

Press release

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USA down mighty South Koreans to win relay gold in day of drama

Audi ISU World Cup Short Track: Day 2

USA pulled off a miracle on ice by edging the mighty South Koreans in a photo finish in the men's 5000m relay as the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track concluded in Shanghai on Sunday. In a dramatic day of action, China's desperate lunge at the final corner just failed to dislodge South Korea from the gold medal position in the women's 3000m relay and Kim Boutin and Marianne St-Gelais formed a great wall of Canada to clinch a one-two finish in the Ladies 1000m. In the men's 1000m final, brothers Liu Shaolin Sandor (HUN) and Liu Shaoang could not hunt down China's Wu Dajing, who became the toast of the town with a second individual gold at the event.

USA hang on to upset South Korea and take 5000m relay gold

USA pulled off a miracle on ice by edging the mighty South Koreans in a photo finish in the men's 5000m relay at the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track.

China and two-time winner Canada crashed with 28 laps to go to open the door for USA but the Americans still had the mammoth obstacle of South Korea in front of them in Shanghai.

They kept pace with them and it eventually paid off at the finish line.

"At one point we were just trying to stay on pace because it was so fast," said J R Celski (USA).

"I looked up to the board and I was like, how long can we hold on to this?"

The three-time Olympic medallist thought that the collision between China and Canada would stop the race and said he was glad his opponents are fine.

Canada eventually was awarded bronze after China was penalised.

"We were aiming for the gold medal but the fall was unfortunate," said Charles Hamelin (CAN).

"The pass was really good, we got taken down, we tried our best to come back but we had a little trouble."

The three-time Olympic gold medallist added: "We thought we could win this one again. We had the legs and the strength."

Alas, it was USA's day, a first relay gold since 2013.

“We’re just happy with everything coming together,” said Celski. “It’s amazing. We work really hard as a team and to see them (teammates) have hope and go out there and attack the relay like we can win, it builds confidence.”

It was also South Korea’s first men’s relay medal this world cup season. Russia won the B final, while Dordrecht silver medallist the Netherlands were eliminated during the heats.

South Korea hold off desperate China to take Ladies 3000m relay gold

China’s desperate lunge at the final corner almost produced the perfect response to losing one of their relay members to injury.

It fell agonisingly short, however, as South Korea edged them to the ladies’ 3000m relay gold in a photo finish at the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track in Shanghai.

The desperate move in front of a vociferous home crowd did see the Chinese overtake Canada, who was later penalised, sending the bronze to Italy.

“Every round has been challenging, not just the final,” said Fan Kexin (CHN), one of several team members who were in tears after the race.

“We’ve prepared for various scenarios during training. Anyone in this team can step up to the challenge because we are very united.”

Original lead skater Zang Yize was injured in Saturday’s 500m event. The remaining skaters gestured “14” – Zang’s number – during the medal ceremony.

“We actually skated a good race but under these circumstances...” said Zhou Yang (CHN), the veteran of the squad, choking back tears.

Zang’s replacement Guo Yihan added: “I don’t see myself as having a special contribution. I just do to the best of my abilities. Today we felt like Zang Yize was here skating with us.”

Italy’s bronze gave their star skater Arianna Fontana her third medal in Shanghai.

Describing the sport as unpredictable, she said: “Anything can happen and it showed today.

“I saw right away the referee was checking the video so maybe something happened but we did a good relay, we were in front, we were passing.”

Hungary won the B final.

Boutin and St-Gelais seal Canadian one-two in Ladies 100m

The great wall of Canada might not have worked in Shanghai on Saturday, but it succeeded on Sunday.

Kim Boutin and Marianne St-Gelais ensured a Canadian one-two in the ladies 1000m at the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track by grabbing the lead early and doubling down the rest of the race.

Their wall was so effective that the others were virtually jostling for third place, which eventually went to Arianna Fontana of Italy.

"I know I'm comfortable in front so of course it was my plan. I stuck with my plan not [to] think about the results and just my technique and everything I need to work on," Boutin said.

"My mental preparations (for the Olympics) are pretty good so I feel confident about the rest of the season."

The victory earned Boutin her second individual gold at the Shanghai leg of the world cup series.

Team mate St-Gelais elaborated on the strategy.

"I wanted to be in front of the pack, to be aware if things happen around us. It's always nice to skate with a teammate because we can skate as two instead of one.

"We were way stronger than the others so there was no point in trying anything or risking anything. I was just protecting (our position)," the three-time Olympic silver medallist said.

On Saturday, St-Gelais and teammate Valerie Maltais failed to block South Korea's Choi Min Jeong from leapfrogging them in the 1500m.

For Fontana, her race was not helped by a hit on her right blade, which affected her final three laps.

"I had it in my legs to go but my right wasn't good so I couldn't really push hard on it," she explained.

"But I'm really happy I was in the finals for the 15 (1500m), the 5 (500m) and now here and the relay, so it's a good weekend."

There was no B final as there were only two qualifiers.

World cup leader Shim Suk Hee (KOR) was penalised in the semifinals while world champion Elise Christie suffered another penalty in an earlier round.

Dajing beats brothers to win second gold in Men's 1000m

Brothers Liu Shaolin Sandor (HUN) and Liu Shaoang could not hunt down China's Wu Dajing, who became the toast of the town with a second individual gold at the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track.

Competing in front of an adoring home crowd, Wu added a rare men's 1000m to his sprint gold.

"I'm still really happy because I haven't won the 1000m in a long time. I think it's been three years, so it holds great meaning for me," he said.

The two-time Olympic medallist also labelled his country's performances ahead of PyeongChang 2018 as "a major source of encouragement".

Behind him, the Lius achieved a piece of sibling glory, but instead of feting his brother's first medal this world cup season, Shaolin Sandor preferred to embrace the similarity of all three medallists.

"It was really good for my brother, and to stand on the podium with Wu, [after all] we're 50 per cent Chinese, so I'm really happy I could get a medal in China and make my family and the crowd proud," he said.

The older Liu even dismissed the idea that they had a secret brotherly strategy.

"We were just enjoying ourselves, that's our main goal. We didn't really have a strategy to beat someone, especially not the Chinese because we are still like family."

He can be forgiven for being so positive. He revealed that his goal was only to reach the A final.

The B final was won by John-Henry Krueger of the USA after South Korean teenage sensation Hwang Dae Heon crashed hard, earning Charles Hamelin (CAN) a penalty.

World cup leader Sjinkie Knegt was penalised in an earlier round and did not advance.

About Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating 2017/18 Series and qualification system for PyeongChang 2018

The Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating consists of four events during the Olympic season; Budapest (September 28-October 1), Dordrecht (October 5-8), Shanghai (November 9-12) and Seoul (November 16-19). The 2017/18 Series is also the Olympic Qualifying events for the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games.

The competitions have a single distance character and are held in separate sessions. The first two days of the event are dedicated to all Qualifying Rounds. On the third and fourth days the last Qualifying Rounds take place before the World Cup session. A and B Finals are held for each distance 500m, 1000m and 1500m. Skaters qualify for A and B Finals only through the Semi-Finals. Men and Ladies also compete in the Team Relay races, 3000m for Ladies and 5000m for Men. Each team consists of four competing Skaters. Skaters gain World Cup points from each distance they compete in during the Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating series. The Skater with the most World Cup points at the end of the season wins the distance World Cup.

A total of 110 Olympic spaces are up for grabs during the four Audi ISU World Cup Short Track Speed Skating events. As the host country, the Republic of Korea automatically qualifies five Ladies and five Men. However, all other ISU Members must compete in the Audi ISU World Cup series in order to qualify up to five Ladies and five Men (quota including a qualified Relay Team), or up to three Ladies and three Men (quota excluding a qualified Relay Team).

Quota places per gender are earned based on the results achieved by the ISU Members competing at the four Audi ISU World Cup Events. Skaters ranked within the top 32 (top eight for the Team Relay) in the World Cup classification of the individual distances will qualify for PyeongChang 2018. If an ISU Member has more than 3 Skaters ranked in the top 32 or decides not to use a spot, skaters on the waiting list will qualify (e.g. athlete ranked 33 in a distance World Cup Classification will take the next available spot).