

February 12, 2021

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

Maiden titles for Golikova and Dubreuil as Dutch dominate Team Pursuit

[Femke Kok](#) (NED) won all four 500m World Cup races in January but there are no guarantees when it comes to the World title. [Angelina Golikova](#) (RSU), second to Kok in each of those races, finally beat her nemesis when it mattered most to win her maiden gold at the ISU World Speed Skating Championships in Heerenveen on Friday. In the Men's race, [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) became the second Canadian after three-time winner [Jeremy Wotherspoon](#) to take the 500m title. Home nation the Netherlands won both the Men's and Ladies' Team Pursuit events.

Maiden title for Golikova

In the Ladies' 500m, [Angelina Golikova](#) (RSU) had to set the pace. The 29-year-old Muscovite started in the outer lane versus [Heather McLean](#) (CAN) and raced the perfect opener in 10.26 seconds, by far the fastest of the field.

Coming from the outer corner she got a perfect draft from McLean before heading towards the difficult final inner corner, which she handled smoothly to finish in 37.14s.

"My opener was key to win this race," she said. "I just had to keep my technique heading into that last inner corner and it went well.

"When I got up and looked at my time I knew it was a good time in these conditions, but still, maybe Olga [[Fatkulina](#), RSU] or Kok [[Femke Kok](#), NED] would be faster."

Fatkulina started in the penultimate pairing and did not match Golikova, finishing in 37.45s. Taking the bronze medal, the 31-year-old was content as she reflected on a challenging fortnight in the Netherlands.

"I was suffering from a muscle injury that made my start position difficult," she said. "It still hampers me a bit so I'm happy to get away with a medal after this period in Heerenveen."

World Cup queen Kok skated in the final pairing and finished 0.14s short of top spot, leaving the gold to Golikova, who won her maiden world title.

Twenty-year-old Kok was happy nonetheless: "It's actually a bit strange that I started as a favorite here today. Last year I only came ninth.

"Of course I came to win today but she [[Golikova](#)] wanted this very much too of course, and she has been a contender for years now. It's a pity, but I'm still satisfied."

Dubreuil follows Wotherspoon's footsteps

Laurent Dubreuil (CAN) faced Dai Dai N'tab (NED) in the third-last pairing of the 500m – the perfect draw, the Canadian said: "I was happy to have the outer [lane], and to be paired to a direct rival. He was first in the World Cup and I came second, so that was a good motivation.

“My game plan was to try and get the draft [on the back stretch] so I needed a fast start to put the pressure on Dai Dai and I was just getting off that line perfect.”

N'tab's start was not what he had hoped. “I made a couple of mistakes in the beginning, and it's tough to fight against an early setback,” he said.

Meanwhile Dubreuil executed his plan perfectly. He went on: “It was pretty close to the perfect race, definitely the perfect first 300m, and then you only have to glide the last 100 meters. This was the best race of my career.”

Crossing the line, the Canadian stopped the clock at 34.39 seconds, with N'tab trailing by 0.23s.

Kulizhnikov was up next and put his name between the two with 34.54s to take silver.

Dubreuil was honored to follow in the footsteps of his compatriot and former world record holder Jeremy Wotherspoon.

“It's a bit surprising [to be only the second Canadian to win 500m gold] because we [Canada] have had a lot of good sprinters. I'm speechless.”

The new champion did not dare to compare himself to his legendary countryman, however. “Oh no,” he said. “I would at least have to win ten more world titles and he has won 67 World Cups [leading the all-time ranking], I have only won one so I need 66 more, and I can almost guarantee you, that's not going to happen.”

Despite not being satisfied with his race, N'tab was happy with his first individual podium finish at a senior World Championships. He said: “Of course, I'd rather have won but I'm happy with my first podium. He [Dubreuil] skated a flawless race. Had I done that, I could've won here today, but third place is good for now, as a stepping stone to next season.”

Change of strategy pays off

The Ladies' Team Pursuit built to a climax between Canada and the Netherlands in the final pairing, after [Evgenia Lalenkova](#), [Natalya Voronina](#) and [Elizaveta Golubeva](#) (RSU) had beaten Norway in the penultimate pair to set the fastest time so far, two minutes, 59.35 seconds.

Both Canada and the Netherlands went out way faster than all previous teams, the Canadians taking the lead with [Valérie Maltais](#) and [Ivanie Blondin](#) assuming front duty in the first two laps and [Isabelle Weidemann](#) pulling through in the final four.

[Antoinette de Jong](#) started in front for the Dutch. She said: “My start was very bad and I thought I had messed up our train but we managed to keep it together and find the rest.”

After De Jong's start [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) took over but [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) stayed at the back. Having seen other nations successfully execute a strategy of pushing instead of switching turns, the Dutch amended theirs too.

De Jong pulled up front for the final four laps, with Schouten pushing from behind – and it paid off. Heading into the final lap the Orange squad was 0.10s behind, but at the finish they were 0.17s ahead, clocking 2:55.79.

De Jong said: “This was only the second time we skated in this line-up and we still have to get used to it. The pushing really helps. We were afraid to do it beforehand because we thought we might lose balance pushing, but it worked out well.”

Canada satisfied with silver

Despite finishing second after two successive wins at the World Cup last month, the Canadian Ladies were satisfied with silver. Blondin said: “It wasn’t a perfect race but I’d still say it’s positive. We come from a situation where we haven’t skated all season and those back-to-back golds... we weren’t expecting that.

“If you would have told me that we would be second within two tenths after the Dutch a couple of weeks ago, I wouldn’t have believed you.”

Medal for Nikita

The happiest Ladies’ Team Pursuit medalist was probably [Evgenia Lalenkova](#) (RSU). She said: “The last two World Cup we were s**t. We couldn’t finish together. This race we returned to the positions we had last year and we managed to keep it together.

“I’m so happy with the medal because I’ve been away 45 days and I miss my six-year-old son very much. Now I can take home this and tell him, ‘Sorry, Nikita, for being away for so long but I brought home a medal for you’.”

Consolation title for Roest

The Netherlands winning another Team Pursuit title may seem like business as usual but it was not. Norway set a track record in the second World Cup race two weeks ago. Using a new strategy, they left the Dutch in disarray.

The Orange team faced another setback when [Sven Kramer](#), who was instrumental in five of the seven previous Dutch wins, withdrew due to a back injury on Thursday. The Dutch chose 19-year-old Beau Snellink to join [Patrick Roest](#) and [Marcel Bosker](#) in the line-up.

They were paired with Canada in the draw. [Jordan Belchos](#), [Ted-Jan Bloemen](#) and [Connor Howe](#) also considered themselves title contenders. Belchos said: “At the World Cups the first four were very close. Going in we thought we could be World Champions but we could also be off the podium.”

Heading into the final two laps, Canada were ahead. Belchos added: “I was in the lead. Those are the moments you dream of as an athlete. You want to be in those positions where you have a chance to win something great and it’s a challenge. So it was fun in that way, at the same time when you lose by such a small margin you always think what if...”

With [Patrick Roest](#) pulling up front, the Dutch pipped Canada to the line by 0.28 seconds, finishing in 3:41.42, but the Championships were not done yet, with track record holders Norway facing [Danila Semerikov](#), [Sergey Trofimov](#) and [Ruslan Zakharov](#) (RSU) in the final pairing.

Belchos continued: “We saw the Dutch beat us and it goes from, ‘OK, maybe we can be World Champions’ to, ‘OK, now we’re second, and hopefully we won’t get beaten by those two pairs and drop off the podium’.”

Canada remained on the podium. Norway again used their pushing strategy without taking turns up front, but this time it did not play out as well for them and they finished fourth in 3:43.23.

Semerikov, Trofimov and Zakharov took the bronze medal in 3:42.66 and Zakharov knew why Norway's tactic had failed this time: "The ice was much slower today [due to weather conditions] than it was two weeks ago when Norway skated 3:39. They used the same tactic but today didn't work because the ice was slower."

For Patrick Roest, the Team Pursuit title offered some consolation but failed to mask the pain of missing out on his favorite 5000m on Thursday. He said: "It's nice, but it doesn't make up for yesterday. Of course it's nice, my first title at the World Single Distance Championships, but I had other things in my mind."

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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