

January 31, 2021

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

Voronina (RUS) eases into top gear, as Mulder (NED) wins first gold since 2017

[Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) and [Femke Kok](#) (NED) each took four gold medals from four World Cup races at the Heerenveen Hub, but [Natalia Voronina](#) (RUS) was the biggest sensation on Sunday as she smashed the seven-day-old 3000m track record at the second and final leg of the ISU World Cup series. In the men's competition [Ronald Mulder](#) (NED) won the 500m to collect his first individual World Cup gold since 2017, while Kai Verbij (NED) managed to beat Thomas Krol in the 1000m with the second-fastest time ever skated in Thialf.

Kok reigns again in 500m

Four out of four. Since 20-year-old [Femke Kok](#) (NED) started her first 500m World Cup race in the A Division last week, she has won them all. At 37.33 seconds, her fourth outing was her slowest of the past two weekends, but it was still good enough for gold.

[Angelina Golikova](#) grabbed her fourth 500m silver on Sunday. The 29-year-old Russian opened faster than Kok again, but in the full lap she couldn't match her younger rival, who was the only one to skate the circuit in less than 27 seconds (26.94).

[Daria Kachanova](#) (RUS) took her first World Cup medal of the season with bronze in 37.63, rebounding from a hard crash in last week's second 500m. She said: "[Last week's crash] doesn't bother me anymore. There's no injuries and today's 1000m [winning the B division in 1:15.10] gave me confidence heading into the 500m."

3000m track record for Voronina

After [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) lowered the track record to 3 minutes and 57.15 seconds in the 3000m last week, it was [Natalia Voronina](#)'s turn this Sunday. The Russian world record holder in the 5000m finished in 3:56.85.

Voronina had come eighth in 4:02.96 in last week's 3000m. "I think I did a little too much last week, with the Team Pursuit and some fast extra laps in training," she said. "This week I did less in training."

Her six-second improvement came as a surprise to her. "It's incredible how the level has gone up in the 3000m this season," she said. "I had not expected to be this fast myself, because I did not skate very well over the past few weeks. I just wanted to skate well technically and aimed at a sub-four-minute time, but two laps into the race I felt good and I knew I could be really fast today."

[Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED), who held the track record before Schouten broke it last week, finished second in 3:58.90 and Schouten had to settle for bronze in 4:00.15.

De Jong was philosophical about having lost her track record last week and coming second on Sunday. She said: "The level and the depth in the field is superb. If you compare my race to [competitions in Heerenveen] over the past years, you'd always win with 3:59. Ireen [[Wüst](#)] skated 3:58 twice, but that's a long time ago. Maybe I broke that barrier skating 3:57 a month ago. After that you had Irene Schouten, and now that 3:56. The competition is merciless. It's a beautiful rivalry."

“I’m in the middle of a training period now, and I know that I can’t expect too much. Jac [coach Jac Orié] was very happy with this time. I’m at 75-80 percent now and I hope to be able to lift it to a hundred in two weeks’ time.”

Bowe ready for World Championships

[Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) was the only lady to finish the 1000m under 1:14, stopping the clock at 1:13.96 for her fourth gold medal in two World Cup weekends. She said: “It definitely feels great to be back on top, but like I’ve said time and time again, it’s great to win World Cups, but the goal is to win worlds [ISU World Single Distance Championships] in a couple of weeks.

“But that said, I’m just super grateful for these four wins. Hard work paying off, it’s always nice when it works out that way.”

Whereas Bowe won last week’s 1000m with an 0.33-second margin over [Jorien ter Mors](#) (NED), the gap to this week’s number two, Angelina Golikova, was only 0.09 seconds.

“Angelina had the 1000m of her life and it was fun to see the excitement on her face,” Bowe said.

The American was due up versus Ter Mors two pairings later and did not let herself get distracted by other skaters’ performances. She continued: “After that, it was time to get to work and focus on my own race. I had a great first chase on Jorien on that first backstretch to get it going. The last lap did not come as easy as it has been for me and so it was a tight race.”

Ter Mors, who had skipped Saturday’s 500m and 1500m races with a sore back, was not able to step up to the podium again, finishing fourth in 1:14.64, leaving Femke Kok in third place. The four-time 500m winner thus collected her career first World Cup medal in the 1000m too.

Long-awaited win for Mulder

Saturday’s 500m winner [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) skipped Sunday’s race because of a groin injury and the winner of last week’s second 500m [Artem Arefyev](#) (RUS) faced [Ronald Mulder](#) in the third-last pairing. Veteran Mulder had a plan for the 20-year-old Russian. “I wanted to get on his nerves in the opener,” said the Dutchman. “He skated 9.60 yesterday and I wanted to be ahead of him. The first step was mine and I got the feeling that he overran himself a bit. That’s a good start to the race.”

Despite the good start, Mulder wasn’t completely satisfied with his race. “It wasn’t immaculate. I opened 9.64 and I have done 9.5 in the past. Immaculate is almost impossible, but when you win, it’s good anyhow.”

Mulder finished in 34.55, keeping compatriot [Hein Otterspeer](#) and Canada’s [Laurent Dubreuil](#) 0.3 seconds behind. Otterspeer got the silver medal because he had been four-thousandths of a second faster.

“It’s all so close in sprinting,” Mulder said. “You can either be tenth or win. That’s nerve-wracking for us sprinters: you have to be so sharp, you have to fight for every inch. It’s great for the spectators and it’s also nice to be a part of that.”

Otterspeer took his first World Cup podium of the season and also commented on the depth of the field in the men’s 500m. “It’s anyone’s game really,” he said. “But it’s good to be on the podium again,

because I've been so close already. My speed is good, but I made little mistakes in my previous races, so when my opener is good and I add a smooth full-lap, I know I can skate 34.5."

Van der Poel driven by dreams

In the 5000m [Niils van der Poel](#) was on a mission. The Swede has set his sights on skating the 10,000m at the World Championships, but his attendance relies on his place on the special qualification ranking list of the 5000m. To keep his chances alive, Van der Poel had to surpass [Hallgeir Engebråten](#) on the list and the Norwegian had skated 6:09.21 last week.

Van der Poel started in the second pairing and stopped the clock at 6:08.39, enough to pass Engebråten, who was due up in the fourth pairing. With 6:17.03, Engebråten did not manage to beat Van der Poel and nor did anyone else but [Patrick Roest](#), who won the distance in 6:05.95. Russia's [Sergey Trofimov](#) took bronze in 6:10.86.

"I knew the time I had to beat," Van der Poel said after his race. It had not come easily, however. "The race I did last Sunday, was the best race of my life, but it still was three seconds too slow and that was just mentally really hard. I really believe I'm one of the top 10,000m skaters in the world right now, and not being able to skate the worlds, that was a punch in the stomach.

"On Monday I was knackered and then on Tuesday we made a change to the radius of my blades, because it looked like a rollercoaster. At practice on Tuesday, I did half the sessions on the rollercoaster and half the sessions with the radius, and then I knew I could go faster. Today's race was excellent. The gain of having a radius in your blade, that's a good one."

When Patrick Roest saw Van der Poel's 6:08.39, he knew he had to dig deep to win. "It's great to have him around in the 5000m," said Roest. "He keeps surprising everyone and he'll be a dangerous rival in the 10,000 [at the World Championships]."

Verbij beats Krol in 1000m

[Kai Verbij](#) left all of last weekend's troubles behind by winning the 1000m in 1:07.35, the second-fastest time behind Pavel Kulizhnikov's track record. Last Sunday, Verbij had come second behind [Thomas Krol](#), after crashing in Saturday's 500m. This time he beat his team-mate in the final pairing.

"It's great, also to take that [second fastest track] time from Thomas," Verbij said. "My approach to the 1000m was the same as last week, but back then I still had a bit of a sore neck due to Saturday's crash. Now I was fresher and sharper."

After two 1500m golds and one 1000m win over the past two weekends, Krol had to settle for silver with 1:07.58, ahead of Canada's [Laurent Dubreuil](#), who took his second bronze medal of the day.

"I'm gutted," Krol said. "Today he beat me fair and square, I have to be honest. Hats off to Kai. I skated a good race, and that's what hurts the most: to skate a good race and still get beaten."

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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