstanding name of another class field for the upcoming edition of China's greatest ski event. In fact, the Chinese Ski Association is entering its most talented skiers to oppose the assembled group of Europeans and Northern Americans with a view to next year's Winter Olympics 2022 election.

Domestic female skiers have always remained successful in the China Tour de Ski, with several stage wins and podium placers, but in recent years their male counterparts have been lagging behind. As Beijing-Zhangjiakou has a 50% chance of getting the 2022 Winter Olympics - the only other candidate city is Almaty in Kazakhstan - time has come to do something about that and the Chinese Ski Association has announced the participation of the last male Chinese winner of Tour de Ski, Xu Wenlong, who won in 2011. It will be interesting to see where he stands after four years.

One of the hot favourites for the overall title this season is Sweden's Robin Bryntesson. Age 26, Bryntesson is a superb sprinter, and with the exception of Changchun's classic style marathon most stages must suit him. Bryntesson is indeed a regular podium finisher in Swedish 1k sprint races. One potential challenger for the title of 'fastest skier' this year will be America's Ryan Scott. The American has been flirting with the top 10 in the national American championship, so we will find out how that compares with the European and Chinese elite. Johan Eriksson has meanwhile become a veteran of the China Tour de Ski and his experience always seems to propel him to at least one stage win challenge.

The China Tour de Ski is based on a points system, which means that pure long distance specialists often have a hard time retaining their advantage built up in the 50km long

Vasaloppet China race in Changchun, traditionally one of the earliest stages in the Tour. There's a couple of endurance athletes in the field this year that will give it their best in the often icy conditions of China's Motor City. The Czech Republic is represented by youngster Jacob Psenicka, who has built up a reputation recently as a strong distance skier. A classic-style specialist is Peter Madsen King of the USA, and Norway's 20-year-old prospect Petter Reistadt might just be the one to watch despite his youth. Reistadt got the silver medal in his country's junior championship on the 15km freestyle, and he also finished 4th and 8th in the national championship race over 20km classic style and 10km freestyle respectively.

All of the previously mentioned names will be up against multiple victor of the Vasaloppet China race, Anders Hoegberg, however. Contrary to last season, Hoegberg will again just stick to the two Changchun stages and not take part in Xiwuqi and Nalati.

After winning China Tour de Ski in 2013 with a fantastic last ditch effort in Nalati, 25-year-old Lisa Svensson had to settle for third place last year but is keen to get back on the top step of the podium. However, the Swedish ace will also likely face bigger competition from the Chinese team this year. Two former female champions are on this year's team: Li Hongxue (winner in 2011) and Ma Dandan (winner in 2009). As with Xu Wenlong, let's find out how fast they are still today!

