

January 11, 2019

Collalbo, Italy

De Jong and Verbij lead after first day

Antoinette de Jong (NED) won the 500m and the 3000m and leads the classification after the first day of the ISU European Allround Championships in Collalbo, Italy, on Friday. In the men's Sprint tournament defending champion Kai Verbij (NED) took the lead after his compatriot Kjeld Nuis (NED) was disqualified.

Head start for De Jong

[Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) took a head start to the tournament, winning the 500m in 39.19 seconds. The 23-year-old Dutch skater was 0.07 faster than Elizaveta Kazelina (RUS) and 0.36 faster than [Francesca Lollobrigida](#) (ITA), who came third in a personal best of 39.56 on home ice.

Lollobrigida skated versus defending champion [Ireen Wüst](#), of the Netherlands, who began the tournament with a false start. Wüst finished in fourth place, 0.53 seconds behind De Jong. Five-time champion [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE) finished in 11th place in the 500m. The long-distance specialist was 1.76 slower than De Jong, which translated into a 10.56 gap for the 3000m.

De Jong strikes again

Sáblíková did manage to gain time back in the 3000m. The Czech skater stopped the clock at 4 minutes and 8.22 seconds, finishing faster than third-placed Lollobrigida (4:11.28) and Russian long-distance specialist [Natalya Voronina](#) (4:11.30), who came fourth in the 3000m. But it was not enough.

De Jong started after Sáblíková. She was a few tenths behind the Czech racer's split times for most of the race, but managed to edge out the 31-year-old by 0.15 seconds after a superior final lap to clock 4:08.07.

"I'm very satisfied with my first day. My 500m was good. My coach joked that it was not a personal best, but I did improve my personal best over 100m," De Jong said.

"Then I saw that Sáblíková skated a good 3000m, and I just skated on intuition.

"It's too early to celebrate yet. I'm in a position that I can only lose, whereas I used to be in the position where I could only win. But I've grown mentally over the years and I think I can cope with the pressure. Today felt good and I want to carry that feeling into tomorrow's 500m and 5000m races."

Home favourite in contention for podium

Lollobrigida was happy too. Primarily known as a Mass Start-specialist, the Italian skater was excited to find herself in second position on the rankings after the first day of an international Allround tournament.

"I did not expect this, because I was ill last week and when I arrived here my skating was very bad. But today it was OK," she said.

Lollobrigida is in contention for a first ever podium spot in an Allround tournament, but does not want to look too far ahead.

"I'm happy that I can compete with the best ones this year. Tomorrow I'm going to focus on the 1500m and then I'll just have to pray for the 5000m."

A tribute to Van Deutekom

Wüst suffered physically and mentally in the 3000m. With 4:14.62 she ended up in seventh place. Like all of the Dutch skaters, Wüst had a black mourning armband manufactured into her tracksuit to honor the late 2008 World Allround Champion, Paulien van Deutekom (37), who died from cancer last week. Van Deutekom was Wüst's best friend, and the defending champion was deeply affected by the tragic loss. Wüst had returned to Collalbo after the funeral on Wednesday and had struggled to prepare properly for the tournament.

"I wanted to race here as a tribute," she said in tears, after she had finished the 3000m.

"I almost said 'unfortunately I'm a human being', but of course I'm glad I'm a human being and not a robot. Life is not about speed skating, it's about love and friendship. I'm grateful for the friendship I shared with Paulien."

Wüst vowed to fight for a podium spot until the end. "Paulien was someone who never gave up. I'm going to try to eat a little something and try to get some sleep, which I haven't managed over the past two weeks or so. And then I hope to have a bit more energy tomorrow."

Verbij starts title defense with victory

[Kai Verbij](#) (NED) kept all challengers at bay in the 500m. The Dutchman clocked 35.23 seconds in the seventh pair after Norway's [Henrik Fagerli Rukke](#) had given him something to aim at with 35.36 in the third pair.

"I was very tense before the 500m," Verbij said.

"That was the distance in which I had to make the difference with Kjeld [Nuis], because he beat me in the 1000m at the Dutch Championships. It worked out well."

None of the other skaters were able to beat Rukke's time, leaving the 22-year-old Norwegian to take silver in the first 500m. Olympic 500m Champion [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) stopped the clock at 35.58 to end up fourth, while the Olympic 1000m Champion [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED) came third in 35.47.

Lorentzen skated versus compatriot [Bjørn Magnussen](#) (NOR), who finished in 10th spot, and felt that both of them were a little unlucky.

"I was a little bit disappointed. Me and Bjørn did our slowest openers of the year except for Tomakomai (JPN) and I think it's because of the wind. It felt like a good race. I usually like outdoor racing when the conditions are equal, but today it was a little bit up and down with the wind. But that's how it is."

Nuis disqualified

In the 1000m, Verbij skated a track record time (1:08.97) before Nuis took on compatriot [Thomas Krol](#) (NED) in the final pair. Krol crashed out of the race in the final corner, leaving Nuis to beat Verbij's time. Ten minutes after the race, however, Nuis was disqualified for crossing the line in the inside corner after having kicked two markers off the track.

"It's a pity for the crowd and it's not good for Dutch skating, but if you hit two markers, you obviously cross the line. Then you're out," Verbij said. "He took a risk and this time it did not work out well."

Lorentzen settles for second

With 1:09.89, Lorentzen secured third place in the 1000m. It took him up to second place in the ranking overall, 0.80 behind Verbij for Saturday's 500m.

"It's going to be hard to catch Kai, so second place overall would be my main goal for tomorrow, but of course I will try to catch him," Lorentzen said.

Russia's [Victor Lobas](#) (RUS) came second in the 1000m with 1:09.80. He is fifth in the overall ranking. Henrik Fagerli Rukke managed fifth place in the 1000m (1:10.58) to hang on to third place in the overall ranking after the first day.

For full entry lists and further information regarding the European Speed Skating Championships please visit: isu.org/speed-skating. Results are [here](#) and you can follow the discussion on social media by using #EuroSpeed and #SpeedSkating.

The ISU European Speed Skating Championships will be available on in some countries on the ISU Skating Channel.

About ISU European Speed Skating Championships

The European Allround Championships is one of the oldest international sport events globally. After two unofficial tournaments in 1891 and 1892, the first official European Championships were held in 1893 in Berlin. In 1970 the first ladies' European Championships were held and since 1990 the men's and ladies' events are held at the same time and venue. In 2017 the European Sprint Championships were added to the program and since then the tournament is held biannually instead of yearly.

Unlike the World Cup, in which Skaters race for single distance titles, at the European Sprint and Allround Championships performances in four distances add up to the final ranking. In both formats, times are calculated based on the 500m, for example the 1500m time will be divided by 3. In the Allround tournament the Men will skate 500m, 5000m, 1500m and 10,000m. The Ladies' Allround competition features 500m, 3000m, 1500m, 5000m races. In the Sprint competition both the Men and the Ladies race the 500m and the 1000m twice. The ladies' Allround and the Men's Sprint tournament will start on Friday and finish on Saturday. The Men's Allround and the Ladies' Sprint tournament will start on Saturday and finish on Sunday.

For further information please visit https://app.isuresults.eu/events/2019_ITA_0001/schedule