



## Press release

20 February 2018

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### **Perfect race hands Lorentzen historic 500m gold**

Havard Holmefjord Lorentzen (NOR) wiped off the dust of Norway's speed skating history books on Monday. The 25-year-old sprinter claimed Norway's first Olympic 500m title since Finn Helgesen at the 1948 Olympics in Sankt Moritz, Switzerland. Korea's Min Kyu Cha and China's Tingyu Gao surprisingly seized the silver and bronze medals.

#### **Fastest full lap**

Lorentzen skated a near perfect race: "That opener was the best I've ever done," he said. The Norwegian sprinter clocked 9.74 seconds at the 100m split, by far not the fastest of the field, but fast enough to set him up for a 24.67 full lap, which was the fastest of the field far out. "I knew in advance that I had to do a perfect race without mistakes to win a gold medal. The last inner was perfect. When I saw the girls yesterday, I said to myself: 'either I hit the pads in the last inner, or it's perfect.'"

To his own discomfort, Lorentzen started in the outer lane, facing Sochi 2014 bronze medalist Ronald Mulder in the 16<sup>th</sup> pairing. "I knew when I passed him in that last corner, that it had to be a good race. I prefer the last outer corner, but yeah, today it was different. It's possible to go fast with the last inner too."

#### **Olympic record**

Before Lorentzen took the ice, Cha equaled the Olympic record (34.42) Casey Fitzrandolph (USA) set in Salt Lake City 2002. The noise of the crowd was earsplitting when Cha stepped on the ice, but the 24-year-old Korean was not aware of it: "I didn't really feel the atmosphere as I was building up to the race but after I'd put on my skates, I suddenly thought 'I'm going to the Olympics'."

It gave Cha the energy he needed. He was an outsider at the starting line, only having won one silver and one bronze medal in World Cup events to this date. Just 34.42 seconds later, he was in gold medal position. Although the color of that medal changed due to a 0.01 second difference, Cha had no regrets. "I didn't think I was going to get a medal so I'm really happy about this. It is indeed really close, but I wasn't disappointed because my goal was only to get on to the podium."

#### **Super start**

Like Lorentzen, Cha had a blistering start. "The 9.6 seconds start was my best for 100 meters and I think that was the key to a fast run," he said. Bronze medalist Tingyu Gao was even faster. With 9.47, he clocked the fastest 100m split time of the field. The 20-year-old sprinter from China beat Joji Kato (JPN), finishing in 34.65. His Japanese opponent clocked 34.83 to end up sixth. Gao had only earned one career World cup silver medal so far, and he had targeted a top-eight finish before the race. "In this event the top 16 can all contend for the gold. They're all at that level, it's just dependent on who performs better on that day," he said.



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Although his first 100m was good, Gao felt his performance was affected by a false start from pair mate Kato and a fall from Artur Nogal four pairings earlier. "I seemed to have seen everything in one event - a false start, and someone falling. I've not encountered something like someone falling before. It gave me a fright, and I didn't really dare to go all-out. I think I could have done better. I wasn't in the best of form. I can only say it was suitable for competition. My glides still weren't great and it got a little messy towards the end."

## **From all to nothing for the Dutch**

The Netherlands swept the men's 500m podium in Sochi four years ago, but were left empty handed at the Gangneung Oval on Monday night. Ronald Mulder was the highest ranked Dutchman with 34.83 in seventh place. World champion Jan Smeeckens, who took Olympic silver only 11 thousandths behind Ronald Mulder's brother Michel in Sochi, finished tenth in 34.93 and World Sprint Champion Kai Verbij clocked 34.90 to end up ninth.

"It's all about making as few mistakes as possible", Ronald Mulder said. "I made two or three mistakes for which I can only blame myself. This was too sloppy a race to take a medal. I know how to do it, but I didn't show it today." Mulder saw Lorentzen overtaking him through the last inner corner: "When I felt him coming, I just tried to stay as close to him as possible, but in that final straight I still was outskated by two tenths. He just skated a very good race."

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.