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Liu brothers steer Hungary to relay world record as Schulting leads Dutch medal charge in Calgary

[Shaolin](#) and [Shaoang Liu](#) (HUN) inspired Hungary to a new world record in the final of the men's 5000m relay, and Suzanne Schulting collected a second gold medal of the weekend by winning the women's 1000m as the opening 2018/2019 ISU Short Track World Cup competition concluded in Calgary on Sunday.

Brilliant Liu brothers help Hungary smash relay world record

[Shaolin](#) and [Shaoang Liu](#) (HUN) brought the opening ISU Short Track World Cup of the 2018/2019 season to a sensational conclusion, inspiring Olympic champions Hungary to a new world record of 6:28.625 in the final of the men's 5000m relay.

But as Shaolin crossed the line to seal victory in a dramatic race – the lead changed hands multiple times over the course of 45 laps – he was perhaps the only man in the stadium unaware of what Hungary had just achieved.

"I didn't actually realise at first," said Shaolin. "I was just screaming. I was shouting, 'Yes baby', wanting to high-five my coaches, and then I went to hug my brother, and he said, 'Look at the screen!' I was like, 'Oh my god, how did we do that?'"

For both Liu brothers, the record came as a particular shock, because for most of the race they were fighting tooth and nail for the lead with Korea and Netherlands, who took silver and bronze. "I'm so surprised as we didn't even feel that good in the race," said Shaolin. "It was a pretty rough race, quite messy with lots of passes. We almost had a fall with 20 laps to go, and I was super worried we were going to end up finishing with just three men."

For Shaoang, the younger Liu brother, the achievement is yet another notch on a burgeoning list of records. "We have an Olympic record as well, and I'd already set a world record previously, but back in the juniors, so it wasn't that big," he said. "It's unbelievable to have done it. The speed was so fast from the beginning, so I was so happy just to have won. But then I saw, 'World Record' on the screen and I was just like, 'Wow!' I maybe still have another 10 years of skating in my legs, so I hope there are many more records to come."

It had already been a highly successful day for the brothers. Earlier in the afternoon, Shaoang clinched gold in the men's 1000m final, having narrowly avoided being taken out in a collision between skaters [Hiroki Yokoyama](#) (JPN) and Kim Gun Woo (KOR) in the semi-finals.

"I'm pretty happy with the gold because I've been through a lot this weekend," he said. "I always say that when you're watching the races on TV, it looks like it's not that hard to get a gold, but it is. It's super hard."

In Sunday's 500m sprint, Shaolin clinched bronze behind Olympic champion [Wu Dajing](#) (CHN) and [Abzal Azhgaliyev](#) (KAZ), a medal that came as a huge surprise to him, having spent most of the week battling illness.

"I'm pretty shocked that I got on the podium as I haven't really trained much this year," he said. "Plus, I'm not really a 500m skater, as I've never been a good starter. I only began training properly two months ago, which is pretty late. It was hard coming back, having won that Olympic gold which was the goal for so long. When you've put a goal out there, and you reach it, it's really hard to find another one. But I'm back now, so everyone, watch out."

So low were Shaolin's expectations ahead of the 500m final, that he had to ask his brother – who took silver in Saturday's 500m sprint – to remind him of how much time he had to put his skates on before the A race.

"I'd actually forgotten when I should start putting my boots on," he said. "I completely forgot how much time you have in the A final."

Meanwhile, the rest of the skating world was left to ponder how to stop Wu, who won the 500m again with plenty to spare, as well as clinching gold for China in the mixed relay ahead of Netherlands and Korea.

[Samuel Girard](#) (CAN), who won Olympic gold in the men's 1000m at PyeongChang 2018, was among those left trailing in Wu's wake on Sunday, finishing fourth in the 500m final. But Girard believes there may still be a way to stop the Chinese star.

"I think the key is to try and get in front of him, and cut his speed," said Girard. "He's comfortable in front, so maybe if you cut his usual pattern, put him more in danger mode, react mode, he'll be a bit more nervous and make some errors. That's what I'll be working on for next weekend in Salt Lake."

Scintillating Schulting leads Dutch dominance

Olympic champion [Suzanne Schulting](#) (NED) spearheaded a dominant performance by the Dutch women's team, which collected two golds and a silver on the final day of the ISU Short Track World Cup at the Calgary Olympic Oval.

Before the competition began, Schulting had expressed a desire to consistently establish herself on the World Cup circuit as the skater to beat over 1000m and 1500m to prove her 1000m gold at the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics was far from a fluke.

She did just that this weekend. But while Schulting won Saturday's 1500m final by a mere hair's breadth from [Courtney Lee Sarault](#) (CAN), she showed her class in Sunday's 1000m final, leaving the rest of the field chasing thin air as she finished more than a second ahead of Sofia Prosvirnova (RUS) and [Veronique Pierron](#) (FRA).

Schulting explained that a hard summer's training has been crucial to her early-season success. While many of the world's leading skaters took several months away from the sport after March's World Championships, she said her success in PyeongChang had made her hungry for more.

“I went for a vacation for five weeks after the Worlds and cleared my mind, let it all go, and then I was ready to put in some hard work to try and win more medals this season,” she said. “It’s still a little bit unreal to think about that Olympic final. I’ve watched it back several times, and each time I’m like, ‘This is so crazy’. But I think it helped focus me for the whole summer. And then the first race this weekend I was a little nervous, but after that it was all gone, and I was really relaxed and skating well. There’s always pressure on you after you win something, and it gets more and more as you get better, but right now, things are perfect.”

For 29-year-old Pierron, emotions were running high after claiming her first individual World Cup medal in almost a decade of trying. “I’m so happy,” she said. “I think the Calgary public just gave me extra energy today. Of course, Suzanne is really strong, and I think she’s in exceptional shape right now. I was just trying to be on the podium. I now hope that this medal will inspire more kids back in France to give short track a go and take up this amazing sport.”

Schulting later collected her third medal of the weekend as the Netherlands claimed silver behind China in the mixed relay.

But while Schulting’s success went with the form book, [Lara van Ruijven](#)’s (NED) triumph in Sunday’s women’s 500m sprint came as a big surprise, not least to the athlete herself. “It’s been three years since my last World Cup medal so to finally get one again is unbelievable,” she said. “This is the best individual result of my career, as usually my medals come from relays. I won a relay medal at the Olympics earlier this year, which was surreal enough, but now another dream came true.”

Saturday’s women’s 500m sprint champion [Natalia Maliszewska](#) (POL) had qualified comfortably for Sunday’s 500m final, winning her quarter-final and semi-final races, but ran out of steam, finishing fourth. However, the biggest surprise of all was the performance of reigning world 500m champion [Choi Min Jeong](#) (KOR), who went out in the quarter-finals, blaming a lack of fitness.

Choi would later pick up a silver medal as part of the Korean team in the women’s 3000m relay, behind champions Russia, but she explained that this World Cup had come slightly too soon for her.

“I think I’m not ready right now for this competition,” she said. “After the Olympics I made many changes and took much time off. My focus for the season is to be ready for the World Championships next March, so I’m not yet in good condition. At the moment, I don’t really have the power, strength and speed I need to be challenging for individual medals.”

But for the local fans at the Calgary Olympic Oval, the abiding memory of the weekend will be the performances of the next generation of Canadian skaters. [Alyson Charles](#) (CAN) finished with three medals from her first World Cup after coming third behind van Ruijven in the 500m and picking up another bronze for Team Canada in the women’s 3000m relay.

“If someone had said that I’d end up with three medals before this weekend, I’d have been like, ‘Are you crazy?’” said Charles. “There’s so much I can take out of this weekend. I mean, I was initially excited just to make the semis yesterday. Getting that first bronze was really something and helped me believe I did deserve to be here competing, and then it was so nice to be able to win something as a team with the other girls. We’re always competing individually but working together to win a World Cup medal helped finish the weekend on such a great note.”

For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU World Cup Short Track Series please visit: <https://isu.org/short-track>. Follow the discussion on social media by using **#OneHandDown** **#ShortTrackSkating**.