



Press release

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Dutch start title defense with Olympic record

The Netherlands started their title defense in the ladies' Team Pursuit with a new Olympic record of 2:55.61. Japan finished a close second with 2:56.09 in the quarterfinals. Canada came third in 2:59.02 and the United States qualified fourth for the semifinals in 2:59.75.

Olympic and track record

The Dutch skated in the same line-up as they did in last year's ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships, when they won the title in 2:55.85 at the Gangneung Oval. This time around Ireen Wüst, Marrit Leenstra and Antoinette de Jong shaved 0.24 off that track record in the first pairing versus Korea. Four years ago, Wüst and Leenstra were joined by Jorien ter Mors when they set the previous Olympic record in 2:58.05.

Newbie De Jong thought there was still room for improvement: "The start was not really good for me and I was a little bit too late on one exchange with Ireen, but I think we skated a good race. We had little mistakes but I hope we can change that: the start and the changes in the corners, and we can skate a little more flat. I think we can skate maybe a second faster."

Korea was not able to keep up with the Netherlands and the team fell apart in the final laps, when Seon-Yeong Noh got dropped. With 3:03.76 they finished seventh. "It was regretful, since it's the time of the last skater that counts," Bo-Reum Kim said. "If our last skater had come in a bit earlier we might have made the semifinals. But it's finished. Ji Woo was supposed to go out with speed, and Seon-Yeong would do minimal. But after we got separated, we couldn't really communicate. That was probably the reason."

Strong second part by Japan

Japan faced China in the second pairing. Li Dan, Mei Han and Jiachen Hao (CHN) started a little faster, but once the Japanese train got running they quickly went ahead. Halfway through the race Japan was more than two seconds down on the Dutch split times, but Miho Takagi, her sister Nana and Ayano Sato were faster in the second half of the race. Taking back almost a second in the final lap, they finished just 0.48 seconds adrift in second place. China were third at the time, but there were two more pairs to come and they eventually were pushed out of the semifinals by a 0.26 margin.

Canada keeps composure

Germany and Canada skated in the third pair, with Roxanne Dufer, Gabriele Hirschi and Claudia Pechstein taking the initiative. On the Canadian side Ivania Blondin, Josie Morrison and Isabelle Weidemann kept close however and they maintained their pace better than Germany. Hirschi tried to make pace after taking over the lead from Pechstein for a final push, but she

went too fast for the other two. With 3:02.65 Germany ended up in sixth place. Canada kept their composure and they were the third team to stay under three minutes in 2:59.02.

Speed versus endurance

The United States started fast in the final pair versus Poland. Halfway through the race short distance specialists Heather Bergsma and Brittany Bowe, who were joined by Mia Manganello, were more than two seconds faster than Canada, but in the second part they gave way. Manganello dragged the others to the finish line in 2:59.75, just enough to stay ahead of China for fourth place.

"This is our first time racing together so we had a strategy," Manganello said. "I'm more of an endurance skater so they stuck me at the end. They are obviously the fastest women in the world, so we used their speed in the first half of the race to get us up to speed and carry that speed, and then hopefully with my endurance strength, carry us to the line."

Poland, who won silver four years ago in Sochi, fell apart in the final two laps. Katarzyna Bachleda-Curus couldn't keep up with Natalia Czerwonka and Luiza Zlotkowska and finished well behind in 3:04.80, to end up eighth.

The Ladies and Men Team Pursuit semi finals and finals will take place on Wednesday February 21 in the Gangneung Oval from 20:00.

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.