

## Press release

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### **Kodaira delivers in 500m**

Nao Kodaira nailed it. After a winning streak of 15 races in the ISU World Cup over two seasons the Japanese rocket exploded for gold and an Olympic record in 36.94. Home favorite and title defender Sang-Hwa Lee (KOR) had to settle for silver in 37.33 and Karolina Erbanova (CZE) ran away with the bronze in 37.34.

Kodaira, who already won silver in last week's 1000m, became the first Japanese lady and the second speed skater from Japan to win Olympic gold. She followed the footsteps of Hiroyasu Shimizu, who won the men's 500m in Nagano in 1998. She felt relieved after her race: "I was the captain of the whole delegation of Japan this time. I know a lot of attention comes from the Japanese people. I knew that. All I have to do is ice skate as I am supposed to skate."

#### **Early lead for Ter Mors**

Kodaira, only started in the 14<sup>th</sup> pairing and the 1000m gold medalist Jorien ter Mors (NED) took the ice earlier in the fourth pair. With 37.53 she set a high bar. It was not before the eleventh pairing that anyone else was able to break the 38-second-barrier, but Brittany Bowe (USA) did. The American also clocked 37.53 and ended up on top of the rankings after the thousands were added: 37.530 for Bowe versus 37.539 for Ter Mors. "When Bowe beat my time, I knew I would not get on the podium today, because these two (Kodaira and Lee) would definitely be faster," Ter Mors said.

Bowe, who fought a tough battle to get back on the ice after a severe concussion in 2016, eventually ended up fifth, behind Vanessa Herzog (AUT), who skated 37.51 for rank fourth in the final pairing. "It's mixed emotions," said Bowe. "It's been a huge battle to get here, a crazy journey. I'm grateful to have the opportunity, to be able to lace my skates up and get to the start line."

#### **Erbanova chases Kodaira**

Bowe was still on top when Kodaira appeared at the starting line with Erbanova. The Japanese and the Czech both started superfast with 10.26 for Kodaira and 10.30 for Erbanova on the first straight. Erbanova started from the outer lane, which gave her the advantage of being able to chase Kodaira on the back stretch. "That 10.3 opening was my plan", Erbanova said. "The key to the race was the second corner. I tried to keep it cool. I came closer to Nao, not close enough, but that race was good." Kodaira hammered on in the second outer corner and clocked an unmatched 26.68 full lap, to become the only lady who managed to skate under 37 seconds in a 500m at the Gangneung Olympic Oval.

#### **Lee ends up in tears**

Lee started in the 15<sup>th</sup> and penultimate pair. The crowd went wild when she stepped on the ice in the outer lane versus Kodaira's compatriot Arisa Go. With 10.20 the defending champion started a little faster than Kodaira, and on the backstretch she was still ahead, chasing Go down quickly, but Lee had

to bow her head in the last 200m. She was in tears after her race was over: "It's an Olympic Games held in Korea," she explained. "I'm very honored to be in it. Because it was ending, I was thinking that it was like a present to me, that I participated in this Games. It was emotional."

Lee and Kodaira skated a lap of honor together, holding up the Korean and the Japanese flags. "Sport can make the world one together, it's simple," Kodaira explained. The new and the former champion hugged after the race: "I told her well done," Kodaira said. "There was such pressure and I wanted to praise her for her efforts. I respect and will continue to respect her." That respect is mutual. Lee said: "She told me that she was still proud of me as I am proud of her, because she did 1500m and 1000m so she did three races."

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.