

February 10, 2022

Beijing, China

Rivals are closing the gap heading towards 10,000m showdown in Beijing

Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games

[Nils van der Poel](#) (SWE) will start the Men's 10,000m as main favorite, having won the world title with a superb world record on lowland track Heerenveen (NED) last season. The 25-year-old Swede started his Olympic campaign in Beijing with a hard-fought gold in the 5000m on Sunday. His Dutch rival [Patrick Roest](#) (NED) took silver in the 5000m, but he was happy to have closed the big early-season gap at the National Speed Skating Oval between him and Van der Poel.

Something really special

At the only international 10,000m this season - on November 20, 2021 in Stavanger (NOR) - Nils van der Poel set a track record in 12 minutes and 38.92 seconds. Roest finished 34.33 adrift to come in eighth position at the Stavanger World Cup. "To have closed the gap (in the 5000m) gave me a lot of confidence. I know it's going to be tough (to beat Van der Poel in the 10,000m), and I know it's his better distance, but it doesn't feel impossible (to win), I do know I have to do something really special."

Roest has not skated too many "really special" races in his career so far. He mentioned two, his 6:05.14s in the 5000m in January 2021, and his 12:35.20s in the 10,000m in December 2020 - both track records at the time in Heerenveen (NED). His 5000m race last Sunday in Beijing was "good, but not special", Roest said.

Bergsma's natural distance

[Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) came closest to Van der Poel, when the Swede skated the Stavanger (NOR) track record in November 2021, but the 2014 Olympic 10,000m Champion still conceded 17.16 seconds. Back in Norway, Van der Poel did not want to take the massive gap over his rivals for granted, saying: "I think the gap will be smaller when we reach the Olympics. I have the ability to have a good ground shape, but if you look at Jorrit (Bergsma) for example, four years ago, he did 13:01 here. At the Olympics (in 2018), he was about 20 seconds faster. If Jorrit goes 20 seconds faster than this, he beats me."

Bergsma finished fifth in the Beijing 5000m on Sunday, but like Van der Poel, he prefers the double distance. "The 10,000m comes more naturally for me," he said. "I'm a Skater who's always searching for rhythm and in the 5000m you simply have less time for that."

Bloemen won't give in without a fight

[Ted-Jan Bloemen](#) (CAN) will be defending his 2018 Olympic title in the longest distance. The 35-year-old Canadian did not impress in the 5000m, finishing over ten seconds adrift to come in 10th position. Bloemen had his ups and downs in World Cup races this season, sometimes struggling to find the perfect stroke, but he'll not give his title away without a fight. After finishing third at 21.30s from Van der Poel in Stavanger

(NOR) last November he said: "I'm a very good Skater, I'm the Olympic Champion, a world record holder, I've got a chance."

Fair play

At a press conference on February 9, 2022 - two days before competition - Swedish Skater Nils van der Poel commented on an article published on a Dutch website suggesting the Netherlands team are using the help of a scientist to influence the condition of the ice at the Beijing National Speed Skating Oval.

Ice masters - Mark Messer and the ISU Technical Delegates - refute all accusations or speculations that the ice is prepared to favor any teams or specific Skaters. The ice making crew at the Beijing National Speed Skating Oval is committed to the task and responsibility in accordance with ISU rules of creating equal and fair conditions for all competitors. The supervision by ISU as well as the general feedback from participating teams (including Sweden) at the competitions held so far confirms the full confidence in the integrity of the Ice masters.

The Dutch Olympic Committee released a brief statement on Thursday morning: "There has been a good talk about the issue with the Swedish team, and both teams focus completely on the race again."

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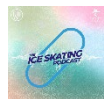
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What's coming ?

Friday, February 11, 2022
Men's 10'000m, 16:00 (local time)

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