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Beijing, China

Gao sets Beijing's National Speed Skating Oval on fire with 500m win Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games

Home favorite [Gao Tingyu](#) (CHN) led an all Asian podium in the men's 500m on Saturday. The 2018 Olympic bronze medal winner hammered out a 9.42s opener and maintained his blistering pace throughout the lap, to finish in a new Olympic record of 34.32s. Korea's [Cha Min Kyu](#) repeated his silver medal from the PyeongChang 2018 Games, and Japan's [Wataru Morishige](#) completed the Beijing 2022 podium seizing the bronze. World Cup leader [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) finished 0.03 adrift of the podium in fourth place.

Gao keeps his four-year-old promise

Coming only 17th in this season's ISU World Cup ranking after four events, Gao started in the seventh of fifteen pairs already, but he set the bar high putting pressure on those to follow. After finishing, the home favorite still doubted whether it would be enough. "The pressure was on them now," he said. Whether it was the pressure, or just his stunning pace, none of the remaining 16 Skaters matched his time.

Gao celebrated the gold waving the Chinese flag to the excited audience. He added: "I just want to say that I made it, I said four years ago that I will win gold in Beijing 2022, and today I made it."

Making the difference in the opener

With his 100m split of 9.42s, Gao came only 0.10 short of the fastest ever opener in Speed Skating he set himself in Poland last November. "It was already a little slower than my best start, so I even wasn't very satisfied about it," he said. Still, none of the other skaters came close to the opener. All top-five finishers had a faster lap than Gao, but crossing the 100m split, they had already lost too much ground.

In the tenth pair, Cha set 24.75s in the full lap, being the only one to skate faster than 24.8s, but he opened in 9.68s. Cha's 34.39s eventually appeared to be 0.17 short of the gold medal. In the following pair his compatriot [Kim Jun-Ho](#) came closest to Gao's opener with 9.53 at the 100m split, but he had to settle for sixth place after setting a 25.01 full lap.

Cha felt different about his silver medal than four years ago in PyeongChang, saying: "It was very different. Back in 2018 I didn't expect to win silver, and it came as a surprise. This time I worked very hard and aimed for gold. It is a pity I didn't win."

Morishige surprises himself

Morishige felt more like Cha did back in 2018, cherishing the Beijing 2022 500m bronze: "I was really happy. Getting a medal was a goal of mine, but I didn't imagine I would actually get it." The 21-year-old Japanese prodigy skated in the penultimate pairing and clocked 34.49s after a 9.63s opener. "I was nervous. I thought it was best to reach the 4.3 (34.3) mark, but I knew that if I thought about it too much I would just get too nervous to skate well. I tried not to think about the time too much and focused on my race instead. I reckoned that if I just focused on my race the results would follow."

Fourth is still pretty good

As the ISU World Cup leader, Dubreuil was paired to third-ranked [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) in the final pairing. After Shinhama had a false start, the pair got off the line well. Dubreuil clocked 9.63 at the 100m split and eventually finished fourth in 34.52. He said: "It's not as if it was a bad race by any means. It was a good race, but it wasn't a great race and I needed a great race today. It's very disappointing, but I did the best I could today. A bad race is fourth in the world for me, that's still pretty good." Shinhama did not overcome his false start and clocked 35.12 to finish 20th.

Lorentzen congratulates successor

Skating versus Kim Jun-Ho, defending champion [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) finished in a disappointing 34.92 to come in 15th. "I'm satisfied," he said. "It's challenging to come into the race as the reigning Olympic champion. Of course, I was hoping to compete for the medals today. My physical shape is good but my body is not 100% (...) My back is so-so. I don't feel it when I race because of the adrenaline but it is something that can upset my rhythm and timing." Lorentzen had nothing but respect for his successor: "He (Gao) was impressive. He's been the favorite all season, since he skated so fast in the first World Cup. He raced so fast everyone thought it would be impossible to beat him here at the Olympics. It's cool to see that he succeeds on home soil. I congratulate him."

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