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Beijing, China

Wüst does it again and takes record sixth Olympic title **Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games**

The most decorated athlete in Speed Skating history once again managed to rise to the occasion like no other, adding yet another Olympic title to her sheer endless list of honors. In a new Olympic record of 1 minute and 53.28 seconds, [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) took her career third Olympic 1500m gold, her career sixth Olympic gold in total and her 12th Olympic medal. World Cup leader [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) came 0.44s short and took silver. [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) finished 1.54s adrift in third place.

Greatest Olympian

With her sixth Olympic title Wüst equaled soviet Skater [Lidia Skoblikova](#), who won sixth gold at the 1960 and 1964 Games. Adding five silver and a bronze medal, the Dutch champion collected a lot more silverware in total.

Wüst started in the 12th pair versus [Ivanie Blondin](#) (CAN). Before she took the ice, De Jong had set the fastest time with 1:54.82 in the 11th pair. De Jong sat down in disappointment, because she felt that she had skated far from flawless. Wüst responded with a perfect race.

“It’s one of the best 1500m races she ever skated, and again she does it when it really counts,” coach Gerard van Velde said. Himself an Olympic Champion (Van Velde won 1000m gold in 2002), Van Velde could only watch in admiration at Wüst’s ability to rise to the occasion. “That’s a gift, and that’s why she’s the greatest Olympian in the Netherlands (...) Look at her final 300m, most Skaters are in a hurry, but she just kept it nice and clean. To keep your composure under this intense pressure, that’s a rare talent.”

Arms on the back

Wüst herself could not exactly explain how she always manages to be at her utmost best when it really counts. “I am nervous and that doesn’t feel good, but on the other hand, I know I need these nerves, so it is nice and I use it to build confidence.”

Although Wüst said she did not consciously know how she controlled her nerves, she knew very well how she managed to control her technique in the final lap. Keeping her arms on her back, is important. She said: “Often when skaters think they have to sprint to the line, they throw in an arm or even two arms, then the body tends to turn and that’s why they start pushing backwards (instead of sideways, which is more efficient). The best thing you can do, is just keep on doing what you’re doing until the finish line not to lose pace.”

Underwear prank

Apart from the incredible focus Wüst has when she is racing, fun is another important element to release the Olympic tension. She shares an apartment with 2018 Olympic 1500m Champion [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED) and together with her other roommate [Femke Kok](#) (NED) she made a prank with Nuis’ underwear. “You can’t be focused all the time”, she explained. “When you’re super concentrated on the track, you have to make sure you’re having fun outside and I do like a joke.”

Winning Olympic titles in five consecutive Games, Wüst had three different coaches along the way. "We learned from her mostly (instead of the other way around)", Van Velde said when asked what he had contributed to Wüst's sixth Olympic title, but the record-Champion herself returned the compliment. "The good thing about Gerard is that we can consult a lot, about training schedules and so on. That's different when you're 19 years old. He's the perfect coach at this stage of my career."

Takagi loses it in final lap

Miho Takagi had beaten Wüst all season long and when she took the ice in the final pair, the World Cup leader and world record holder was confident. She said: "I was determined going into that race. I was ready for it (...) After Wüst broke the Olympic record, I didn't lose hope. I was convinced that if I tried my best, I still had the chance of winning gold."

Takagi started a little faster than Wüst and she was at almost the exact same pace as her Dutch rival throughout the rest of the race only to bow her head in the final lap. "That's what happens when your feet are tired," she said. "It's really giving it your all, 100% to the last (...) What I could give in that race, I did, and it produced the results that it did." The result eventually was the same as four years ago, silver behind Wüst. "It is really a pity for me. Last time, I felt lucky to win a medal though I failed to be the champion. But I am not resigned to winning silver again," she finished.

Disappointment turns into relief

For Antoinette de Jong (NED) disappointment turned in to relief in the end. After finishing her own race and watching Wüst crush the Olympic record, the European 1500m Champion had to watch another three pairs before it was all over and she was in despair. "When I saw 1.54s, I thought, that's not enough (for a medal). I was all emotional and thought I had blown it again (De Jong took a disappointing eighth place in the 3000m on Saturday already)."

One after another failed to match De Jong's time, however and in the end only Takagi managed to squeeze in between De Jong and Wüst on the podium. De Jong said: "Watching the others my hope slowly rose again and when only two others turned out to be faster in the end, I was relieved and happy. This was not a supergood race, but to come away with a bronze makes me proud."

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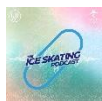
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