

December 15, 2019

Nagano, Japan

Russia dominate, but Japan give home crowd plenty to cheer

Local hero [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) may have had to settle for bronze, losing out to Russia's [Angelina Golikova](#) in the 500m, but the excited crowd in Nagano's M-Wave still had a gold medal to cheer for as Japan, back in their 2018 Olympic Games-winning line-up, triumphed in the Team Pursuit.

In the men's competition, Russia collected five out of seven gold medals over the weekend, adding 1000m and 5000m wins through [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) and [Danila Semerikov](#) on Sunday.

2nd 500m Ladies: Revised draw helped Golikova

Chasing her second 500m gold medal of the World Cup season, Golikova was happy to face off with her Russian teammate [Daria Kachanova](#) in the sixth pairing.

"I was due up to [Olga \[Fatkulina\]](#) initially, but on today's start list I was paired with Daria," Golikova said. "That was better for me. Olga has a good lap but her start is not the best. Daria has a strong first 100 meters, so she helped me in this race."

Finishing in 37.24, Golikova was 0.27 seconds faster than she had been on Friday, when she took silver behind Kodaira. The 28-year-old Russian felt that starting in the inner lane and finishing in the outer made the crucial difference.

"Getting into the final inner corner with high speed is more difficult," she said. "This time, I realized that I had the second outer and I was more confident."

[Vanessa Herzog](#) seems to have left her early-season troubles behind. The Austrian world champion had already skated 37.45 before Golikova took the ice, earning her a second World Cup medal this season after Friday's 500m bronze.

"Finally," she smiled. "On Friday I was still a bit stressed for the start, but today I was just trying to focus on the signal and go off the line as fast as I could. My last corner wasn't great, but I'm happy."

M-Wave was buzzing with excitement when Nao Kodaira stepped on the ice in the penultimate pair to take on Fatkulina. The Olympic champion had to step up her game after Golikova's exploits, but she ended 0.01 slower than she had been in winning gold on Friday.

"The body as a whole was not in a good balance today," she said. "But I'm happy with the audience here, it reminded me of the Olympics."

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 500m Ladies](#)

Team Pursuit Ladies: Japan get winning team back together

The enthusiastic M-Wave crowd did not let their disappointment get in the way of cheering for Japan's Team Pursuit ladies in the evening's third medal race.

With [Ayano Sato](#) joining sisters [Miho](#) and [Nana Takagi](#) the home team were back in their golden Olympic line-up for the first time this season - and it showed.

Going out in the first pairing against Belgium, Japan smashed the Netherlands' 2016 track record by more than two seconds, finishing in 2:56.37.

Sato missed the first Team Pursuit race this season in Poland, and the whole Japanese A-squad had skipped the second race. The 23-year-old was happy to be back and was delighted with the support the home team received.

"This season my condition has not been very good and it did not pick up as fast as I had hoped, so I had a lot of stress," she said.

"Because of our Olympic gold in PyeongChang there was a lot of pressure [in Nagano], but I tried to turn the pressure into power.

"We got a lot of strength from the fans. I hope this gold medal gives power to the fans too and that it makes them come back to watch us next time."

Miho Takagi was happy to have her Olympic companion back in the team.

"[Ayano] Sato picks up my pace and is able to maintain it," she said. "It's one thing to build up the speed, but if the one who comes next is not able to keep it up, it's useless. Sato is skating very well at the moment.

"But even if we have other team members racing, we have to win gold. We've got enough strong skaters. The line-up shouldn't matter."

Canada ([Ivanie Blondin](#), [Valérie Maltais](#) and [Isabelle Weidemann](#)) took gold in the absence of Japan's A-squad in Nur-Sultan last weekend and managed to stay close to the home team, clocking 2:57.81 to grab silver.

That second-place finish secured the overall Team Pursuit World Cup, the Canadians having won a bronze, a gold and a silver medal in the three qualifying races.

"Consistency is the key word to make a good Team Pursuit," Maltais said.

Blondin, who has picked up two individual golds in Nagano, believes that Canada can catch Japan as they look forward to upcoming events.

"Absolutely, they still had a great race and yes, they were faster, but I still think we can beat them," she said.

Russia came second in the overall World Cup, with [Evgenia Lalenkova](#), [Elizaveta Kazelina](#) and [Natalya Voronina](#) taking the bronze in Nagano.

The Netherlands, who had left their top-guns home and skated with youngsters Esther Kiel, Elisa Dul and Reina Anema, finished fifth to secure the overall bronze.

ISU World Cup Speed Skating Standings [Team Pursuit ladies](#)

1000m Men: Speed comes easy for Kulizhnikov

Pavel Kulizhnikov said that he “just wanted to skate a good race, as training” after being forced by the last-minute withdrawal of pair-mate [Kim Tae-Yun](#) (KOR) to skate alone in the opening pair of the Men’s 1000m.

He certainly did that. The Russian, who returned to World Cup action in Nagano after missing the first two legs of the season through injury, stopped the clock at 1:08.45, shaving 0.01 off Olympic champion [Kjeld Nuis](#)' 2016 track record to add a gold medal to the silver and bronze he had already picked up in 500m at this meet.

Worryingly for his opponents, Kulizhnikov insists he is not yet back to his best.

“My injury is over, but the foot is still a bit swollen sometimes and I cannot make all the movements I want to,” he said. “That’s also why I raced as if it were a training today. This is my easiest victory ever.”

With Nuis and world cup leader [Thomas Krol](#) absent in Nagano, Dutch hopes were set on [Kai Verbij](#) and [Hein Otterspeer](#), but both fell short.

Verbij had to settle for silver in 1:08.67 to take the overall World Cup lead from Krol, while Otterspeer clinched bronze in 1:08.95.

“Of course, you are disappointed if you think you could have done better,” Verbij admitted. “I felt that I did not hit all my strokes well in the corners. This was a seven out of 10. With a nine I could have been way under [Kulizhnikov’s time].”

“But it’s an OK race. I’m happy and now I’m going to focus on the Dutch national championships [27-29 December].”

Otterspeer did not skate a ‘perfect 10’ either, but the 31-year was happy to be back on the World Cup podium for the first time since March 2018.

“This was not my best race ever. I just came out of a training camp in Collalbo [Italy], add a bit of jet lag and that makes it difficult to be 100 per cent.”

Representing any other country Otterspeer would easily qualify for the major tournaments but given the competition in the Netherlands he does not get too many chances at the top level.

“I’m happy to participate under the Dutch flag,” he insisted. “That makes me proud and I know I’ve got it in me. It all depends on injuries, which are always there. I know that if I keep that under control, I can be the best.”

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 1000m Men](#)

5000m Men: Michael goes close, but Semerikov times his finish to perfection

After 5000m of racing and an agonizing wait, New Zealand’s Peter Michael ended up just 0.08 seconds short of gold at the weekend’s closing event.

Michael knows what it is like to win a World Cup 5000m, having topped the podium at Astana 2016, and his prospects took a lift with the absence from Nagano of Dutch No.1 and No.3 in the World Cup ranking [Patrick Roest](#) and [Jorrit Bergsma](#).

"I told a couple of people last week that I was coming to Japan to hit the podium," he said. "I knew what time I thought was going to be required and I did that, so it was all smooth.

"But then it's a long wait to see what the others do."

Going off in the third pair, Michael skated 6:18.691, finishing with two fast 29-second laps.

"I've always had decent finishing, I guess it's from inline [Michael is a multiple world champion inline skater]. This is my style of racing, to bring it home."

That style was enough for the podium, but not for gold. Four other pairs came and went before Russia's [Danila Semerikov](#) registered 6:18.605 in the eighth and final pair to snatch top spot.

"I wanted to skate a balanced schedule [with equal lap times], and I wanted to be a little faster than him [Michael], but in the last few laps I did not have enough power," Semerikov said.

The victory means the Russian takes over top rank from Roest in the World Cup classification.

"I want to win the overall long-distance World Cup," he said. "It will all come down to the World Cup final in Heerenveen [7-8 March]."

Semerikov's compatriot [Aleksandr Rumyantsev](#) took the bronze medal.

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 5000m Men](#)

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[Minsk \(BLR\) - Nov 15 – 17](#)

[Tomaszów Mazowiecki \(POL\) – Nov 22 – 24](#)

[Nur-Sultan \(KAZ\) – Dec 6 – 8](#)

[Nagano \(JPN\) – Dec 13 – 15](#)

[Calgary \(CAN\) – Feb 7 – 8](#)

[Final – Heerenveen \(NED\) – Mar 7 - 8](#)

About ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating is a Series of international Speed Skating competitions which takes place annually. The Series started in 1984 and usually consists of six or seven Events including the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final. Skaters can earn points at each competition, and the Skater who has the most points on a given distance at the end of the Series is the World Cup winner of that distance. The World Cup Competitions held from November to December serve as qualifying events for entry quotas at the ISU European, World Single Distances, World Sprint and World Allround Speed Skating Championships. A number of World Cup titles are awarded every season; For Men: 500m, 1000m, 1500m, combined 5000m / 10,000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For Ladies 500m, 1000m, 1500m, the combined 3000m / 5000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For further information please visit isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating.