

February 28, 2020

Hamar, Norway

Takagi and Shinhama draw first blood

[Miho Takagi](#) and [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) handed Japan an excellent start to the Combined ISU World Sprint and Allround Championships. Takagi took a firm lead over compatriot and defending champion [Nao Kodaira](#) with two wins in the first two distances of the ladies' Sprint tournament on Friday, while Shinhama took the lead in the men's Sprint tournament with a 1000m win. [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN), who won the 500m is second, while defending champion [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) decided to call it quits despite still being third after the first two races.

Ladies: close finish in 500m

In a field of 27 skaters, [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) was the first to break the 38-second barrier in the eighth pairing of the opening 500m. After a 10.49 opener and a 27.01 full lap, she finished in 37.51 seconds.

Five skaters were faster after the first 100m, but no one was able to match Takagi's full lap.

[Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) came closest. The reigning champion opened in 10.48 and added a 27.05 full lap to finish just 0.02 outside the winning time in 37.53.

With 10.44 [Angelina Golikova](#) (RUS) had the fastest opener, but she ended up in fifth place with 37.77.

[Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT) took fourth place in 37.53 and [Olga Fatkulina](#) (RUS) fifth in 37.72.

Ladies: giant leap in 1000m

Takagi's 500m win may have come as a surprise, her follow-up win in the 1000m less so, but the gap ahead of [Jutta Leerdam](#) (NED), who won the 1000m single distance title two weeks ago in Salt Lake City, was astonishing.

After [Jorien ter Mors](#) (NED) had broken [Brittany Bowe](#)'s 2019 track record of 1:14.79 by 0.20 seconds, Takagi then went out and was the only one to finish under 1:14, in 1:13.75. She hammered out a 28.72 second final lap. No one else was able to finish with a sub-29 lap.

Ter Mors came closest with 29.05, but she still dropped to third place in the 1000m because Leerdam was faster in the first 600m before closing off with a 29.31 lap to finish in 1:14.54.

"My 500m was not good," Leerdam said. "Therefore, I was content that I was able to bounce back in the 1000m. It's difficult to regroup, when you have to be ready within an hour for the next race."

After the first day, Leerdam is sixth in the ranking. She said: "[I hope for] a better 500m and another good 1000m tomorrow and then we'll see where I'll stand at the end of the day."

Having lost her track record, Bowe clocked a disappointing 1:15.09 for fifth place in the final pairing of the 1000m.

With 1:15.44 Kodaira had to settle for eighth place in the 1000m. She faces an almost unbridgeable gap of 0.865 points, which translates to 0.87 seconds in the 500m and 1.73 seconds in the 1000m.

Takagi has the chance to become the first female skater to win both the World Sprint title and the World Allround title (which she won in 2018), since Anni Friesinger (GER) who won the World Sprint title in 2007 and the World Allround title in 2001, 2002 and 2005.

"My first 500m and 1000m were good, but this competition is for the overall result of all four races," Takagi said.

"I am happy with how it went today but I don't feel relieved yet."

Kodaira isn't giving up on her title just yet: "My two races were not very good, but I can learn from the races.

"I need to adjust my body movement and performance for tomorrow. It will be a challenge for me."

Men: Dubreuil gets into the tournament well

To the delight of the Norwegian home crowd, [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) was the first to skate under 35 seconds in the opening 500m. The Olympic 500m champion stopped the clock at 34.90 in the seventh of fourteen pairings.

Lorentzen's time stood until Kulizhnikov set 34.60 in the eleventh pairing, with [Cha Min Kyu](#) (KOR) finishing 0.11 later in 34.71.

[Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) skated 34.55 in the penultimate pair and despite opening two tenths of a second faster, [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) needed 0.03 more to complete the full distance. Shinhama lost speed because of a mis-stroke in the final corner.

With Dubreuil and Shinhama first and second, world record holder Kulizhnikov had to settle for third place in the opening distance and Lorentzen eventually placed eighth.

"I really needed to get into the championships with this race," Dubreuil said. "A bad race can lose you a championship already. A good race will not win it, but you'll be in it."

Men: track record for non-specialist

Although he is a 500m specialist, Shinhama firmly took hold of the lead in the rankings with a superb 1000m. The 23-year-old Japanese sprinter was the only one to skate a

personal best in the double distance and his 1:08.28 was 0.10 faster than Shani Davis' (USA) 2007 track record.

[Joel Dufter](#) (GER) took a surprise second place in the 1000m with 1:08.65, and [Yamato Matsui](#) (JPN) finished third in 1:08.69.

Dubreuil faced [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED) in the 1000m and almost beat the Olympic champion. Nuis trailed by 0.73 at the 600m split and only edged out the Canadian with a quick move to the line on the final straight.

"This was a very poor race," Nuis said. "If a Japanese guy [Shinham], who normally is tired after 300m already, skates 1:08.2, I should be able to skate 1:07 something."

The Dutchman eventually finished in 1:08.73 for fourth place and Dubreuil took fifth in 1:08.79.

Dubreuil dropped to second place in the ranking, 0.225 points behind Shinama, which translates to 0.23 seconds in the 500m. Matsui trails Shinham by 0.515 points.

"My 1000m was tougher [than the 500m]," Dubreuil said. "I was aggressive at the start, but when I passed Kjeld [Nuis] in the first exchange, I stopped being aggressive, and I did not have enough energy in the last lap. But [it's] still a good result."

"I'm really happy with where I stand right now. Of course, it's a dream [to become world champion] but you don't become world champion by thinking about it throughout the weekend."

"I need to show up tomorrow and execute a good 500m first."

Showing up tomorrow is what Kulizhnikov will not do.

"After 300m into the 500m I already felt that it was going to be nothing at all today. The legs were empty," the defending champion said.

"I had the feeling as if I was going to be ill, skating was very difficult."

After three starts and three wins, the 2020 tournament thus marks Kulizhnikov's first World Sprint Championships without winning gold.

For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU World Speed Skating Championships please visit the [Championships Page](#) on ISU.org. Click [here for results](#).

Where to Watch

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About ISU World Speed Skating Championships

Hamar, Norway, will host the first combined World Allround and Sprint Speed Skating Championships in history. The World Allround and Sprint Championships used to be held separately. There will be four titles at stake in Hamar: the men's and ladies' Allround titles and the men's and ladies' sprint titles.

The ISU has organised the World Allround Championships for Men since 1893 (unofficial Championships were held in the years 1889-1892) and the World Allround Championships for ladies since 1936 (unofficial Championships were held in the years 1933-1935). Since 1996 the men's and women's World Allround Championships are held at the same time and venue. The World Sprint Championships will be held for the 51st time.

Unlike the World Cup, in which Skaters race for single distance titles, at the World Allround and Sprint Championships performances in four distances add up to the final ranking. The rankings are calculated according to the Samalog method. All times are measured in seconds and then converted to points, using the average times on 500 meter units. For a 1,000m race the time in seconds divided by two, for the 1,500 meters, the time in seconds is divided by three, and so on.

In the Allround tournament the Men will skate 500m, 5000m, 1500m and 10,000m and the Ladies' competition features 500m, 3000m, 1500m, 5000m races. In the Sprint tournament both the Men and the Ladies will skate two 500m races and two 1000m races.