

March 8, 2020

Heerenveen, Netherlands

Four track records and a novel race as season concludes in Thialf

The 2019/2020 speed skating season came to a close with four track records at the ISU World Cup in Heerenveen on Sunday. [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) crushed her own track record to claim the 1500m World Cup, and [Angelina Golikova](#) (RUS) skated a track record in the 500m. [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) took home the 500m World Cup title and [Melissa Wijfje](#) (NED) had a great day, making her first World Cup podium with bronze in the 1500m, followed by gold in the mass start.

In the men's tournament, [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) secured the 500m World Cup, and thus became the first Japanese male skater to win this title since the legendary Hiroyasu Shimizu in 2001. [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED) finished his rollercoaster season by beating teammate [Thomas Krol](#) to take home the 1500m World Cup title with a new track record, and Bart Swings (BEL) edged out Joey Mantia (USA) by one point to grab the mass start World Cup title.

The action-packed final day of the season concluded with Li Qishi and Kahanbai Alemasi (CHN) winning the first ever Mixed Gender Relay in speed skating.

Ladies 1500m: Wüst signs off in style

To start the final day of the season, last week's World Allround champion [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) and World Sprint champion [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) lined up in the penultimate pairing of the ladies 1500m in the battle for ultimate prestige.

Takagi had the fastest opener but Wüst took the initiative after the first full lap and did not surrender her advantage.

On the finishing straight, Takagi did all she could to close the tight gap, but it proved too big a task and she fell over crossing the line.

Wüst clocked 1 minute and 53.10 seconds to beat her own 2018 track record by 0.20 seconds. Despite falling, Takagi also managed to finish inside Wüst's 2018 mark, taking the day's silver in 1:53.27.

After having won the European and World 1500m titles and the World Allround crown this season, she concluded the season on another high note.

"I never thought about the track record today," she said. "When I woke up this morning I first thought I wanted to stay in bed but on the other hand I looked forward to skate. Nothing beats skating in a sold-out Thialf stadium.

"There was quite a bit of pressure today. I wanted to win that World Cup and I had a great draw against Miho [Takagi]. Last season's [track record] time was pretty sharp, but the conditions [low air pressure] were good, the crowd was great and a good opponent also helps."

After her race, the 33-year-old record Olympian announced that she will continue speed skating for at least two more years, having signed a new contract at the Dutch Reggeborgh trade team.

Takagi finished the season with mixed feelings. "On the last straight I was so tired, I couldn't control my skates anymore.

"I enjoyed the atmosphere and it was a very close race with Ireen but today it was her race. She had the initiative. I enjoyed the battle but I pity the result a little."

Wüst and Takagi took first and second place in the 1500m World Cup ranking, with [Yevgenia Lalenkova](#) (RUS) taking third after finishing fourth in 1:54.71 on Sunday.

Coming third on the day, [Melissa Wijfje](#) (NED) claimed a career-first World Cup medal, a bronze, in 1:54.69; she would have an even bigger prize to celebrate about two hours later.

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 1500m Ladies](#)

Ladies 500m: Golikova takes last win, World Cup for Kodaira

In the last ladies 500m race of the season, [Angelina Golikova](#) (RUS) made amends for a disappointing fifth place on Saturday. The 28-year-old Russian hammered out a 37.02 second 500m to lower [Nao Kodaira](#)'s 2018 track record by 0.15 seconds in the penultimate pairing.

Kodaira started the final pairing as leader of the World Cup ranking. She was unable to recapture her track record, but did secure the World Cup title, coming second in 37.19.

Kodaira was happy to see Golikova win: "I can learn a lot from losing. Two years ago I won everything, that was no fun. Now there are more rivals and I like it. That motivates me to train more, too."

Golikova, who celebrated her win dancing and waving hearts to the crowd, pushed teammate [Olga Fatkulina](#) – fourth in 37.39 on Sunday – to third place in the overall ranking. Saturday's winner [Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT) came third in 37.25 in the final race of the season.

Earlier this season Golikova broke Fatkulina's Russian national record.

"Olga is very good," Golikova said. "I'm strong, but she has a better technique and my technique sometimes falters. If I'm too nervous, my technique is worse, so I have to stay relaxed on the ice.

"Yesterday was not good, so I turned the negative energy into a positive today. I didn't feel so stressed and I was really focused on first place."

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

Ladies Mass Start

The final ladies Mass Start of the season did not, for a change, end in a bunch sprint. [Marina Zueva](#) (BLR) set up an escape in the second lap, with [Melissa Wijfje](#) (NED), [Karolina Gasecka](#) (POL) and [Claudia Pechstein](#) (GER) joining her.

The four escapees quickly gained more than half a lap on the bunch and Wijfje then knew the breakaway was to last to the very end.

"At first I thought, well just let them [her fellow escapees] work, but when we looked at the bunch in the back at the straights, I knew this was a one-in-thousand chance and I joined the work up front."

When Wijfje started pulling, Pechstein and Gasecka had to give way, but Zueva managed to keep up with her Dutch companion and the two worked together until the final sprint.

"I know I'm a bit faster than her [in the sprint] Wijfje said, and she proved it, easily leaving Zueva behind on the final corner. "A perfect end to the season," she said.

[Irene Schouten](#) (NED) took third place, winning the bunch sprint. Mostly Wijfje does the hard work for sprinter Schouten to take the honours, so this time Schouten was happy to finally see her teammate win.

"This shows how much of a team effort the mass start is. It's so beautiful to win in a sold-out Thialf. I already know that feeling and it's just so great that Melissa's got that feeling, too, now."

Schouten came second in the mass start World Cup, behind [Ivanie Blondin](#) (CAN), who had a big points margin over her rivals going into the final race and eventually finished fifth.

"I pretty much just had to show up for the race and that's what I did," Blondin said.

"I was pretty exhausted from all the racing I did recently. It would have been nice to be on the podium today, but at the same time I'd rather just make sure that I stand up on my feet and finish the race."

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings Mass Start Ladies](#)

Men's 1500m: track record for Nuis

Going into the final 1500m race of the World Cup season, [Ning Zhongyan](#) (CHN) was on top of the ranking but the 20-year-old Chinese prodigy was not able to keep up with the big guns in Thialf.

Ning had to settle for fifth, in 1:45.69, and took second place in the final ranking.

"Before this competition, I encouraged myself to do the best I could and after the race I told myself not to be too upset," Ning said.

"Of course, I'm a little bit disappointed, but before [this season] I would not have expected to be able to win this competition at all."

Nuis had gone into the season expecting to have a shot at the 1500m World Cup, but a severe bout of flu set him back physically in December and his return had been tough in January.

At the World Single Distance Championships in Salt Lake City in February, Nuis announced his return to form, becoming 1500m World Champion, but at the World Cup final in Heerenveen he had to concede the 1000m World Cup title to [Thomas Krol](#).

In Sunday's 1500m, the Dutch teammates were matched in the fourth of six pairings and Nuis settled the score after Saturday's disappointment.

Krol was ahead in the opener, but Nuis hit back with two sub-26 second laps to finish with a sub-28 lap in 1:43.00, beating the 2015 track record set by [Denis Yuskov](#) (RUS) by 0.36 seconds.

"Yesterday I was strained. Ben [coach Ben Jongejan, NED] told me that I was way too negative.

"We looked back at the footage of yesterday's (1000m) race, something I've never done before, and then I decided to just relax and skate well today. I really owe this one to my coach."

With his gold medal Nuis also took the World Cup title, leaving Ning 26 points behind, and Krol, who came second in 1:43.30, 33 points behind in third place.

A disappointed Krol said: "I skated a very good race myself, so no regrets there, but I have to bow my head to the better skater today, unfortunately. Thanks to Kjeld I have missed quite a few beautiful prizes this season."

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 1500m Men](#)

Men's 500m: Shinhama the heir to legendary Shimizu

On Saturday [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) had equalled the track record of 34.31 in the 500m and he knew that he could go faster on the Thialf rink. On Sunday he showed how much faster that was.

The fresh World Sprint champion smashed Michel Mulder's (NED) 2013 mark, which had been equalled by [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) in January, by a 0.24 second margin.

"I wanted to skate a track record," Shinhama said, "but I had never imagined to be able to skate a time like this."

Shinhama was the second Japanese male sprinter to win the 500m World Cup and the first since three-time winner, the legendary Hiroyasu Shimizu.

"Before this weekend I had not thought it possible because I was in third place. I had to win both 500m races here to pull it off. This title means a lot to me."

Russia's [Viktor Mushtakov](#) (RUS) had to settle for second place in the World Cup ranking after finishing fourth in 34.38 on Sunday.

[Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) finished third in the World Cup ranking. The Canadian had already lowered the 500m track record by 0.01 to 34.30 seconds before Shinhama took the ice, and eventually took silver on Sunday.

"My race was very, very good, but after seeing Shinhama already equalling the track record yesterday. I knew he had a good shot at beating me, but he still had to do it. And even if he did it, I skated a pretty good race myself.

"I was shocked by his 34.0 – there was no way I could have skated that time myself here today."

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

Men's Mass Start: Swings edges out Mantia

The men's mass start season came down to one point in the final sprint of the concluding event.

The long season had taken its toll of the riders in the bunch, who did not seem eager to make a tough fight of it in Heerenveen on Sunday.

Dutchman [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) did not want to let the home crowd down, however, and tried his luck with an escape with two laps to go.

World Cup leader [Joey Mantia](#) (USA) chased him down in the final lap, but eventually paid a high price for his effort.

On the final straight, [Jae-Won Chung](#) (KOR) came from behind Mantia's back to win the race, with [Bart Swings](#) (BEL) also overtaking the American to come second.

With his bronze medal, Mantia was just one point short of holding off Swings for the season's mass start World Cup title.

"I went in pretty optimistic," Mantia said. "But I think what happened today was just lack of fitness over the past three weeks. I definitely did not watch my diet after the Worlds [World Single Distance Championships in Salt Lake City]. I got a little relaxed and I think my fitness pays for it."

Chasing down Bergsma had been a bold move, he admitted.

"I thought if I don't do it, nobody will. I think I gave Jorrit a bit too much credit in terms of speed and I caught him quickly. Then I couldn't just sit behind his back because we were in the final lap already, so I passed him but then I started to run out of steam a little bit."

Swings had relied on his bunch skating experience to eventually take home the World Cup.

"I knew I could win it, but I did not think too much about winning, or the podium, or the overall. I just wanted to have a really good race to finish on the podium and then see what the final result was.

"I really love the mass start. I come from inline-skating and the tactic is similar. I like that game."

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings Mass Start Men](#)

Mixed Gender Relay

The action-packed weekend in Heerenveen concluded with the innovative Mixed Gender Relay on Sunday.

China's [Li Qishi](#) and [Kahanbai Alemasi](#) will go down in history as the first winners of the new event, which was much appreciated by the skaters who participated.

"I do like it," Ivanie Blondin said. The Canadian took third place with compatriot [Antoine Gélinas-Beaulieu](#).

"It's a fun race, interesting. We practised it twice and it went OK. It could become a serious event on the programme. After all, the mass start and the Team Sprint also started like this."

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

Where to Watch

Viewers will be able to watch either 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](#).

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ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series 2019/20:

[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](https://www.isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating).