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Dresden, Germany

Prosvirnova (RUS) wins first ladies' gold as Korean men dominate

Russia's Sofia Prosvirnova stole the show with her first ever individual World Cup victory while Korea dominated the men's races on a day of dramatic Short Track speed skating action in Dresden on Saturday.

Prosvirnova grabs first gold as ladies light up Dresden

Russia's [Sofia Prosvirnova](#) stole the show with her first ever individual World Cup victory on a day of high-octane Short Track speed skating action in Dresden's Energieverbund Arena on Saturday.

The 21-year-old, who has long been touted as a future star of the sport, believes a new "relaxed" attitude was the key to her victory. But in keeping with a day full of thrills and spills, Prosvirnova was made to wait until the very final metre to confirm her 1000m gold.

Having jostled for the lead throughout with Poland's sprint sensation [Natalia Maliszewska](#) and [Choi Ji Hyun](#) (KOR), the podium places were only decided on the final bend when Maliszewska caught an edge and went down, leaving Prosvirnova free to power past the Korean.

"That was awesome," Prosvirnova said. "I didn't focus too hard today, I just tried to enjoy it and have fun."

The Russian's triumph was made even more impressive by the fact she was battling a sore neck sustained during a fall in Friday's heats, as well as the after-effects of a back injury which has been troubling her since before last month's European Championships.

But here she set a pace that most of the field struggled to live with. Italy's [Cynthia Mascitto](#) took the bronze and the 26-year-old said: "With three laps to go I was a little nervous about my third place but I tried to keep up with the girls and hope that the others behind were just as tired."

The ladies' 1500m proved just as dramatic. The final seemed to be set up as a showdown between the two women currently topping the overall world rankings, [Suzanne Schulting](#) (NED) and [Choi Min Jeong](#) (KOR). But in a sign of the strength-in-depth of the sport, both were outshone.

In an eight-woman final the lead changed hands throughout before Korea's [Kim Ji Yoo](#) burst past PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Games triple medallist Kim Boutin to snatch gold on the line. Schulting, winner of four individual World Cup titles already this season, was left in third with world No.1 Choi out of the medals in fourth.

"I am excited and surprised to beat Choi," said gold medallist Kim. "I don't know why we are so good (in Korea) but we do train so much and we do have so many athletes."

Boutin was far from surprised to see another Korean top the podium but feels she is edging ever closer to working out a way to beat them.

"It is normal to see them at the top, but I am happy to have got silver," the Canadian said. "It is one of my weaknesses normally (skating) in traffic and this was a really strategic race. To be a good skater you have to be good in these conditions too, so I am getting there."

Schulting too saw bright things in her bronze medal. The Dutch skater said: "I am not frustrated. It was a really nice race. There was lots of passing, it was really fun. I really enjoyed it."

“Of course I want to win but it’s another medal and I am still going strong. Today I had the feeling that any of us could have won and that we were all at the same level.”

Schulting will be back in action in tomorrow’s 500m, while part two of the 1000m, the 2000m mixed relay and the 3000m ladies relay are also scheduled for Sunday.

Korean men see off valiant Canadians to dominate in Dresden

Nothing could stop the all-powerful Korean squad from utterly dominating the first day of men’s finals at the ISU World Cup in Dresden, Germany on Saturday.

In a mesmerising display, the Korean men claimed four of the six medals on offer, including gold in both the 1500m and 1000m. According to one of their stars, [Hwang Dae Heon](#), the fierce competition within the team is fuelling their exceptional form.

“It’s very difficult to be part of this team,” said Hwang, winner of the 1000m. “You have to train so hard just to be picked.”

These high standards were evident in the 1000m final. Hungary’s [Shaolin Sandor Liu](#) had breezed through the morning’s quarter and semifinals in typically relaxed style. The man who won three gold medals at last month’s European Championships also looked like the skater to beat for much of the final but, with two laps to go, a blur of white and black spandex flew past him.

“It is really hard to fight three Koreans,” Liu said. “But it was a pretty good race. Maybe I should have been more aggressive. I need to learn from this.”

Liu faded to finish last but Canadian [Charles Cournoyer](#) ensured the Koreans did not have it all their own way. The two-time Olympic medallist recovered from a bad mistake early on to split the three Koreans, grabbing silver and pushing [Hong Kyung Hwan](#) into bronze.

“I was expecting them to work as a team and they did it pretty well,” Cournoyer said. “We were five in the race and I beat three - not too bad.”

That left [Park Ji Won](#), currently second in the season-long 1000m World Cup standings, out of the medals. The man ahead of him in those rankings, [Shaoang Liu](#) (HUN), did not make the finals after crashing during heats on Friday and breaking three bones in his left hand. It was an absence his brother felt hard.

“I think from 2013 we haven’t gone to a World Cup without each other,” the elder Liu said. “It’s a bit hard but I have to learn from this one as well. I was racing for him today but it didn’t go how I planned it. Hopefully (it will) tomorrow.”

Shaoang Liu hopes to recover in time for the 2019 World Championships in Sofia, Bulgaria in March. Meanwhile, his brother will have to find a way past the Korean juggernaut if he is to bring a gold back home from Dresden.

In what was undoubtedly the race of the day, [Kim Gun Woo](#) (KOR) came flying through the field on the final bend to take gold in the 1500m and showed why he tops the long-distance World Cup rankings.

But the 20-year-old had to fight for it. Veteran Canadian [Charles Hamelin](#), who won the first two of his three Olympic gold medals back in 2010, and teammate [Steven Dubois](#) took the race to Kim and his compatriot [Lim Hyo Jun](#) from the gun. The four skaters hit the tape just over two minutes and 15 seconds later with barely the width of a skate separating them.

“I was pushing to get the gold but they were really quick at the end and I didn’t want to get caught in a bump on the last corner,” Hamelin said. “So I just tried to hold on and stretch for the line.”

The photo-finish placed the 34-year-old second with Lim in third and the unlucky Dubois in fourth. Just 0.098 seconds separated the top four, delighting the raucous crowd inside the Energieverbund Arena and providing the evergreen Hamelin with plenty of reasons to carry on skating.

“I can’t describe how great I feel right now, I am doing this because I love it,” Hamelin said. “I am here to inspire kids on the national team with me and back in Canada. If I can still do that then it’s job done for me. These races just make me want to continue.”

With [Kim Boutin](#) claiming silver in the women’s 1500m, it was an impressive day for team Canada but the last word went to the all-conquering Koreans.

“My teammates are very good and that makes me better,” said Kim Gun Woo. “I felt really strong and quick during the race. I have a lot of confidence.”

Racing continues on Sunday with the second men’s 1000m, the 500m, the popular mixed 2000m relay and the men’s 5000m.

About ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating Series

The World Cup series consists of five Competitions. The competitions have a single distance character and are held in separate sessions. The first day is dedicated to all Qualifying Rounds. On the second and third days the last Qualifying Rounds (if necessary) are taking place preceding the World Cup session that day.

On the distances 500, 1000 and 1500 meters there are A and B Finals. Skaters qualify for A and B Finals only through the Semi-Finals. For the first time, Mixed Gender Relay races over 2000 meters will be held at each World Cup Competition. Mixed Gender Relay Teams shall be formed by four (2 Ladies & 2 Men) to eight (4 Ladies & 4 Men) Skaters, which are all considered as participants. During any Mixed Gender Relay race in a competition, a maximum of four (2 Ladies & 2 Men) Skaters shall compete. Ladies 3000 meters Relay races and Men 5000 meters Relay races are taking place with Teams of four to six Skaters, which are all considered as participants. During any Relay race in a competition, a maximum of four Skaters shall compete. Entries of Teams with less than four or more than six Skaters are not accepted. All Skaters of a team must belong to the same ISU Member.