

February 11, 2021

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

De Jong wins nerve-wracking 3000m as Van der Poel wins historic title for Sweden

“The nerves cost me ten years of my life but I would give anything for this,” said [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) after winning her career first individual World title on home ice at Thialf on Thursday. Winning in three minutes, 58.47 seconds, the 25-year-old edged out six-time champion [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE) by 0.10 seconds in the Ladies’ 3000m, kicking off the 21st ISU World Single Distance Championships in Heerenveen. [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) took bronze in 3:59.75.

In the Men’s competition [Nils van der Poel](#) (SWE) won the first title for Sweden in the history of the World Single Distance Championships. The 24-year-old endurance specialist upset major favorite [Patrick Roest](#) (NED), who had to settle for silver, while [Sergey Trofimov](#) (RSU) came away with bronze.

Antoinette De Jong was the first of the favorites to take the ice on Thursday. She said: “I decided to go flat-out from the start and then see where that would leave me. I thought, what if I come second by a small margin again? I didn’t want to be able to blame myself.”

Having won the European Allround title in January, De Jong came second in the 3000m at the two World Cup events which followed. It hadn’t bothered her too much but when a picture of her disappointment after getting 3000m silver at the World Championships in Inzell in 2019 popped up on her phone two days ago, it reminded her of a nightmare scenario.

At those Championships in Germany, Sáblíková had pipped De Jong to second by 0.5s in the final pairing and this time around the Czech endurance specialist again skated after De Jong had set the mark.

Sáblíková close

Sáblíková’s split times were slower than De Jong’s throughout the race but De Jong knew that her final lap had not been her fastest. She went on: “I saw Sáblíková making that final sprint and it very much reminded me of Inzell. When she crossed the line [0.10 seconds slower than De Jong] I was relieved to know that I would at least be on the podium.”

Sáblíková finished in 3:58.57. She said: “I saw how fast she [De Jong] was and I thought, OK, let’s just see what I can do. I did not think I could win it but a couple of laps into the race my coach Petr Novák told me my lap times were good.

“I’m happy with my performance. After 4:04, 4:00 and 3:59, it’s under 3:59 now, my fastest time in Thialf after four times in fourth place [at the European Allround Championships and the two World Cup events].

Final pairing

With Schouten and [Natalya Voronina](#) (RSU), who both won a World Cup race in January, coming up in the final pairing, De Jong was still far from sure of the color of her medal.

“Schouten started super fast but then her following lap times were not so fast,” De Jong said. “When I saw her entering the final lap 1.7 seconds behind, I knew they had to be really fast to catch me. Then Jac [coach Jac Orië] told me I had won it.”

Schouten eventually finished in 3:59.75 for bronze, and Voronina had to settle for seventh place with 4:02.85. She was gutted: “I knew it was possible [to win]. We had a couple of girls who could win here, I was one of them, but today I was not the best one.

“I think I focused too much on my pair-mate, I did not skate my own race. I’ll try to turn it into a positive – I did learn from the experience.”

Van der Poel upsets Roest to make history

Patrick Roest had won 17 of his previous 19 races in the 5000m. The only two he did not win were the World Championship races in Inzell (2019) and Salt Lake City (2020). With a fabulous track record of 6:05.14 and another win, in 6:05.95, at the World Cup in Heerenveen, the 25-year-old Dutchman seemed unstoppable in his favorite distance this season.

“I felt good working towards the World Championships,” he commented. “But when I had started my race, I felt that it did not come as easy as it did at the World Cups.”

Roest skated in the third-last pairing and had to set his time before Van der Poel took the rink. With the air pressure being a lot higher than during the World Cups, he did not expect to match his track record again. He was right. Finishing in 6:10.05, he was still six seconds faster than [Danila Semerikov](#) (RSU), who had set the fastest time so far.

No one was able to beat Roest’s time, except Van der Poel. “I did not skate to my full potential but it was not too bad,” Roest said. “Van der Poel just skated a very good race and even on a good day it would have been difficult for me to beat him. Today he skated faster than he did when the air pressure was lower. That says a lot.”

The Dutchman was gutted to have failed at a third successive World Championships and covered his head under his jacket after Van der Poel had finished in 6:08.39.

Consolation

As happy as he was winning the title, the Swede immediately comforted Roest. “I feel bad for him,” van der Poel said. “I wish we could share this medal. He’s probably the best skater there is and he deserves this more than anyone. We’ve been skating against each other since we were kids. That guy has been more inspiring to me than anyone else.”

Van der Poel had not expected to win the 5000m because he’s targeting his main goal this Sunday. He explained: “For me, Speed Skating is all about the 10,000m. This is half the distance, half the challenge, half the pleasure.”

After Van der Poel had finished, [Sergey Trofimov](#) (RSU) managed to pull off 6:13.02 in the final pairing versus [Sven Kramer](#) (NED), who suffered from a recurring back injury and finished last.

Whereas Roest had inspired Van der Poel, the Swede had inspired Trofimov. The 25-year-old from Nizhny Novgorod said: “I saw Nils’ result and it gave me extra motivation before the start. I knew that it was possible for me to be on the podium today.”

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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