

February 15, 2015

For immediate release

**ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 2015 - Heerenveen (NED)
Sunday - Day 4**

Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) won the 500m with a lowland world record combination on the final day of the World Single Distances Championships in Heerenveen and became the first European World Champion in this distance. Brittany Bowe (USA) became the first US world champion in the 1500m. The first mass start gold was seized by Dutch skaters Arjan Stroetinga (NED) and Irene Schouten (NED). Four skaters improved their personal best times.

Kulizhnikov lives up to expectations in 500m

In the first 500m the seventh pair gave the first two 34's with the opener for Olympic Champion Michel Mulder (NED) and the lap for his compatriot Hein Otterspeer. Otterspeer won this race in 34.743. Mulder finished in 34.852.

The next sub-35 races were the last three pairs, with the winner being Kulizhnikov, whose 34.383 (lap time 24.76) was a personal best, narrowly missing the Russian national record of 34.35. Tae-Bum Mo (KOR) finished fourth with 34.905, followed by Ruslan Murashov (RUS), who skated a personal best of 34.964, Laurent Dubreuil (CAN, 34.971) and Espen Aarnes Hvammen (NOR, 34.979).

In the second heat, Artur Was (POL), took revenge for his disappointing 8th place in the first heat. The Polish sprinter, who frequented the podium in the World Cup this season, skated 34.790 to end up in fifth place. He commented: "It was the first good season for me. The last few weeks hurt my confidence slightly, but I am proud that I pulled it off in the second race. This may be the end of my season. I need to fix a knee problem."

Dubreuil was paired with Mo and opened fast. He beat Mo, who slipped in the turn and dropped behind Was and Hvammen. Dubreuil for his part, continued with what he later called 'a perfect race' and crossed the finish in 34.723. It gave him a total of 69.694 to surpass Mo. Young Russian Murashov did not manage to deliver two 34s and also fell back behind Dubreuil and Was.

Michel Mulder had a better second race and although his 34.770 was slower than Dubreuil's 34.723, he stayed ahead in the combination with 69.622. With only one pair to go he was certain of a medal.

The top two contenders Kulizhnikov and Otterspeer both started well, but Otterspeer lost his balance and finished in 35.032. He ended up in rank four behind Dubreuil. Kulizhnikov also won the second race, in 34.548, and set a lowland world record in the combination of 68.931.

Kulizhnikov commented: I was a little nervous, it was my first world championships and it was really interesting to see what would happen. The first day I found a bit heavy [when he was second

in the 1000m], but I found myself back and it went well just as I wanted it. I was not scared of the others, I just minded my own technique. One day I hope to skate a 500m under 34 in Calgary. The competition, like Mulder, is strong and will certainly be on a higher level next season.” Asked about if he had any secrets he laughed: “No, I have no secrets, maybe my coach has, but not me.”

Mulder: “Of course I see this as gold lost, but this is the maximum possible for me if you look at the times. The entire season Kulizhnikov skates the best 500 meters. In November I reached a main goal for this season, to get a world title in inline. So these championships I came to the start with less confidence. I wanted to get the maximum out of it. Secretly I am happy that my track record survived. Next year I plan to be more competitive with Kulizhnikov.”

Dubreuil said: “I did not think I could go that fast in my second 500m. The goal was simply executed. The first one was less, but still my fastest at sea level, but I knew some parts I could have done better. I was fast but had more in me. So I refocused and executed better. It was just perfect.”

Bowe takes momentum into 1500m

Brittany Bowe (USA) was the first of the favourites to start in the Ladies’ 1500m and she set a standard that proved to be infeasible for the rest of the field. After winning the 1000m on Friday and taking silver in the 500m on Saturday Bowe became the first American lady to ever win a 1500m title at the World Single Distance Championships. “I focussed on the 1000m and the 1500m here. I had a lot of momentum going into the 500m and after my strong performance yesterday I just kept it going for today. The past days have definitely been a confidence booster.”

Skating in the tenth pair Bowe was the first to open below 26 seconds and she set a first full lap of 28.2. In the second full lap she really made the difference, with 29.4. Only Martina Sáblíková (CZE) managed to skate sub-30 seconds in that lap as well, but the Czech was a lot slower in the opener and the first full lap (26.5 and 28.7). Bowe finished in 1:54.27. Sáblíková, who had skated in the previous pair had finished in 1:55.65, which would take her to fourth place.

Ireen Wüst (NED) was due up straight after Bowe and she managed to stay close to Bowe’s lap times only to lose three tenth of a second in the penultimate lap to finish in 1:54.76. “It was a good race, but it was just not good enough”, she said.

Heather Richardson, who took gold in Saturday’s 500m, was the last one to challenge Bowe’s 1:54.27. She skated the fastest opener with 24.70. That was the tactics she had discussed with her coach beforehand: “Jillert (Anema) knows that speed is my advantage, so he told me to open fast. Today that just didn’t really work out in the end.” Richardson managed to stay below Bowe’s time after the first full lap, but she started to struggle in the second full lap and heading into the final lap Bowe already knew she had won the title. Richardson also had to bow her head for Wüst, when she finished in 1:55.60 to take the bronze.

Wüst did not win a single title at the World Single Distance Championships only for the second time since she first participated in 2007. "I'm disappointed at the moment, but maybe tonight I can be a bit proud again. After all I won three silver medals at these Championships", she said. Searching for reasons why she hadn't been able to win, Wüst said: "Maybe I skated too many race this season but well, I can't turn it back anymore can I? There's just one beautiful tournament to come: the World Allround Championships in March."

First ever mass start world title for Stroetinga

Arjan Stroetinga (NED) took the first ever world title in the mass start when he outsprinted Fabio Francolini (ITA) in Sunday. Stroetinga's teammate Alexis Contin (FRA) grabbed the bronze medal after a very fast race.

Silver medallist Francolini had put his cards on Seung-Hoon Lee (KOR), who won this season's Mass Start World Cup. "I followed the Korean, because he's the fastest. But I got some feeling during the race, that it was going to be different. Lee was focussing on Jorrit (Bergsma) and I saw Alexis (Contin) and Stroetinga together. I decided to follow them and that turned out to be a good decision."

Lee finished fifth behind Bart Swings (BEL). "They were too many of one team. It was their plan", said Lee. The Korean ended up in rank 12 because he did not take part in intermediate sprints. "He couldn't even imagine how little chance he had", said Jillert Anema about Lee. Anema is coach of Bergsma, Stroetinga and the French Contin. His skaters had discussed tactics before the race.

Stroetinga said: "We were going to make it a tough race and Jorrit (Bergsma) was going to attack if there would be an opportunity. But the pace was high and Jorrit couldn't get away, so I knew it would be up to me and Alexis to go for a sprint." Although Contin might have liked to win himself, he was happy with the bronze and with the fact that they'd beaten Lee. "We got him", he shouted, laughing.

Haralds Silovs (LAT), Andrea Giovannini (ITA), Peter Michael (NZL), Tyler Derragh (CAN) and Jeffrey Swider-Peltz (USA) were ranked 4-8 respectively because they had earned points in the intermediate sprints. With his eighth place Swider-Peltz secured funding for next season.

Schouten takes last international title in Old Thialf

Irene Schouten's world title was historic in two respects. Not only was it the first ever Mass Start World title, it was the last ever international title in Heerenveen's Thialf stadium as well. The speed skating temple will be renovated straight after the World Single Distances Championships. Schouten outsprinted Ivanie Blondin (CAN) to take the gold and teammate Mariska Huisman (NED) managed to take the bronze. Schouten thanked Huisman extensively: "I owe much of this title to Mariska, because she managed to close all gaps. And if the race would end up in a sprint she was going to lead out the sprint and swerve outside to let me pass on the inside. Blondin is the main competition and this way she would not have anywhere to go", she said.

Huisman quits speed skating at the end of this season. "I've been skating for such a long time now. On the one hand it's a pity because the results are so good at the moment, but on the other hand there's so many things I want to do next. I will skate two marathons and maybe the World Cup in Erfurt and then it's done."

Blondin was happy to take the silver. She said: "It is my first year to be skating that well. I have been number one in the World Cup and also been second in some races but I could just as well miss the podium, so I am really happy."

"The Mass Start is probably my best discipline. It is most like short track. I see myself more like a 3k/5k specialist. This year I started to do the 1000m and am still figuring out the 1500. In the mass start I can combine my sprinting ability, agility and long distance."

Sábliková tried to get away twice during the race. Early on she joined Claudia Pechstein (GER) in an attempt to escape, but Huisman did not let them get away. Three laps before the end Sábliková tried to escape once again, but again Huisman immediately countered. "We knew that Sábliková would try, and if she's gone we would not be able to get her back again", Schouten said.

For full results of the ISU World Single Distance Championships 2015 please refer to <http://www.isuresults.eu/> and <http://www.live.isuresults.eu/2014-2015/heerenveen-3/index.htm>

The ISU World Single Distance Championships is available as a live stream on the ISU Skating Channel. Please note that geoblocking may be required in certain territories
<http://livemanager.eurovision.edgesuite.net/isu/index.html>

The ISU World Championships will continue on Friday to Sunday in Warsaw (POL) with the ISU Junior World Championships and one week later the ISU World Sprint Championships in Astana (KAZ)

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ISU World Single Distance Championships Heerenveen (NED) - Medal Winners day 4

1500 m Ladies

1	Brittany Bowe	USA	1:08.57
2	Ireen Wüst	NED	1:08.61 P
3	Heather Richardson	USA	1:08.71

500 m Men

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1	Pavel Kulizhnikov	RUS	34.383(1) + 34.548(1)=68.931
2	Michel Mulder	NED	34.852(3) + 34.770(3)=69.622
3	Laurent Dubreuil	CAN	34.971(6) + 34.723(2)=69.694

Mass Start Men

1	Shani Davis	USA	1:08.57
2	Pavel Kulizhnikov	RUS	1:08.61 P
3	Kjeld Nuis	NED	1:08.71

Mass Start Ladies

1	Irene Schouten	NED	3:01.53
2	Ivanie Blondin	CAN	3:01.55
3	Mariska Huisman	NED	3:03.19

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