

Press release

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Japanese ladies dominate Heerenveen, track record for Kulizhnikov (RUS)

Japan won six out of eight ladies events at the first leg of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating series in Heerenveen, with Nao Kodaira (JPN) taking her personal third gold in the 1000m on Sunday. In the men's tournament Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) hit back with a fabulous 1000m track record after disappointing 500m races earlier in the weekend.

Antoinette de Jong (NED) and Sven Kramer (NED) restored Dutch honor with individual golds on home ice on Sunday, while the Canadian men and the Russian ladies won the non-Olympic Team Sprint events.

Kodaira in league of her own

Nao Kodaira (JPN) had already won the two 500m races on Friday and Saturday, and she dominated the 1000m on Sunday too.

With a time of 1 minute 13.99 seconds, Kodaira was less than one-tenth of a second outside the track record set by Brittany Bowe (USA) in 2015. Bowe herself won the 1000m in the B Group earlier on Sunday in 1:14.95. Apart from the medalists in the A Group, the American was the only lady to skate under 1:15 on Sunday.

Miho Takagi (JPN) clinched second to bolster Japanese dominance and Jorien ter Mors (NED) took bronze.

Takagi, who won the 1500m on Saturday, finished in 1:14.45. With 28.8, she had the fastest final lap of the field, but sprinter Kodaira had been much faster in the first 600m.

In the final pairing Ter Mors was 0.26 closer than Takagi in the first 200m, but she finished in 1:14.65.

Kulizhnikov (RUS) breaks Thialf's 1:08 barrier in 1000m victory

Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) became the first man to skate under 1 minute 8 seconds in the 1000m at the Thialf ice stadium as he bounced back from injury in Heerenveen on Sunday.

The 23-year-old Russian took World Cup gold in a track record time of 1:07.97. Dutchman Kai Verbij finished second in 1:08.12 and Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen (NOR), who had won the first 500m on Friday, took bronze in 1:08.28.

Kulizhnikov had not been able to train for about two weeks prior to the first leg of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating series. He was not up to his usual speed in both 500m races, finishing sixth on Friday and 18th on Saturday.

His 1000m gold did not come as a surprise to him, however.

“I suffered from a groin injury and the 500m was harder for me than the 1000m, because the 500m is more explosive,” he said. “I’m in good shape now, but I still need a little more time to recover.”

De Jong (NED) brings home gold for Dutch fans at last

After Japan’s streak of six event wins in the ladies tournament Antoinette de Jong (NED) handed the Netherlands their first World Cup victory of the season when she won the ladies 3000m.

It was De Jong’s first individual career World Cup win. The 22-year-old challenged Ireen Wüst (NED) and Martina Sáblíková (CZE) last season, but never managed to beat both of them in one race.

At the Dutch national championships in October, De Jong took Wüst’s scalp when she grabbed the Dutch 3000m title, and now she has finally beaten Czech Sáblíková too.

“I think nobody has ever been so excited about winning a World Cup than me today,” she said with a smile after finishing in 4:03.53.

Natalia Voronina (RUS) took silver in 4:04.00 and Ivanie Blondin (CAN) grabbed bronze in 4:04.16. Wüst finished sixth in 4:05.54 and Sáblíková seventh in 4:05.70.

De Jong acknowledged that one World Cup gold does not give any guarantees for future races.

“Of course this is great. I feel great and I’m very confident about the rest of the season, but this is just one weekend,” she said. “I have to perform next weekend again and there are many races yet to come.”

Sáblíková complained about a back injury. “I’m in so much pain,” said the Czech. “I’ve had a back injury for one month and nobody knows what to do about it.”

The long distance specialist has no room for rest, however. “I have to skate in the next World Cups to secure my place in the Olympic 5000m,” she said.

Bloemen (CAN) can only admire Kramer’s (NED) famous acceleration

Sven Kramer (NED) beat Ted-Jan Bloemen (CAN) in the final pairing of the 5000m to clinch gold at his home World Cup in Heerenveen.

Dutch-born Canadian Bloemen had to settle for silver and Norway’s Sverre Lunde Pedersen (NOR) took the bronze medal.

Bloemen said he could not remember any previous head-to-head race versus Kramer in a World Cup, but he would not be forgetting this experience any time soon.

“I finally got to see that famous Sven Kramer acceleration in the final four laps. It’s good to learn how to deal with that. Unfortunately I was not able to keep up,” he said.

At 3400 metres Kramer accelerated with a 28.9 lap after he had skated 29.9 in the three previous laps. Bloemen clocked 29.6 at 3400m and could not close the gap after that. In the final lap Kramer again skated sub-29 to finish in 6 minutes 12.88 seconds, 2.07 seconds ahead of Bloemen.

“It was a good race,” said a satisfied Kramer, 31. “We were level with four laps to go and then I got a sign that I was a second above schedule so I was able to shift gear.”

The Dutchman only skated one distance at this first event of the 2017/18 World Cup because he had been feeling unwell. “It’s not too bad, it was more of a precaution to skip the Friday and Saturday races,” he said.

Pedersen, who clocked 6:15.81, gave credit to the Norwegian team for his bronze medal. “I feel really well. We have a very good team and it’s good to have Håvard Bøkko (NOR) back. He has really raised our level,” he said.

Bøkko took a break from speed skating last season but is back on the ice after overcoming a knee problems in the summer. He finished second in the B Group with 6:18.35.

Canada and Russia win Team Sprint events

Canada confirmed its status as a powerhouse in men’s sprinting when Laurent Dubreuil, Alexandre St-Jean and Vincent De Haître (CAN) beat Germany in the final pairing of the men’s Team Sprint to clinch World Cup gold in Heerenveen on Sunday.

Norway took a surprise silver as Russia grabbed the bronze. Germany finished seventh.

De Haître was brought into the Canadian line-up at the last minute after claiming fifth place in the 1000m earlier in the day.

He was pleased with his team’s morale, adding: “We have a very good group of sprinters in Canada. It’s very nice to skate together in an event like this.”

Although Norway is not renowned for world class sprinters, the Scandinavian country has improved significantly in this area in the past year and boasted this weekend’s 500m gold medalist Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen as anchor.

Norway sprint coach and former 500m world record holder Jeremy Wotherspoon (CAN) did not want to take all the credit.

“I did not start the sprint program in Norway, that was already running,” he said. “They had put more focus on the sprint program before I came. I tried to keep on doing what they were doing well, build on it and apply some of my philosophy into the program.”



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In the ladies event Angelina Golikova, Olga Fatkulina and Elizavita Kazelina took gold for Russia. Anne Gulbrandsen, Hege Bøkko and Ida Njåtun handed Norway silver, while Kim Hyun-Yung, Park Seung-Hi and Kim Min Sun took bronze for the Republic of Korea.

Full [results and classifications](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using **#WCSpeedSkating** and **#SpeedSkating** and watch the live stream on the [ISU Skating Channel](#).

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About ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2017/18 Series

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating is a series of international Speed Skating competitions which takes place annually. The Series started in 1984 and usually consists of six or seven events including the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final. Skaters can earn points at each competition, and the skater who has the most points on a given distance at the end of the series is the World Cup winner of that distance. Skaters also cumulate Grand World Cup points each time they compete in a distance. During the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final, the Lady and the Man with the most Grand World Cup points is crowned the Grand World Cup winner.

The results on the individual distances in the World Cup ranking are the main qualifying method for the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships.

A number of World Cup titles are awarded every season, for Men: 500 m, 1000 m, 1500 m, combined 5000 m / 10000 m, Team Pursuit, Mass Start and Team Sprint. For Ladies 500 m, 1000 m, 1500 m, the combined 3000 m / 5000 m, Team Pursuit, Mass Start and Team Sprint.