



Press release

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Golden Wüst most decorated Olympic speed skater in history

Ireen Wüst took her fifth Olympic title and her tenth Olympic medal to become the most decorated speed skater in history on Monday February 12, 2018. The 31-year-old Dutch skater set 1:54.35 in the 11th pair of the ladies 1500m, and none of the other favorites in the remaining three pairs were able to match it. Miho Takagi (JPN) came very close with 1:54.55 in the final pair versus Heather Bergsma (USA), but the World Cup leader had to settle for silver. Marrit Leenstra (NED) took bronze in 1:55.26.

With her tenth medal in total Wüst, who already took silver in Saturday's 3000m, surpassed Claudia Pechstein (GER), who won nine Olympic medals in total. She also became the first Dutch athlete to win a fifth title at the Olympic Winter or Summer Games.

Wüst couldn't be happier: "It's incredible. It's 12 years since my first gold medal in Turin (2006 Games), my fifth gold medal, my 10th Olympic medal. I started my own team three years ago with only one goal, win the gold in the Olympics again. It worked out this way and it's incredible."

Wüst began with a false start, but skated the most balanced race of the field after the second attempt. The experienced champion opened in 25.53, and added 28.43, 29.57, 30.82 laps. Takagi, who also began with a false start, was the only one to skate an equally flat schedule. After a marginally faster opening of 25.50, she had to concede some hundreds of seconds in all following laps (28.53, 29.65, 30.87) to finish in 1:54.55. Her pair-mate Bergsma stopped the clock at 1:56.74 to end up in eighth place.

Takagi's race was nerve-wrecking for Wüst: "I wasn't watching, did not dare to watch. I was watching the ground and I heard my coaches say: 'This is good, this is good, this is fast...' Only the last straight I dared to watch."

Happy and frustrated

Takagi smiled when she crossed the line, but burst into tears seconds later. "When I saw I was in second place, I was so happy that I won a medal," she said. "There are so many people cheering me and applause for me. I really felt that great support. But at the same time, I felt that there is a difference between the gold medalist and myself."

She had been unbeaten in all 1500m World Cup races this season: "This season in World Cup, yes, I won and that really made me confident that I'm getting some power. But I know that the Olympics are different. Also, coming into these Olympics, we have to make adjustments," she said.



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"I am happy, but at the same time, frustrated. So, the 1000m and team pursuit events are the upcoming races and I will really strive for a better color of the medal or show a better performance. Now I am motivated to go faster and better and that's a great reflection from today."

Finally on the podium

Leenstra skated in the second last pair, straight after Wüst had left the rink. She was 0.23 faster than her compatriot on the 1100m mark, but had to pay the price in her last lap, skating 32.00 to complete the race in 1:55.26. Leenstra broke down in the final lap: "It was just too long. That last outer corner was so tough I nearly came to a standstill."

The 28-year-old Dutch skater, who trains in Italy, came fourth in the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships at the Gangneung Oval last year. "When I crossed the line I thought it would not be enough, that I would end up in fourth place again. I'm so happy to finally have that medal."

This time around it was Lotte van Beek (NED), who had to settle for fourth place. Before Takagi and Bergsma took the ice for the final pair, the Dutch ladies were ranked first, second and third. Van Beek had skated 1:55.27 in the penultimate pair.

Bowe is back

In the first race of the day, Josie Morrison (CAN) had to set the pace all on her own, having drawn a solo skate due to the odd-numbered field of participants. The 24-year-old Canadian clocked 1:59.77, which eventually got her into 15th place.

Nao Kodaira (JPN) immediately beat Morrison's time. She hammered out the fastest opening of the field in 24.94, but the 1500m proved a little too far for the Japanese super sprinter, who dragged herself to the finish line in a painstaking 32.68 second final lap to clock 1:56.11.

Brittany Bowe (USA), skated in the final pair before the ice cleaning break and started out a little slower than Kodaira. She was still 0.11 seconds behind at the 1100m split, but a 32.00 final lap and a total time of 1:55.54 took her to the top of the rankings after eight of fourteen pairs. She eventually had to settle for 5th place, but her Olympic Games are not over yet.

Bowe fought a long battle over the past two seasons, coming back from a severe concussion in 2016. She was happy with her race: "It's my best 1500m in a couple of years. That gives me great momentum going into my favorite distance, the 1000m. I'm super happy with my performance."

For more information, schedules, full entries and results please refer to the [ISU website](#) and the [official website](#) of the Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang.