

February 8, 2020

Calgary, Canada

Takagi, Kulizhnikov break track records

The Japanese ladies boosted their confidence heading into next week's ISU World Single Distance Championships in Salt Lake City, taking their tally to three golds over the World Cup weekend. [Miho Takagi](#) smashed Brittany Bowe's 2015 track record by 1.26 seconds to win the 1500m on the final day in Calgary, while [Nao Kodaira](#) added 500m gold to her triumph in Friday's 1000m.

In the men's tournament [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) seized his second medal of the Calgary World Cup weekend, winning the men's 1000m on Saturday to go with his silver in the 500m from Friday. After three Russian victories in the Men's tournament, [Patrick Roest](#) concluded the fifth leg of the World Cup with the only gold for the Netherlands, edging out home favorite [Ted-Jan Bloemen](#) by just 0.02secs in the 5000m.

Ladies' 500m: Kodaira and Golikova outclass rest of field

After she won Friday's 1000m, [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) had a chat with [Angelina Golikova](#) (RUS), who had come seventh. The Japanese Olympic 500m champion told her Russian opponent that she would be her favorite pair-mate for Saturday's 500m.

"So when I saw the draw, it was a good surprise for me," Golikova said.

Kodaira and Golikova faced each other in the third-last pair of the opening event on Saturday and they outclassed the rest of the field.

With 10.32 and 26.33 Kodaira had the fastest opener as well as the fastest full lap of the field to finish in 36.65 seconds.

"It was a good race," Kodaira said. "Every stroke was good. Only the second corner was not exactly what it should have been, but I'm ready for next week [World Single Distance Championships in Salt Lake City]."

Golikova did not yield much, losing 0.03 in the opener and 0.09 in the full lap to clock a personal best and Russian national record of 36.78.

"I don't want to be celebrating too soon," Golikova said. "Last year I also broke the national record but the next day my friend [Olga Fatkulina](#) broke it again.

"If I'm still the fastest after Salt Lake City it will really be a national record."

She was at least still the fastest at the end of the Calgary leg of the World Cup. Fatkulina skated in the final pairing versus [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) and had to settle for fourth place in 37.11. Bowe ended up 12th in 37.70.

Kodaira and Golikova were the only skaters to beat the 37 second barrier, with bronze medalist [Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT) clocking 37.08.

The reigning 500m world champion from Austria is fighting back after a disastrous start to the season, when she was disqualified after two false starts at the first World Cup in Minsk in November.

"The [season] start was terrible of course," she said. "But I tried to fight my way back and from Japan [fourth World Cup in Nagano in December] until now, I was on the podium in every 500m.

"I'm not where I want to be but yeah... I have to live with it. My goal is to be on the podium next week. [Defending my world title] would be a dream, but the other girls are very strong."

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

Ladies' 1500m: Takagi in league of her own

[Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) looks to have timed her return to form to perfection. The 1500m world-record holder had yet to win an A Division race in this season's World Cup before she stepped on the ice for her final test in the run-up to the World Single Distance Championships.

Clocking a blistering track record of 1:50.33 she made amends for a disappointing display in Friday's 1000m, when she finished fourth.

"Yesterday was not so good. I was pushing too much therefore my legs were too tired after one lap. Today I kept my composure and had more control," she said.

Takagi finished just 0.50 outside her own Salt Lake City-set world record.

"If I can keep this focus I can do a better race next week, but a world record? I don't know, I'll try," she said.

[Ivanie Blondin](#) (CAN) came second to give the crowd at Calgary's Olympic Oval their first 'home' medal of the World Cup weekend. The Canadian needed 1.43 seconds more than Takagi to complete the 1500m.

Taking bronze in 1:51.99 was [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED). Despite trailing Takagi by a 1.65 second margin, the reigning world champion is not too worried about her form ahead of next week's world championships.

"I would rather have skated 1:50 here, but one week ahead of an important event I'm looking at the positives," she said.

"The opener was not good, sloppy, but after that I got into the race. Because of that opener I lacked the real top speed and that's hard to make up for.

“There's little things to improve, things you may not even be able to see with the naked eye. It's the way I enter the corners, the timing. Just little things but they can make a big difference.”

The overall World Cup leader is looking forward to taking on Takagi again next week on the ice at Salt Lake City.

“[Takagi] was outstanding today,” Wüst said. “She is the lady to beat and I'm really curious to see how she handles that pressure.”

“I rely on my experience. I rely on my race instinct, which always give me that little bit extra on big occasions.”

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

Men's 1000m: Kulizhnikov eases to track record

[Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) started in the first pairing of the 1000m and set an unscaleable bar for the rest of the field with 1:06.49, shaving 0.02 off Kjeld Nuis' 2017 track record.

“This race was not full throttle,” the Russian said afterwards. “I think even a 1:06.3 or a 1:06.2 would have been possible.”

Despite not going full gas, Kulizhnikov was 0.52 seconds faster than Krol and Nuis, who ended up in second and third place just 0.002 apart.

Beating his Dutch rivals by such a big margin makes Kulizhnikov the red-hot favorite for next week's World Single Distance Championships in Salt Lake City.

“I'm used to being a favorite,” he said. “Today's race doesn't mean much. Anything can happen at the world championships.”

According to the Russian racer, to become world champion will require a time below 1:06. The current world record is Kjeld Nuis' 1:06.18.

“I think that five or six skaters are able to break that 1:06 barrier,” Kulizhnikov said. “Myself, Krol, Nuis, [Kai] Verbij...”

Krol and Nuis skated against each other in the penultimate pair in Calgary. The teammates push each other to a higher level - but not high enough to challenge Kulizhnikov.

“The gap [with Kulizhnikov] is smaller than at the European Championships [in January],” Krol said.

“And at the European Championships I really did not have a clue where to gain time on him. I felt that I skated the perfect race there, and now I absolutely did not. There were too many little mistakes, so I know I could have gone faster.”

"I'd rather have beaten him [Kulizhnikov] here, but I do what I can and next week it's going to go a lot faster."

Nuis, who had a tough time recovering from illness in December, got a confidence boost despite the big margin enjoyed by Kulizhnikov.

"I'm happy that I'm back at this level, the level of Thomas Krol," he said. "That's much better than two weeks ago. I'm still improving every day.

"We still have to go half a second faster, but I was not too impressed by his [Kulizhnikov's] time. I skated 1:06.51 here three years ago, he's just 0.02 faster.

"On the other hand, the big margin [between Kulizhnikov and himself] did impress me. Half a second is quite a lot, but I still have a week to work on that."

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

Men's 5000m: Roest rules the roost

[Patrick Roest](#) (NED) has been unbeatable in the men's 5000m so far this season, but he struggled to maintain his grip in Calgary.

Local favorite [Ted-Jan Bloemen](#) (CAN) had stopped the clock at 6:07.42 in the third-last pairing and Roest was behind Bloemen's split times for most of the race.

With one lap to go, the Dutchman trailed by half a second.

"I just wanted to win," Roest said. "When I saw that margin heading into the final lap, I knew it would be possible if I went full gas."

Roest rocketed over the line in 6:07.40 to take his fourth World Cup win of the season, but at what cost?

"I wanted to be careful [not to waste too much energy a week before the world championships] but when you see a time like [Bloemen's] it's hard to hold back.

"I went pretty deep. It's not that I skated in the red zone during the final six laps, but that final lap really hurt. Now I have to rest a lot the next couple of days."

Bloemen, who saw his compatriot [Graeme Fish](#) take bronze in 6:10.58, was content with silver.

"At first I was a little annoyed when Patrick crossed the line, but now I'm just very happy to be back and to come this close.

"Roest has dominated the 5000m this whole season, and now I'm just 0.02 behind. That's a great confidence booster for next week.

"For me it took very long before everything fell into place this season, but it finally did today and I'm just stoked to be able to fight for the prizes next week."

Another man who is happy to be able to be back in contention for the world championships is [Sven Kramer](#) (NED). The Olympic 5000m champion has struggled with a back injury for most of the season and started in the B Division in Calgary.

Having qualified for the 5000m in Salt Lake City, Kramer decided to test himself at the Olympic Oval. The Dutchman skated 28-second laps throughout the first part of his race and was at world-record pace before he stunned the crowd by calling it quits after 3000m.

"I would not have done this if I had skated in the A Division," he said. "But skating in the non-televised B Division I felt that I could experiment a bit.

"I wanted to test myself at the speed that is needed to skate a world record next week, but to do that for a full 5000m would be too much only a week ahead of the world championships.

"I'm really happy with how I felt on the ice. This was the ideal way to get ready for next week."

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.