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Lausanne, Switzerland

## **Kai Verbij wins the 2022 VISA Award for his classy Olympic move in Beijing**

"I did not want to mess up someone else's Olympic performance," said Kai Verbij—(NED) after sacrificing his medal chances in the Men's 1000m Speed Skating Final at the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games by giving priority to opponent Laurent Dubreuil (CAN), who won silver. Verbij left Beijing empty-handed, but got a consolation reward four months later. The Dutchman was granted by a public's vote the 2022 VISA Award for his 'classy move', as Dubreuil labeled it. Launched in 2021, the Visa Award gives fans the opportunity to vote for their favorite Olympic and Paralympics moments with a special focus on friendship, inclusion and acceptance.

### **Classy move**

As reigning World Champion, the Dutch Speed Skater Verbij entered the 1000m competition in Beijing as one of the main favorites. He was unlucky to draw Laurent Dubreuil as a pair-mate. The Canadian exploded from the start, whereas Verbij built up pace gradually to gain time in the final lap. The two different approaches collided on the final backstretch.

Both Skaters were on medal winning pace, but ended up level at the crossing. Coming from the inner lane, Verbij came upright to avoid an actual physical collision. "At that exact moment, I knew it was over," he said. "When I skated in the corner, I knew that I would end up right next to him, and I knew I had to give way. I could have tried to gain a bit more speed, but I think that wouldn't have worked out, and I didn't want to mess up someone else's Olympic performance."

Dubreuil showed gratitude and compassion: "It's unfortunate for us to be tied like this with 250m to go. My race plan was not to be there, I thought I would get right behind him and have a draft on that straight, but I went faster than I've ever gotten into 600m and I was ahead of what I would have been in my race plan (...) I'm pretty sure he's disappointed. He's the World Champion in the 1000m like I was in the 500m, and to not get on the podium, I know exactly how it feels. I can't say thank you enough to him. It was a really professional and classy move to do, in an Olympic race."

### **Charity**

The Visa Award is aimed at encouraging people around the world to believe in and support each other. The prize was handed out for the second successive Summer and Winter Games. Fans were given the opportunity to vote for the most inspiring moments that best exemplify the shared Olympic, Paralympic and Visa values of friendship, acceptance and inspiration. Alongside Verbij, the Ukrainian Paralympic team also won the Award.

For the 2022 Award edition, winners were offered the possibility to choose a charity to which a donation of 50,000 dollar would be given by Visa. Verbij chose UNICEF Netherlands as beneficiary, for the work it does in support of children's lives and rights all over the world, and more specifically in areas experiencing conflicts.

Team Ukraine selected the National Sports Committee for the Disabled of Ukraine, which was established by the National Paralympic Committee of Ukraine to help ensure that their athletes could continue training and representing their country in international competitions.

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