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Gdansk, Poland

Elistratov and Schulting take overall titles as Sighel claims ‘unexpected’ victory

Semen Elistratov of Russia and the Netherlands’ Suzanne Schulting claimed the overall gold medals at the ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships 2021, each winning their third such title. Italian 21-year-old Pietro Sighel followed up his 500m silver on Saturday with victory in Sunday’s 3000m Superfinal.

The ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships 2021 concluded in Gdansk, Poland with Russia’s Semen Elistratov securing his third European overall title after an explosive finish in the 1000m final.

The 30-year-old held the fifth and last position for seven of the race’s nine laps, sprinting from fourth to first place on the final lap. Hungary’s John-Henry Krueger finished the race in second, with the Netherlands’ Itzhak de Laat taking bronze.

“Today I’m very, very happy,” Elistratov said. “My tactic was nice. For most of the distance I was looking out and waiting. Four laps to go. Three laps to go. When it was two laps to go I just went, ‘Go, go, go’ and now I am European champion. I will take two-three days of rest and then start training for the World Championships [5-7 March].”

Elistratov finished top of the overall classification having also won the 1500m final on Saturday. His previous European overall titles came in Sochi, Russia in 2016, and Turin, Italy the following year.

Elistratov won with a total of 71 points, while Pietro Sighel of Italy took overall silver, and De Laat bronze, both amassing 55 points and separated by their 3000m Superfinal result.

Sighel proved that winning his first-ever international senior medal on Saturday was not a fluke. The 21-year-old followed up his 500m silver with victory in Sunday’s 3000m Superfinal, sprinting from the back of the scrum to take the lead with only two of the 27 laps remaining. De Laat finished second, with Krueger third.

“It was definitely very unexpected,” Sighel said. “I came here 100 percent ready as always, I gave it my maximum and the medals came here unexpectedly as they are my first ones.

“I came to the Superfinal more rested than the others as they had been racing (the 1000m finals) before it, so it was a bit lucky to have fallen on Friday (in the 1000m heats) and be out already.

“In the race I tried to consume as little energy as possible to be able to push it to the maximum in the last laps and in the end I got a great result, winning the Superfinal and finishing second overall.”

Before this weekend, Sighel’s best senior individual result was his 20th place in the World Cup in Shanghai in December 2019. Now he can look ahead to the World Championships with an appetite for more success.

“It tastes great for the emotions it brings,” he said after biting his new silver medal. “But Italian food tastes better.”

The Netherlands controlled the Men’s 5000m Relay final, winning the gold medal ahead of Italy in second and bronze medalists Russia.

“We went to the front in the right moment,” Dutchman [Dylan Hoogerwerf](#) said.

“Our plan was to get to the front in the last 12 laps and we did that. Behind us they were all passing each other but we were in the front. I think it was the right decision to make.”

De Laat, who had finished third in the 500m as well as the 1000m and overall in Gdansk, was happy to end the weekend on the top step of the podium.

“I feel that I could’ve been at least second so I am happy to finish with the Relay and give us a gold medal, so it still feels like I have won a lot this weekend,” he said.

“I’m happy that I skated well so that I’ve got some experience and confidence to go to the World Championships. I think that I’m doing a really good job. The level is so high, everyone is so close, you can finish first or you can become 20th or something and if I keep this level up in Dordrecht (at the World Championships) I have a good chance for medals there as well.”

[Suzanne Schulting](#) continued her medal haul on Sunday, raising two fists in the air and screaming with joy after winning the 1000m – the event in which she holds the Olympic title. The 23-year-old took a lead in the third lap and kept it for the remaining six, winning the gold medal three tenths of a second ahead of teammate [Selma Poutsma](#). Germany’s [Anna Seidel](#) finished third.

The Olympic champion’s victory sealed her third consecutive European overall title. This year she took it with the biggest margin – 47 points – finishing top with 102, ahead of Seidel in second with 55 and Russia’s [Sofia Prosvirnova](#), who finished third overall with 53.

“I was really happy with the 1000m and that I was able to race such a great race and of course I was happy that I got the overall classification,” Schulting said.

The superstar fell in the Ladies’ 3000m Relay but got up again to help her team claim the silver medal behind France, adding to her four individual gold medals in Gdansk. In an emotional medal ceremony, Schulting struggled to hold back her tears.

“I put myself in a lot of pressure this weekend so it was because of that,” she said.

“In the Relay we wanted gold but we got silver because I fell down and that made me upset. And I was thinking about [Lara \(van Ruijven\)](#), her teammate, who passed away in July 2020) because last year she won the silver medal in the 1000m. It was a combination of everything, but mostly about Lara.”

Poutsma’s silver in the 1000m final was her first individual international medal.

“Already when I made it to the A final, that was a milestone for me,” the Dutch 21-year-old said. “To be able to win a medal too was the cherry on top of the cake. We (she and Schulting) did it perfectly. We could not have done it better.”

Poutsma, who competed for France until 2018, left the European Championships with mixed feelings, however, after missing out on Relay gold.

“We got silver due to some small mistakes. I think we should keep that in mind for the next time and show what we’ve got because I think we are so strong,” she said.

“I have to work a lot on my corners and we have to really keep in mind the small mistakes we made in the Relay so that we can take the gold in the World Championships.”

Seidel’s 1000m was looking less than glorious with three laps to go but the 22-year-old made a push past Russians [Ekaterina Efremenkova](#) and [Evgeniya Zakharova](#) to move from fifth place to take the bronze medal. Prosvirnova won the 3000m Superfinal, ahead of Seidel in second and Efremenkova third.

The overall silver medalist can look back at a successful first weekend of Short Track after the almost-year-long break from international competition.

“I’m really happy,” said Seidel, who leaves Poland with two silvers and a bronze. “I knew that physically I could do well here but in Short Track there are so many things that can happen so I’m really happy it worked out so well for me.”

“It’s been a really tough time for us and that makes me even more proud. We could train in our arena the whole time but motivationally it hasn’t been the easiest, so I’m proud that we finished so strong and continued training through these hard times.”

Where to Watch

Viewers will be able to watch the ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships 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](#).

All the information is available in the [Where to Watch](#). For further information regarding the ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships, including the announcement and entry list please visit the dedicated [ISU Event Page](#).

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