

February 10, 2019

Inzell, Germany

Tears, cheers and a thrillingly chaotic climax bring curtain down in Inzell

On an emotion-fuelled final day of the ISU World Single Distances Championships, [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) won the Ladies' 1500m in a track record time and tearfully dedicated her title to her friend and former World Allround champion Paulien van Deutekom, who died in January. Wüst's compatriot [Irene Schouten](#) won her career second world title in the Mass Start.

In the men's competition, [Thomas Krol](#) (NED) won his career first world title with an impressive track record in the 1500m, before [Joey Mantia](#) (USA) brought four days of thrilling competition to a close by retaining his Mass Start title with a spectacular display of wit and power in the final stages.

Tearful title

"Tears of happiness, tears of pride and tears of missing," was how Wüst described her emotions at collecting her 13th World Single Distances title in 1:52.81.

A week after 37-year-old Van Deutekom's funeral, a devastated Wüst had finished fourth at the European Allround Championships. In Inzell on Sunday, surrounded by friends and family, she made amends. "My form was rising and I hoped to be able to do something special here," she said afterwards. "I wanted this so much. I don't have words for this. This title is for Paulien. Maybe she helped me a little bit today."

Before Wüst, 32, stepped on the ice, 23-year-old [Melissa Wijfje](#) (NED) was the first to break the 1:55 barrier, skating a personal best 1:54.50 in the seventh pairing.

After [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) broke Wüst's 2014 track record with 1:53.76 in the ninth pairing, Wüst was next out and hammered out 1:52.81. Neither [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) nor [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) could match that in the two final pairs. The Japanese World Allround Champion took silver in 1:53.32, while the American followed up Saturday's 1000m gold with a 1500m bronze in 1:53.36.

World record

Bowe, 30, said: "Of course I always go for gold, but Wüst's time was hard to beat today. In Salt Lake City that race would have been a world record for sure.

"I'm impressed and I couldn't have been more happy for her (Wüst). She definitely had that extra set of wings carrying her around that track today and it put a smile on my face. She deserved that one."

Wüst's biggest motivation to continue speed skating after her successful Olympic campaign in PyeongChang last year was the chance to skate a world record at the World Allround Championships or the World Cup in March. She said: "I'm on the right track, hopefully I can skate another race like this in Calgary of Salt Lake City."

Takagi will defend her World Allround title in Calgary. She said: "My race was good today. Ireen was so strong today. I'm happy with my silver medal and I'm looking forward to the World Allround

Championships in Calgary, but first I'll skate the World Sprint Championships in Heerenveen this month."

Pluck and luck

"This race went exactly as we had planned," said a smiling Irene Schouten after recapturing the Mass Start world title. The 2015 champion jumped off the back of [Ivanie Blondin](#) (CAN) heading into the final lap and did not give way in a long sprint to the finish line at the Max Aicher Arena.

Schouten, 26, said: "I know I'm one of the fastest girls when it comes to a sprint, but you never know what's going to happen in a Mass Start. You have to be sharp every second, everybody wants to sit at the back of the good skaters and then there's also crashes.

"I got away lucky with a crash just in front of me today. You have to be really good to win, and you need a little luck too. Today everything played out well for us. Melissa (teammate Melissa Wijfje) helped me out big time, skating a strong couple of laps in the front to lead me out for the sprint and I was able to finish it off."

Blondin, 28, finished second and [Elizaveta Kazelina](#) (RUS) took the bronze medal. Blondin, the 2016 champion, tried to outsmart Schouten with a jump on the final straight in the penultimate lap. "I wanted to go early, so that I did not reproduce what happened last time in the World Cup, when I got stuck in the back and couldn't find my way through the pack," Blondin said.

"As soon as I jumped the gun I thought I had her (Schouten). I know that I can gap the girls real quickly and I did not see her coming, and when I saw her I was like, 'Oh shit.' She had a really impressive last lap.

"In the last corner she went really wide and I was scared that someone else would pass me, so I went really tight and that's why I slowed down a bit and she gained speed on me. But it's OK, I'm really happy for her. We're both really strong competitors."

Kazelina, 22, won her career first individual World Championships medal and thanked 2014 Olympic short-track champion [Ruslan Zakharov](#) (RUS) for it. She said: "He gave me advice on how to skate the Mass Start and that's why I was able to pull it off today."

Krol on a roll

[Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) (NOR) was the first of the favorites to step on the ice in the 'Race of the Kings'. The opening day's 5000m champion soon threw his own race plan out of the window. "My goal was to skate two laps under 27 seconds and I did 25.7 and 26.4, so I was way ahead of that schedule," he said. Pedersen finished off with a stunning 27.2 lap to finish in 1:43.16, breaking the track record by more than a second.

With five of the 12 pairings still to come, the 26-year-old Norwegian then had to sit and wait.

Before Krol faced [Denis Yuskov](#) (RUS) in the tenth pairing, no one had matched Pedersen's time, but the 26-year-old Dutchman was on fire. With 24.9 and 26.2 in the first two full laps he left Yuskov standing and took a solid advantage over Pedersen. "He had too big a gap before the final lap, I knew he would break my time at that moment already," Pedersen said. And so did Krol. Despite a slower final lap (28.1), he finished 0.58 seconds ahead.

Yuskov struggled but kept fighting. Closing on Krol in the final lap, he stopped the clock at 1:43.20 to take the bronze medal. "I was still tired after yesterday's 1000m," said the 29-year-old Russian. "My legs were sore, that's why I made some little mistakes. I had hoped for more, of course, but I have to be satisfied with the bronze regarding how my legs felt today."

In the final pairing, defending champion and Olympic gold medallist Kjeld Nuis (NED) could only manage 1:43.60, to finish fifth.

Krol said his first world title made amends for his second-place finish in Saturday's 1000m. "When I crossed the finish line yesterday, I was actually more excited because I thought my time would be good enough for gold, so when I crossed the line today, I celebrated modestly. I did not want to cheer and see someone else beating my time afterwards again.

"In December I won my first World Cup gold medal with a similar race and that gave me the confidence that I could beat anyone, and now I'm world champion. That's still a little bit hard to believe."

Cometh the hour, cometh the Mantia

The Men's Mass Start was as spectacular as it was chaotic. Defending champion Joey Mantia watched it all happen and relied upon his experience to run away with gold in with a strong move in the final lap. [Cheon-Ho Um](#) (KOR) and [Jaewon Chung](#) (KOR) took silver and bronze.

Belgian [Bart Swings](#) (BEL) attacked on the final straight one lap from home, but the Belgian crashed coming out of the penultimate corner. Um and Chung seemed to be heading for gold and silver, but they hit each other coming out of the final corner and Mantia passed them flying wide on the final straight.

Mantia, 33, said: "I spent the last eight or nine laps watching people really fight the turns, so I just relaxed, and did not use too much energy.

"With three (laps) to go things were together still, and I was looking, 'Am I going to make a move here?' I felt pretty good. Two (laps) to go came around and then the Koreans were moving up. I knew they were going to be the two to key off of, so I made a move to the outside and people were falling everywhere and I thought, 'OK, I'll take it.'

"I took that last corner wide and I took advantage of them bumping into each other."

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

The ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships is available in some countries on the ISU Skating Channel.