

July 15, 2020

## Obituary

### Lara van Ruijven (NED)

It is with profound regret and sorrow that the ISU learned of the death of Short Track Skater Ms. Lara van Ruijven who passed away on July 10th, 2020 at the age of 27.

Ms. van Ruijven, a Short Track Speed Skater from the Netherlands was one of her country's brightest sporting talents.

Among a close-knit team also featuring brilliant athletes such as Suzanne Schulting, Rianne de Vries and Yara van Kerkhof, Ms. van Ruijven was the Ladies' field speed demon. They called her 'Panther' (panther) and she decorated her helmet with the colors of the wildcat. On the ice, especially in her favorite discipline, the 500m, she was always ready to strike.

She grew up in Naaldwijk, near The Hague, and first tried out skating aged six. At 18, she showed her promise by finishing sixth at the 2010/2011 World Junior Championships, and was soon making a mark on the senior World Cup circuit, too.

By 2013, aged 20, she stood on top of her first major podium, collecting gold medals at both the ISU World Cup in Dresden (GER) and the European Championships in Malmo (SWE) as part of the Netherlands' excellent 3000m Relay group – which also featured the likes of Schulting and van Kerkhof.

Further Relay golds followed – at the European Championships in 2014, 2016, 2019 and 2020.

And the Dutch skaters also combined to take a bronze medal at the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

As much as she was a team player, Ms. van Ruijven was also emerging as a brilliant individual racer. Grappling against other lightning-fast talents like Natalia Maliszewska (POL) and Martina Valcepina (ITA), she won individual World Cup gold at Calgary 2018/19 and on home ice in Dordrecht in 2019/20.

Her greatest solo moment, however, came at the 2019 ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Sofia (BUL) where she took gold in the 500m. In doing so, she beat her great friend Suzanne Schulting to become the first female Short Track skater representing the Netherlands to win a world title.

Ms. van Ruijven, who was studying law at university as well as training full-time, passed away at a hospital in Perpignan, France after falling ill during a training camp in the Pyrenees. She was diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder and placed in a coma. Tributes to her came from all corners of the Short Track world. None were more heartfelt than those of her teammates.

The ISU pays tribute to Ms. Lara van Ruijven and will remember her with affection.