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Dordrecht, The Netherlands

## Old favorites, new winners and double gold on day to savor in Dordrecht

The Dordrecht 2021 ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships saw old favorites return to the top, new champions crowned – and an extraordinary double gold scored under highly emotional circumstances. Charles Hamelin (CAN) showed that there was life in a 36-year-old racer yet, winning the men's 1500m in fine style. Shaoang Liu (HUN), meanwhile, claimed his first world title, with gold in the 500m. But the day truly belonged to Suzanne Schulting (NED). Not only did she put herself firmly on the road to her second overall title, but she also paid tribute to her late teammate Lara van Ruijven (NED) in the process. It was a day to savor for Dutch Short Track speed skating.

### Emotional double for Schulting

[Suzanne Schulting](#) (NED) got her Dordrecht 2021 ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships off to the perfect start on Saturday, winning both 1500m and 500m gold, under emotional circumstances. The results put her in prime position to lift her second overall title on Sunday.

Schulting, who won the last World Championship overall title back in 2019, and the last two European Championship overall titles, came into the competition as hot favorite, and did not disappoint.

She took the 1500m gold with ease. Hitting the front with five laps to go, Schulting simply applied too much speed for a high-quality field to cope with. Left in her wake, a crash resulted as the rest tried to keep up. Only [Courtney Sarault](#) of Canada, who took silver, and [Xandra Velzeboer](#) (NED), who got bronze, could get close.

“This is a very big relief,” said Schulting after the 1500m. “The World Championships now really started and I am super happy to have started like this.”

Schulting then added the 500m gold – never her favorite distance – to cap a remarkable day.

There were high emotions in the arena before the final. On the big screens, the last race of [Lara van Ruijven](#) (NED), who tragically passed away during a training camp in France in 2019, was shown.

Van Ruijven became 500m World Champion at the 2019 ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Sofia, Bulgaria. Schulting finished in third place that day.

This time around, she won gold. The Netherlands racer got into first place on the first corner, knowing that her superior speed could see her through, and once again the opposition floundered. [Sofia Prosvirnova](#) (RSU) fell early, and while Italy's [Arianna Fontana](#), the 2018 Olympic gold medalist at this distance, tried her best, Schulting was simply too powerful.

At the finish line, Schulting, her teammates and coaches shed tears for Van Ruijven. Afterwards, she paid tribute to her teammate and friend.

“When we left the hotel in Perpignan last summer after we said goodbye to Lara, there was one thing that I really wanted to work on,” said Schulting. “I wanted to fight and become better on the 500m, and worked on that all summer and season. There was just a small group of people that knew this was my main goal.

“I really had to work. The first part of my race wasn’t as good as Lara’s, for example. [After crossing the line] I thought about Lara right away.

“I really wanted to become World Champion in the 500m to make sure we kept the title within the Dutch team. That really was my main goal this season, and I am super, super proud of it.”

With her favorite event, the 1000m, to come tomorrow, Schulting goes into Sunday’s decisive racing with the leader’s red hat. It will take a miracle to stop her from becoming World Champion for a second time. She is on 68 points, with Fontana a distant second on 26, and Sarault third with 24.

### **Hamelin proves he still has what it takes**

Canada’s [Charles Hamelin](#) turned back the years at the Dordrecht 2021 ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships on Saturday, taking gold in the 1500m to cement his legendary status in the sport.

The 36-year-old considered retiring in 2018, having already done it all. He came into this competition with three Olympic gold medals and 12 World Championship golds in his collection.

But the Canadian didn’t travel to his 17th World Championships to make up the numbers. Starting a final that included [Luca Spechenhauser](#) (ITA) – an athlete 16 years his junior – Hamelin combined all his years of Short Track savvy with the raw power of a still-great athlete.

He hit the front with six laps to go, and simply couldn’t be caught. It was his third 1500m World Championship gold.

“It was a really good race for me, from the beginning of the day I was feeling really good,” said Hamelin.

“It was a big race in the final, eight people, but I was able to manage myself to be well in my energy for the last six laps where I led. I tried to keep the pace really fast for the people behind me, and it worked.

“When I won [the overall World Championship title] in Montreal in 2018, I knew I had more in me. I didn’t know how long I would continue, but I hoped for the next Olympics. To win the 1500m is the first big step to show what I can do next year.

“When you love something, you try to do the little things to keep you going faster. With the new coach, he targets the perfect exercises, to correct movements you are doing wrong. For me it was really good.

“I was hoping to race some day during Covid, and it finally came.”

The ever-improving [Itzhak de Laat](#) (NED) got the silver, with [Semen Elistratov](#) (RSU), who was crowned European Champion in January, taking bronze. A crash in the final eliminated [Shaoang Liu](#) (HUN).

“In retrospect I could have done a bit better, but I am happy with silver too,” said De Laat. “The 1500m really made my day.”

In the 500m, 22-year-old Shaoang Liu secured his first World Championship gold. Liu has been one of the leading skaters in the men’s field for a number of years, but had not yet managed to take a world gold.

He led from the front in a fast and furious race, beating Elistratov into silver and [Pietro Sighel](#) (ITA) into bronze.

Sighel has proved to be the breakout skater of the year. Having never made a podium in his first two seasons of World Cup racing, he now has a World Championship bronze to add to his 2021 European Championship overall silver.

[Sjinkie Knegt](#) (NED) meanwhile endured a difficult day. Although looking back to his pre-injury best, he committed penalties in the semi-finals of both the 1500m and 500m, to miss out on the final races.

The results leave the overall competition finely poised. Hamelin and Liu have 36 points, Elistratov has 34 and De Laat has 21. All four will fancy their chances at the overall title, setting up a thrilling Sunday of racing in Dordrecht.

### **Where to Watch**

Viewers will be able to watch the ISU World 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 World Short Track Speed Skating Championships, including the announcement and entry list please visit the dedicated [ISU Event Page](#) and listen to [The Ice Skating Podcast](#).

Subscribe to the [ISU Newsletter](#) to receive the latest information from the ISU and you can also subscribe to the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#) to receive notifications when live streams or new videos are published.

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### **About the International Skating Union**

The International Skating Union (ISU), founded in 1892, is the oldest governing international winter sport federation and the exclusive international sport federation recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) administering the sports of Figure Skating (Single & Pair Skating and Ice Dance), Synchronized Skating, Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating worldwide. The objectives of the ISU are to regulate, govern, promote and develop its sports on the basis of friendship and mutual understanding between athletes. Currently three ISU disciplines are included

in the Olympic Winter Games program (Figure Skating, Speed Skating and Short Track Speed Skating).