

# INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Event 9 of 9

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## **Essent ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final – Heerenveen (NED)**

The Essent ISU World Cup series concluded in the Thialf Stadion in Heerenveen. Only the 20 best skaters of each distances raced. There were three Personal Best times, one of which was a National Record for Belgium (1:45.50 by Bart Swings), and Ireen Wüst (NED) skated a Track Rrecod, a World Record for lowland rinks: 3:58.68 in the 3000m.

World Cup trophies were presented to the best skaters of the season in each distances including the Mass Start Race and to the best Team in Team Pursuit. The Cups went to Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR, 500m), Heather Richardson (USA, 1000m), Marrit Leenstra (NED, 1500m), Martina Sábková (CZE, long distances). For the men: Jan Smeekens (NED, 500m), Kjeld Nuis (NED, 1000m), Zbigniew Bródka (POL, 1500m) and Jorrit Bergsma (NED, long distances). The Mass Start Cup went to Bo-Reum Kim (KOR) and Arjan Stroetinga (NED), The Team Pursuit Cups to the Dutch Ladies (De Vries, Valkenburg, Wüst, Leenstra) and the Dutch men (Sven Kramer, Jan Blokhuijsen, Koen Verweij, Jorrit Bergsma).

For the second year in the history of the World Cup Speed Skating series a special prize from Essent and US \$20,000 was awarded to the Lady and Man who had accumulated the highest number of points throughout the season and be crowned 'Grand World Cup' winner. For each competition in the individual distances, the top five ranked competitors earned 'Grand World Cup' points. This honour went to Ireen Wüst and Jorrit Bergsma (NED).

### **Friday**

Friday was a short day, featuring the Ladies' and Men's first 500m race and the Team Pursuit races. In the 500m for Ladies, Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) had won all World Cup races in which she participated. She was the World Cup leader with 800 points and was paired with Jenny Wolf (GER) for the last pair. Last week's winner Beixing Wang (CHN) had just set the best time, with 37.81. Wolf skated better than earlier this season, opened in 10.35, a tenth of a second faster than Lee and also faster than Wang. She perfectly came through the last inner ahead of Lee, and did not give that advantage away. Her 37.77 proved that the 34-year-old former World Record holder could still win. Lee finished with 37.82 in third, behind Wang. Theoretically, Wolf could still beat Lee to the World Cup and the last race on Sunday would determine the winner. Wolf: "I skated more relaxed and with focus on technique." Lee: "I don't mind, it did not matter. The goal is Sochi."

In the Men's 500m, Jan Smeekens (NED) was on the podium for every World Cup weekend, and on the top tier from this season's third World Cup onwards. Heerenveen would proved to be no different. The battle between Smeekens and Kato ended to Smeekens' advantage, although the opening was for Kato, but the lap for Smeekens. 34.84 was his winning time today. Kato's 35.06 brought him to fourth place, as Jamie Gregg (CAN) finished second in a strong 34.96. In the penultimate pair, the twins Michel and Ronald Mulder fought for the third place. Ronald won in 35.04, Michel with 35.07. Ronald: "But I do not race just against him, I race against the whole world." For the overall ranking, it meant that Smeekens had won the World Cup independent of the second 500m. He had 980 points, Kato had 776 and there were

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only 150 to be won. With this, Smeekeens became the first European World Cup 500m winner since Uwe-Jens Mey in 1991.

The Team Pursuit races were for the top four teams to find the winner. Both in the Men's and the Ladies' field, the Dutch team won. The Dutch Ladies with 3:00.50 beat the Canadian team (3:03.50) and the Polish Ladies took third (3:04.19) against the Russian team.

On the Men's side, the Dutch men clocked 3:40.64, the Korean team started fast but then slowed and reached 3:42.69. The Norwegian men lost to the Russians with a small margin: 3:43.99 and 3:43.02. The Team Pursuit World Cup overall was for these teams in that order.

## Saturday

In the 1000m Ladies, Heather Richardson (USA) was leading with 501 points, well ahead of Karolina Erbanová (CZE) with 429 and Brittany Bowe (USA) with 290. The first skater below 1:16 this day was Laurine van Riessen (NED) with 1:15.95. The next pair featured Hong Zhang (CHN) and last year's World Cup winner Christine Nesbitt (CAN), who had not participated in China, nor in Erfurt. It turned out to be a well-balanced race. Nesbitt opened in 18.29, 0.07 faster than Zhang. Zhang won 0.06 back in the first lap, but then lost again 0.01. Nesbitt finished in 1:15.48 and 1:15.50 was Wang's time. Nobody else managed to skate below 1:16. Bowe was closest with 1:16.03 and finished fourth. Richardson lost in her pair with Erbanová, their respective times 1:16.83 and 1:16.34. Still, Richardson won the World Cup with 525 points, her teammate Bowe rose to second place with 480, Erbanová dropped to third with 465 points. Richardson: "I had a strong beginning this season, but after the World Sprints my body seemed to need time to rest. I am going to have a blood test done on Monday, I may be a little low on iron." Nesbitt, today's strongest skater: "It was good, but it can be smoother. The entire team was sick and lately I was a bit up and down. With so much travel I had to be careful. No, I don't fear Zhang, I just focus on my own race." Erbanová was also glad with third place: "I had not expected to be this competitive."

In the Men's 1000m, the final race between the two Dutchmen Kjeld Nuis (482 points) and Hein Otterspeer (479) should determine the overall winner, but Shani Davis (456) and Samuel Schwarz (445) could still win. Stefan Groothuis (NED), who missed the first half of the season, skated a strong race with a first lap of 25.2 and second of 26.8. He finished in 1:08.91. This was too fast for everybody else. Mark Tuitert (NED) finished in 1:09.22, closely followed by Shani Davis and Kjeld Nuis, who both finished in 1:09.24. Nuis was faster by thousands and got to third place, Davis was fourth. Otterspeer lost, finished in 10<sup>th</sup> and therefore even missed the qualification for the World Single Distance Championships according to Dutch rules. Nuis won the World Cup with 587 points, Davis was second with 546 and Otterspeer third with 477. Nuis: "I started like always, and was ahead of Otterspeer after 200m. It surprised me how far he was behind in the end. But this is the first time I won the Cup with the big ears." Otterspeer: "I had a cold last week and it felt like half my motor had been switched off." Davis: "I have to pick my battles better, as I get older. Considering the injury I had at the start of the season, I know I can still win. The level is still the same. I know what I have to do."

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In the 3000m Ladies, Martina Sáblíková won the World Cup for the seventh time in a row. The past three times, Stephanie Beckert was second. The 24-year-old German was again second in the ranking going into this competition. Ireen Wüst, who was ill in the first part of the season, was in excellent shape already last week. Today, she skated a new track record in Thialf, 3:58.68, which is a new World Record for lowland rinks. She even managed to lower her lap times at 2200m to 31.0. "It was a wonderful 3k", she said. "I skated relaxed, focusing on my technique. Everything was right, the race almost went by itself. I did not know I was this good. It was only half a second above my Personal Record skated on altitude." This time proved unbeatable here. Linda de Vries skated a personal best time, 4:04.87, which was good for third place, Diane Valkenburg was second with 4:04.75. Sáblíková did not get beyond 4:07.44 and was sixth, Beckert skated 4:09.92. It was enough for Sáblíková to win the World Cup with 475 points, but Claudia Pechstein (GER) overtook Beckert and finished second with 421 points, third was Valkenburg, and Beckert dropped to fourth overall. Sáblíková: "It was good enough. It was warm inside. Of course I would have liked to win, but with Wüst today that was not possible."

Going into the Men's 5000m, the difference between Jorrit Bergsma (NED) and Bob de Jong was only 20 points. The winner of their pair would determine the winner of the World Cup. Before they raced, Sven Kramer, third in the rankings, was paired with Seung-Hoon Lee. Lee could keep up with Kramer until 3000m, skating well, but then his lap times dropped from the mid 29s to 30s and finally a 31.0. He finished in 6:18.32. Kramer managed to be faster in the second half than in the first half. With lap times going down gradually from 29.8 to 28.5 in the final lap, he got close to the Track Record, but missed it by 0.4. His winning time was 6:10.78. Bergsma, who had lost to de Jong last week because he started too late with his attack, was much more aggressive this time and left De Jong behind him at 1000m, keeping 29 lap times. As he could not match Kramer's first and last laps, Bergsma finished in second with 6:15.74, De Jong stayed just within the time of Lee with 6:18.26 and took third place in the race. It made Bergsma the winner of the World Cup with 520 points, followed by De Jong with 485, and Kramer with 450. Bergsma also won the Grand World Cup: "I had not thought of that in the start of the season until I heard I was on top, and Heather as well. But she lost it again. It is a bonus. For me the main thing is to skate good races and fast times." Kramer: "I wanted to race a progressive race, because then it does not take so long to recover. I had not expected that it would be that fast."

## Sunday

Sunday started with the second 500m races. Beixing Wang, third in the ranking, skated well on her birthday, finishing in 37.78. Sang-Hwa Lee beat Jenny Wolf this day with 37.77 while Wolf had 38.20 and finished in fourth. Thijsje Oenema finished in third with 38.10. Thus with a final victory, Lee won with 1055 points. Wolf had 761 and Wang had leaped to the podium with 636 points. Wang: "I trained in China from May until the first World Cup of this season. After that I started to make my own program and trained by myself until one day before the race in Erfurt, when I joined the Kia Speedskating Academy. Wotherspoon is a good technical coach. But I was pleasantly surprised that the training worked." Lee: "I am fresh and excited as this is the first season I win the World Cup. The difference this year is good conditioning

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programs, and Kevin Scott (my trainer in Calgary) and I are a good combination. I am happy it worked out so well."

Going into the last race of the Men's 500m, Smeekens was already the certain winner and Kato the runner-up. Behind them, the struggle for bronze was between the Mulder brothers, who were only 10 points apart. Based on Friday's results, Michel Mulder skated first and did well with 34.97. Then Kato moved him out of the lead. The Japanese skated 34.92, while Jamie Gregg finished behind Mulder. In the final pair Ronald Mulder raced with Jan Smeekens. The mark his brother had set was too high for him this day. While Smeekens won again, in 34.83, Ronald finished fourth in 35.13. This brought Michel bronze in the ranking with 665 points, Ronald had 640. Smeekens won with 1130 and Kato had 896. Kato: "This was my best race of the season. It is possible to beat Smeekens, hopefully in Sochi, but today my skate broke and it was fixed before the race, still therefore I did not trust my skate. I have to try hard." Jamie Gregg: "Smeekens is so consistent, you think you have to try really hard to beat him. But it is the opposite: you have to relax and trust that your body can go fast." Ronald Mulder; "In the last part of the season I managed to climb from ninth to fourth place but it is just not good enough." Smeekens: "This means a lot to win the World Cup, especially the way I did it: winning 7 races, six in a row in the second half of the season. Six months ago I said that my goal was to become more consistent. And I succeeded. I was nervous on Friday, but now I was relaxed."

In the Ladies' 1500m, Marrit Leenstra was leading with 105 points over Christine Nesbitt. Yekaterina Shikhova who was third could not compete. The first surprising result in this distance was a personal best time by Kali Christ (CAN), who skated 1:56.97 and reached a career-high fourth place. Lotte van Beek (NED) was faster with 1:56.58, both skaters are 21 years old and show great promise. Winner of this race was again Ireen Wüst, who won in 1:54.67. In the final pair Nesbitt reached 1:56.86, just enough for the podium but she would have needed to beat Wüst to win the World Cup. Now Leenstra, in spite of an 8<sup>th</sup> place in the distance, gathered enough points for the season's victory: 411. Nesbitt had 375 and Wüst got to 350. Valkenburg had needed second place to win the overall world cup, but was only 7<sup>th</sup>: "I lost too much in the end, the beginning was good, but my race should have been better." Leenstra: It is a big prize, but as I am not in a shape as good as Wüst, van Beek and Valkenburg, I am not qualified according to Dutch rules to race the 1500m in Sochi. I have to accept that."

The Men's 1500m has been special this season, as each race in the World Cup series had seen a different winner, and this day was no different. The pair to look forward to: Shani Davis racing Bart Swings (BEL). Swings opened slower than most, 24.49, but had technically brilliant laps in 26.4, 26.9 and 27.5. As a result, he overtook Davis in the final lap, reaching another Belgian record time of 1:45.50. Davis' time was 1:46.13. It also brought Davis to the podium. The only person to come between them was Zbigniew Bródka (POL), the leader in the World Cup. 1:45.96 was another second place for him, after he gave Poland its first victory last week. Håvard Bøkko, ranked second, dropped a place after his 1:46.49. Swings

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was the first Belgian skater to win a World Cup race and he moved up to second in the ranking with 336 points. Bródka took the World Cup with 460 points: "I am very happy and satisfied, it was the best season of my life. Every time I skated 1:46, and now 1:45. Especially in this distance it is very close, and hard to know who will win next time." Bródka's coach mentions his very good mental and physical possibilities and technical improvements in the five years he skated long track. Bródka: "The mentality is because I work as a fireman. To do that you need to be able to handle a lot of stress."

In the Ladies' Mass Start race, Claudia Pechstein tried everything to win, because it would give her the Grand World Cup, but she had to let the top skaters go on the last straight. Irene Schouten won, just before Ivanie Blondin (CAN) and Bo-Reum Kim (KOR). Bo-Reum Kim won the World Cup with 365 points. Second with 330 points Huisman (NED) and third with 300 points was Blondin.

In the Men's Mass Start, Bart Swings won the final sprint, his second victory of the day and of his career on ice, in a very close finish with Hyung-Joon Joo (KOR) and Arjan Stroetinga (NED). For the ranking this meant that Stroetinga won the World Cup. Swings moved up to second place and third was Jordan Belchos (CAN).

The skaters will gather once again this season for the World Single Distance Championships that take place from 21 to 24 March in Sochi, in the venue that awaits the Olympic Games next year.

## Essent ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final – Heerenveen (NED) - Medal Winners

### 500m Ladies

1	Jenny Wolf	GER	37.77
2	Beixing Wang	CHN	37.81
3	Sang-Hwa Lee	KOR	37.82

### 500m Men

1	Jan Smeekens	NED	34.84
2	Jamie Gregg	CAN	34.96
3	Ronald Mulder	NED	35.04

### 500m Ladies

1	Sang-Hwa Lee	KOR	37.77
2	Beixing Wang	CHN	37.78
3	Thijsje Oenema	NED	38.10

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## 500m Men

1	Jan Smeekens	NED	34.83
2	Joji Kato	JPN	34.92
3	Michel Mulder	NED	34.97

## 1000m Ladies

1	Christine Nesbitt	CAN	1:15.48
2	Hong Zhang	CHN	1:15.50
3	Laurine van Riessen	NED	1:15.95

## 1000m Men

1	Stefan Groothuis	NED	1:08.91
2	Mark Tuitert	NED	1:09.22
3	Kjeld Nuis	NED	1:09.24(0)

## 1500m Ladies

1	Ireen Wüst	NED	1:54.67
2	Lotte van Beek	NED	1:56.58
3	Christine Nesbitt	CAN	1:56.86

## 1500m Men

1	Bart Swings	BEL	1:45.50 NR
2	Zbigniew Bródka	POL	1:45.96
3	Shani Davis	USA	1:46.13

## 3000m Ladies

1	Ireen Wüst	NED	3:58.68 TR
2	Diane Valkenburg	NED	4:04.75
3	Linda de Vries	NED	4:04.87 P

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## 5000m Men

1	Sven Kramer	NED	6:10.78
2	Jorrit Bergsma	NED	6:15.74
3	Bob de Jong	NED	6:18.26

## Team Pursuit Ladies

1	Marrit Leenstra / L. de Vries / I. Wüst	NED	3:00.50
2	K. Christ / B. Schussler / C. Nesbitt	CAN	3:03.50
3	K Bachleda-Curus / K Wozniak / L Zlotkowska	POL	3:04.19

## Team Pursuit Men

1	J. Blokhuijsen / S. Kramer / K. Verweij	NED	3:40.64
2	S.-H. Lee / H.-J. Joo / B.-W. Ko	KOR	3:42.69
3	Y. Lalenkov / I. Skobrev / D. Yuskov	RUS	3:43.02

## Mass Start Ladies

1	Irene Schouten	NED	32 points
2	Ivanie Blondin	CAN	19 pt
3	Bo-Reum Kim	KOR	10 pt

## Mass Start Men

1	Bart Swings	BEL	33 points
2	Hyung-Joon Joo	KOR	15
3	Arjan Stroetinga	NED	11

## World Cup Final Ranking

### 500m Ladies

1	Sang-Hwa Lee	KOR	1055
2	Jenny Wolf	GER	851
3	Beixing Wang	CHN	756

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## 500m Men

1	Jan Smeekens	NED	1130
2	Joji Kato	JPN	896
3	Michel Mulder	NED	665

## 1000m Ladies

1	Heather Richardson	USA	525
2	Brittany Bowe	USA	480
3	Karolina Erbanová	CZE	465

## 1000m Men

1	Kjeld Nuis	NED	587
2	Shani Davis	USA	546
3	Hein Otterspeer	NED	507

## 1500m Ladies

1	Marrit Leenstra	NED	411
2	Christine Nesbitt	CAN	375
3	Ireen Wüst	NED	350

## 1500m Men

1	Zbigniew Bródka	POL	460
2	Bart Swings	BEL	336
3	Håvard Bøkko	NOR	329

## 3000/5000m Ladies

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	475
2	Claudia Pechstein	GER	421
3	Diane Valkenburg	NED	410



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## 5000/10,000m Men

1	Jorrit Bergsma	NED	520
2	Bob de Jong	NED	485
3	Sven Kramer	NED	450

## Team Pursuit Ladies

1	The Netherlands	NED	400
2	Canada	CAN	370
3	Poland	POL	295

## Team Pursuit Men

1	The Netherlands	NED	450
2	Korea	KOR	350
3	Russia	RUS	285

## Mass Start Ladies

1	Bo-Reum Kim	KOR	365
2	Mariska Huisman	NED	330
3	Ivanie Blondin	CAN	300

## Mass Start Men

1	Arjan Stroetinga	NED	330
2	Bart Swings	BEL	310
3	Jordan Belchos	CAN	216

## Grand World Cup Ladies

1	Ireen Wüst	NED	72
2	Christine Nesbitt	CAN	65.5
3	Diane Valkenburg	NED	63

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## Grand World Cup Men

<b>1</b>	Jorrit Bergsma	NED	67
<b>2</b>	Jan Smeeckens	NED	54.5
<b>3</b>	Shani Davis	USA	50.5

For details of the Essent ISU World Cup, including complete results see [www.isu.org](http://www.isu.org) .

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