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Charles, Maliszewska and Wu shine in Salt Lake City on final day of World Cup meeting

Canada's [Alyson Charles](#) and [Natalia Maliszewska](#), of Poland, both enjoy glory on the Salt Lake City ice in the Ladies' events, while the irrepressible Wu Dajing, of China, continues to dominate the Men's 500m.

Fast starter Charles continues rapid progress with Salt Lake glory

[Alyson Charles](#) (CAN) is well known within Canadian Short Track circles for her explosive starting on the ice but the 20-year-old sprinter from Montreal has made an even faster start to her World Cup career.

After winning two individual bronze medals on her World Cup debut in Calgary last week, Charles claimed her first gold with a stunning finish in Sunday's Ladies' 1000m (2) final at the ISU World Cup Short Track in Salt Lake City, USA.

"It feels all a bit surreal," Charles said after pipping [Anna Seidel](#) (GER) on the line by three thousandths of a second to clinch victory, with [Noh Ah Rum](#) (KOR) taking bronze. "I didn't expect to even have a medal last week so a gold this week is a bit crazy. The ice here is super fast which I think helps me but it also helps everybody else too."

Charles' victory was even more unlikely, given that she began the day in the repechage rounds, having come third in her heat on Friday. It meant she had to win through an additional two rounds of racing just to make the quarter-finals.

"At the start of the day, I was thinking, 'I just need to get through the repechages somehow, and then see what happens,'" she said. "Somehow I managed to make it through to the final and I just gave it my all out there. It's been a long day for me, six races including the (2000m) Mixed Relay too, and I'm really feeling it in my legs now. I'm ready for it to be over now."

It was quite an achievement for a skater who describes herself as an out-and-out 500m specialist, and one who's still learning her trade at the longer distances. "I wouldn't say I love the 1000m more than the 500m yet but I'm just trying to do every single distance and get better at all of them," she said.

Charles' win has also catapulted her into third place in the overall World Cup standings for 1000m with 15,120 points, although [Suzanne Schulting](#) (NED) is still comfortably leading with 20,000 points.

There were fewer surprises in the Ladies' 500m final, as [Natalia Maliszewska](#) (POL) backed up her debut World Cup victory in Calgary with a second gold medal. Maliszewska's explosive speed over the shorter distance was just too much in the final couple of laps for the versatile Schulting, who added a silver medal to go with Saturday's 1000m (1) gold.

"It was quite a close finish," said a delighted Maliszewska. "I managed to pass Suzanne and just held first place to the line. Winning in Calgary helped me a lot, it meant I was going through this whole race with the mindset that I was going to win. But Suzanne is amazing as she's so good at every distance. Me, I'm just naturally a sprinter, nothing can change that. My body's built for speed. I think my top speed in the final in Calgary was the fastest lap ever done by a woman. You won't find me skating the 1500m, that's for sure."

Maliszewska admitted that since she won in Calgary, it's been impossible to separate her from her gold medal. "It's my lucky charm," she smiled. "It's in my backpack right now. I've been carrying it with me all the time since I got it."

The sprinter continues to be a trailblazer for Short Track Speed Skating in her native Poland: in 2015, she became the first Short Track skater representing Poland to win a World Cup medal, and this year became the first Polish woman to win a World Championship medal and is now also the first Polish woman to win World Cup gold.

With her success continuing to raise Short Track's profile in her homeland, she hopes that she will soon have some more national rivals to push her harder in training.

"I really hope that because of this, I'm soon going to have somebody who's going to be at my back and kicking my ass to go harder," she laughed.

Maliszewska's victory also means she now tops the World Cup standings over 500m, with 25,120 points, ahead of [Fan Kexin](#) (CHN) with 16,078 points.

However, in contrast to the celebratory mood in the Polish camp, there were mixed emotions for Team USA. While [Kristen Santos](#) (USA) reached her first World Cup A final in the 1000m (2), national coach Wilma Boomstra could not help but reflect on what might have been. Santos was right in the mix in the final, before making a crucial error which led her ultimately to finish last.

"I'm really happy but I'm so disappointed too, because we were so close and I know she was good enough to medal," Boomstra said. "It's just the beginning. In three months, she's made huge progress. My program is a lot of intensity and she's adapted really well. Her speed has gotten a lot faster, and speed endurance, but she's also a lot stronger. We still need to work on her mindset because she's not used to being this good, so she gets a lot of nervous anxiety, but she'll be fine. We'll get it next time."

The Republic of Korea won the Ladies' 3000m Relay, with Russia taking silver and Japan bronze. Rep. Korea are now joint-top with Russia in the event's World Cup classification, each with 18,000 points.

Records are no boundaries for history-maker Wu

Another week, another blistering 500m from [Wu Dajing](#) (CHN) who grabbed the headlines by smashing his own world record to claim gold on the final day of action at the ISU World Cup Short Track in Salt Lake City.

Wu was once again in a league of his own, setting a new record of 39.505s in a sensational race where three men went below the 40-second barrier.

"The ice here is very fast," Wu said afterwards. "I'm very happy. A year's training has gone into this world record."

[Lim Hyo Jun](#) (KOR) and [Shaoang Liu](#) (HUN) were among the skaters left chasing Wu's shadow. They clocked 39.670s and 39.699s respectively to claim silver and bronze, times which themselves would have been fast enough to win any of last season's 500m World Cup races.

Liu was left shaking his head in disbelief at Wu's speed. "It's pretty great to have been in a world record race," he said. "The rest of us are all on a certain level but Wu Dajing is just, like, 'up here'. Of course, it's always a goal to try and pass him, and it'll continue to be our goal for the next year, but he was too fast for me today."

Wu's performance means he becomes the first skater – across all Men's and Ladies' categories – to reach 30,000 points in the World Cup standings. He leads the 500m rankings, more than 15,000 points ahead of Liu in second place.

"The classifications are important but the most important thing for my brother and me is to get medals at all of the World Cup events, and try to be there in all of the finals if possible," Liu said.

He and his brother, [Shaolin Sandor Liu](#), had more silverware to smile about later in the day as Hungary claimed gold in both the 2000m Mixed Relay and the Men's 5000m Relay.

"I hope we get the title of 'Kings of the Relay' now," Shaolin joked afterwards.

But for the majority of the Mixed Relay, the gold medals looked to be going to the Netherlands team who controlled proceedings until Shaolin unleashed a burst of speed in the final two laps, eventually overhauling [Sjinkie Knegt](#) (NED) with virtually the last stride.

"It was a little bit tight in the end," he laughed. "I just managed to pass Sjinkie. If you saw my face in those final two laps, you could see how motivated I was to try and catch him."

It was the first time that the Liu brothers have competed together in the Mixed Relay, but Shaolin said that he's become an instant fan. "It was so much fun to be racing with the girls," he said. "I think the Mixed Relay is pretty good because it's less laps so you can use your full power from the beginning which makes for a really exciting and fast race."

It was a different story in the Men's 5000m Relay, which world record holders Hungary led from start to finish, ahead of China and Russia, to win the event for the second successive week. "It was so much fun, leading for the whole 45 laps," Shaolin said.

The happiest man on the Hungarian team was [Csaba Burjan](#) (HUN) who completed the race standing on his feet, having endured a week of teasing from his team-mates after falling during the 5000m Relay final in Calgary.

"Before the race, I said, 'Guys, if we just get a bronze or a silver medal, are you still going to be happy?'" Shaolin laughed. "And Csaba said, 'Guys, I'll be happy if I don't fall.' And I was like, 'Everyone is going to be happy if you don't fall in the relay.'"

In Sunday's Men's 1000m (2), [Hong Kyung Hwan](#) (KOR) took gold but one of the most heart-warming stories of the day featured 33-year-old [Thibaut Fauconnet](#) (FRA) who claimed silver. It was a remarkable performance considering Fauconnet won his first World Cup medal during the 2006/2007 season, when Hong was just eight years old.

"I like to race against these kids," Fauconnet said. "I try my best and it keeps me feeling young. Not everything was perfect today but over my career I've learned that every medal is special because each time is different. In Short Track, we can race every final four times and every time you will get a different result."

Fauconnet already has his retirement plans laid out, and one day soon he will begin his new life as a sports teacher, but he insisted that he's not ready to hang up his skates quite yet.

"My doctor says that I'm a lactic junkie, because I love the pain so much – the feeling of lactic in my muscles," he said. "Training each day and experiencing that is the way I live."

Hong's triumph moves him up to fourth place in the overall World Cup 1000m standings, with 12,621 points, with Fauconnet now into sixth place. With just a few hundred points separating joint-leaders [Ren Ziwei](#) (CHN) and [Park Ji Won](#) (KOR) from the rest of the top five, there's plenty to race for as the World Cup series moves on to Almaty, Kazakhstan, in December.

For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU World Cup Short Track Series please visit: isu.org/short-track. Results are [here](#) and you can follow the discussion on social media by using [#WCShortTrack](#) and [#OneHandDown](#).