

January 30, 2021

Heerenveen, Netherlands

Encore for the leading ladies as some men up their game

[Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) got back up again at the second leg of the ISU World Cup speed skating on Saturday. After crashing in last weekend's first 500m, the Russian world record holder won his first World Cup gold of the season in Heerenveen. [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED), who got up on Friday by qualifying for the Mass Start final despite a crash in the semis, followed that up with a powerful break to win the gold medal on Saturday. Meanwhile the undownable [Thomas Krol](#) (NED) was in a class of his own again in the 1500m. In the ladies' competition [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA), [Femke Kok](#) (NED), and [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) reprised their victories of a week ago.

Undownable Krol

In last week's World Cup 1500m race, all top-five places were orange. This week the Dutch dominance was restricted to the podium, with Norwegians [Hallgeir Engebråten](#) and [Sverre Lundevold](#) coming fourth and fifth.

With a time of 1 minute and 43.42 seconds, winner Thomas Krol was 0.18 seconds slower than last week. [Kjeld Nuis](#) clocked 1:44.22 and was 0.44 faster to take silver after last week's bronze, swapping places with [Patrick Roest](#) (1:44.75), who was 0.30 slower than last week taking bronze instead of silver.

Despite Krol's domination in the distance, Nuis is convinced that he catch up with his former teammate to challenge him at the World Championships in February. He said: "It's my best of the season, so I can't complain and the gap with [Thomas] Krol has almost halved. But it was far from a perfect race. I had a good opener and a good outer corner after that, but on the turn after the first cross-over I messed it up. That was a shame. I would still not have caught up with Krol, but I could've skated 1:44.0.

"Remembering last year, I'm still confident. Back then, Krol also won everything in the beginning of the season, and I beat him in Salt Lake City [at the World Championships] in February."

Nuis said he would like to be paired with Krol at the World Championships. His compatriot was indifferent. "I don't really mind," said Krol. "Of course he's the only skater who can be of any help in my race and that's the same the other way around, because we're the only ones who open so fast. But I've skated all my races alone this year already and I won them all, but one. I've shown that I'm faster than him over the past couple of weeks, so bring it on."

Kulizhnikov back on top

[Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) was more careful skating the 500m after last week's crash, and his cautious race was enough for gold on Saturday. Having climbed back up to the A Division again by winning last Sunday's B Division race, the Russian set 34.47 in the second pairing on Saturday.

Last week's 500m gold medalists [Dai Dai Ntab](#) (NED) and [Artem Arefyev](#) (RUS) were not able to match it, sharing Saturday's bronze medal in 34.58. [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) took silver in 34.52.

Kulizhnikov was diagnosed with Covid-19 in December, but said that the infection had not affected his preparations for the season. "I feel good, but we did not skate many races eventually, so I lack rhythm," he said. "I'm not at my top level yet, but it's gradually getting better."

Bergsma solos to gold

After his remarkable recovery in the semi-finals on Friday, [Jorrit Bergsma](#) had more solo riding in store on Saturday. Whereas he had to chase the bunch after a crash in the semis, it was the bunch who had to chase the Dutchman in the final. Bergsma made a powerful jump with about six laps to go and managed to stay out of sight. [Bart Swings](#) (BEL) was second and Swiss [Livio Wenger](#) third.

Bergsma said an early jump is not always successful. "You never know," he said. "It all depends on what the bunch does and they hesitated, which gave me just about enough room. If those guys decide to chase, it's going to be difficult. Escaping is tough, you have to make enough pace to get away and then you have to have the stamina to hold on to the line."

Bowe beats 'best of all time'

"The time doesn't lie," said [Brittany Bowe](#) after she won the 1500m for the second successive week. Stopping the clock at 1 minute and 53.45 seconds, she was 0.43 seconds faster than last time. "I could tell I pushed myself harder than last week, Antoinette [De Jong](#) going before me. She had an awesome 300m first split and all three of the splits I saw of her were faster than I did last week, so I knew I had to put the paddle down and go for it."

After De Jong had skated 0.08 faster than Bowe did last week, the American faced [Ireen Wüst](#) in the penultimate pairing. "There's no greater person to be paired with, because she's the best of all time," Bowe smiled. During the race she set aside her respect for the five-time Olympic champion and went out fast starting from the outer lane.

The only thing Wüst could do was follow at a distance and at the last crossing, Bowe even crossed ahead of her pair-mate coming from the outer lane. Wüst said: "I skated pretty far behind and to be over-crossed in that final lap is not good, but it makes me sharper. These [World Cup] races are a prelude to the World Championships. I'm making progress and I believe in myself. I've proved to be able to give something extra when it really counts more than once."

Wüst, who had won silver last week, had to settle for bronze in 1:54.22, behind De Jong's 1:53.81. De Jong was excited about her performance. "In the past I never thought of myself as a 1500m skater, but I'm beginning to like it more and more. With the new pair of shoes I use this season, I can convey my energy to the ice much better."

Like Wüst, De Jong has faith in her 1500m title chances at the World Championships. "I'm at 95 per cent now," she said. "Skating 1.53 is good for me, but I don't aim at good, I aim at very good. The gap [with Bowe] is 0.4. That's a lot, but it's less than last week. I just have to step up my game a little more."

Unstoppable Kok not used to winning yet

A week after winning the first Dutch gold World Cup medal in the ladies' 500m since 2011, [Femke Kok](#) topped the podium in the shortest distance for the third consecutive time on Saturday. "No, I'm not getting used to it yet," she smiled.

Kok stopped the clock at 37.23 seconds, leaving [Angelina Golikova](#) (RUS) 0.05 seconds behind in second place, while 2019 World Champion [Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT) grabbed her first World Cup medal of the season in third place with 37.40.

“I’m not sure whether this is my peak form,” 20-year-old Kok said. “I hope not, because I want to be better at the World Championships.”

Golikova finished second for the third time in a row. She hopes to be paired up with Kok at the World Championships, as the two have not faced each other in the same pairing this season.

Kok is not choosy about her possible pair-mate, although she does like racing racing Golikova. “She is really sweet and super fair,” said Kok. “She always wishes me luck beforehand and congratulates me afterwards. That’s what makes sport so beautiful: positive people who do not begrudge each other.”

Schouten edges out Blondin in eventful Mass Start

[Irene Schouten](#) (NED) won the Mass Start, edging out [Ivanie Blondin](#) after an eventful race. [Francesca Lollobrigida](#) (ITA) finished third but she and [Valérie Maltais](#) (CAN) were disqualified for irregular conduct on the ice. [Elizaveta Golubeva](#) (RUS) stepped up to the podium for bronze.

Both Schouten and Blondin agreed that racing in the Mass Start had become too aggressive over the past years, praising the referees for taking action.

“I feel like every race is worse and worse,” Blondin said. “In a way I’m happy they started disqualifying people, because it kind of gives everybody the idea that we need to take a step back from being too aggressive. It’s unfortunate that they disqualified Val [Valérie Maltais], but it happens. It’s for everyone’s safety.”

Schouten said: “I’ve always said that the ISU had to be stricter and it’s good to see that they took action today. Some skate more with their arms than with their legs and I’m happy that the ISU takes a close look at the footage.”

Where to Watch

Viewers will be able to watch the ISU Speed Skating competitions that will take place within the hub 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](#) which will be updated after each competition. The individual announcements and entry lists will be published under the respective events as soon as they are available. For further information regarding the ISU Speed Skating Hub please visit: <https://www.isu.org/heerenveen2021>.

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