

February 8, 2020

Dresden, Germany

Korea lead World Cup charge on first finals day

Republic of Korea dominated the first day of finals at the ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating in Dresden (GER), winning three of the four individual events, with **Choi Min Jeong** continuing her triumphant start to the year as she builds towards next month's World Short Track Speed Skating Championships.

The two-time Olympic champion had been struggling to make it to the top of the podium this season, but kicked off 2020 in style when she won the overall gold medal at the Four Continents Short Track Championships in Montreal (CAN), in January, winning the 500m, 1000m, 1500m and 3000m titles.

In Saturday's 1500m final, she took the lead in lap 13 of 14 and won her first individual World Cup gold medal this season ahead of teammate **Noh Ah Rum** who took silver and **Han Yu Tong** (CHN) who won bronze.

"I feel like I've found my shape but I'm just step by step building it up for my main goal which is the World Championships," the 21-year-old said.

"First I've been building up my strength and energy to race stronger in World Cup five (Dresden) and six (Dordrecht, NED). These competitions are to make me ready for the World Championships. Now I'm testing out everything I want to do and the way it turned out today, I'm satisfied."

Choi's teammate **Kim Ji Yoo** took the 1000m title in a final that had to be restarted after **Sofia Prosvirnova** (RUS), **Lee Yu Bin** (KOR) and **Courtney Lee Sarault** (CAN) had crashed out of the race.

Prosvirnova and Lee got penalties after the first run, leaving Kim and Sarault to race it out with the 1000m specialist and overall world No.1 **Suzanne Schulting** (NED). Kim waited in the back for half of the race and took the lead in the penultimate lap that she kept to the finishing line. Sarault finished with the silver medal ahead of Schulting.

"When it gets interrupted you're obviously tired because it was almost at the end of the race so it's a bit frustrating," said Sarault.

"You're just so ready for the final and then it all stops and you've got to regroup and do it all again with all of the emotions coming back."

"I never gave up and I was working with what was happening in the race. I was looking and thinking that the girls in the front would be fighting for the gold. I was waiting behind and if one of them would lose speed I'd try to go to the line and that's what I did and I did a pretty good finish." Winning her 11th medal this season in just her second year on the World Cup circuit, the 19-year-old is adamant she's not satisfied yet.

"I feel like I could do more and give more," she said.

"To be third in the last laps, that's not what I want to be, I want to be strong in the last two laps, I want to lead it and win that way."

In the men's competition **Park Ji Won** (KOR) also showed good form ahead of the World Championships starting in the Korean capital Seoul on 13 March. The 23-year-old overall World Cup leader won the 1000m final, beating **Liu Shaolin Sandor** (HUN) and **Kazuki Yoshinaga** (JPN), having waited until the seventh of nine laps to sprint from his fifth position to the front.

Rampant Ren celebrates long-awaited win

In Saturday's only individual final not won by a Korean, **Ren Ziwei** (CHN) started the 1500m final with a sprint, leaving the rest of the skaters to fight for the second place as he kept his margin all the way to the finishing line.

"This is kind of a strategy," the 22-year-old said.

"There's often a lot of changes during the races but with this it's good because I've already controlled what I should do.

"I just make the first few laps very fast. The later part will be slower."

Earning his first individual World Cup win in four years, Ren was skating alone for most of the race, beating silver medallist Sven Roes (NED) by just under two seconds, with **Kim Dayyeom** (KOR) winning the bronze.

"I was just thinking 'acceleration, always speed up', but I feel powerful and full of energy. I'm really happy," Ren said, thinking he could inspire other skaters to follow his tactics.

"Maybe I can change the way people race 1500m."

The coronavirus outbreak that began in the Chinese city of Wuhan has not affected his preparations and he dedicated his victory to the people affected by it.

"This is my own way to make my country and Wuhan cheer up," Ren said.

Dream debut for Roes

Saturday's happiest medallist was arguably 20-year-old Sven Roes, who makes his first World Cup appearance this weekend.

"It's a wonderful feeling," Roes said.

"On the ice I was a bit like 'what the f.. did I just do? It was an amazing feeling.

"I was just coming here with no experience and thought 'let's see what I can bring. I know that my 1500m is good but this is unbelievable."

The university student does not normally compete with the national team but was called up after winning the Dutch championships in January, showing that his skating is ready for bigger arenas.

"It was crazy, so many people here. Normally I skate in smaller competitions with not a lot of people in, I was so surprised by the crowd," he said.

Roes thanked his idol-turned-teammate Sjinkie Knegt for helping him to keep calm in the race as Ren sprinted off in the first few laps.

"I was like 'just let him go' because if I was going to chase him (Ren) I was going to die. His race was so strong. I let the Korean (Kim) close the gap and I chilled, then in the last lap I went for it," Roes said.

"Sjinkie told me some things, like 'don't go too early in the front and not all the way in the back, just relax' and I that's what I did."

Having reached his milestone first World Cup medal in his first World Cup final, the young Dutchman, who hopes to focus full-time on Short Track after finishing his university degree, has set his eyes on new goals.

"First I want to get a gold medal on the 1500m, that's my main goal, then I will try to qualify for the Olympics, that would be sick. Apart from that I'll just train and see where we'll go."
Hungary won the 2000m Mixed Relay ahead of Russia and France in the final medal event of the day.

The World Cup concludes on Sunday with both Men's and Ladies' medals up for grabs across 500m, 1500m, 3000m and 5000m races.

Where to watch and follow the ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating 2019/20?

Viewers will be able to watch via their national broadcaster/channel and for countries where there are no broadcasters, the ISU will offer a live stream on the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#). You will find the full list in the Where to watch news [here](#).

Subscribe to the [ISU Newsletter](#) to receive the latest information and the "Where to Watch" news. You can also subscribe to the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#) to receive notifications when live streams start or new videos are published.

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For further information on ISU Short Track Speed Skating visit: <https://www.isu.org/short-track>.

ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating Series events 2019/20:

[Salt Lake City \(USA\) – November 1 - 2](#)

[Montréal \(CAN\) – November 8 – 10](#)

[Nagoya \(JPN\) – November 29 – December 1](#)

[Shanghai \(CHN\) – December 6 – 8](#)

[Dresden \(GER\) – February 7 – 9](#)

[Dordrecht \(NED\) – February 14 – 16](#)

About ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating Series

The World Cup series consists of nine distances 500, 1000 and 1500 meters for Ladies and Men, Ladies 3000 meters Team Relay, Men 5000 meters Team Relay and a Mixed Gender Relay over 2000 meters.

The competitions have a single distance character and are held in separate sessions over three days. Day 1 is dedicated to all Qualifying Rounds. Days 2 and 3 the last Qualifying Rounds (if necessary) take place, followed by the World Cup sessions.

For the Mixed Gender Relay Teams (2 Ladies & 2 Men), the Ladies 3000 meters Relay races and Men 5000 meters Relay races a maximum of four Skaters shall compete and must belong to the same ISU Member.