



Press release

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Pedersen motors Norway to Team Pursuit gold

Like Japan in the Ladies' Team Pursuit, the Norwegian Men proved that a team can be more than the sum of its parts. Sverre Lunde Pedersen, Håvard Bøkko, Simen Spieler Nilsen beat the Netherlands in the semifinals and Korea in the final to seize Norway's second speed skating gold at PyeongChang 2018 in the Team Pursuit on Wednesday. Korea grabbed silver and the Dutch men beat New Zealand in the bronze medal race.

In the final versus Korea, Norway took an early lead with anchor Pedersen, but Korea hung in and even skated faster split times halfway through the race. It was Pedersen again, who made the difference in the end and when they entered the final lap Korea was 1.09 second down already. At the finish line the gap had increased to 1.20 seconds.

Looking down on Dutch

Key to Norway's gold medal was the semi-final versus the Netherlands. The eventual winners beat the Olympic record of 3:37.71 set by the Netherlands at Sochi 2014, to edge out the defending champions. The teamwork between Bøkko, who replaced Sindre Henriksen after the quarterfinals, Pedersen and Nilsen was flawless. They were about half a second ahead of the Dutch for most of the race to win by a 1.38 margin.

"The Team Pursuit is about how to use the energy of your team the best as possible," Bøkko explained. "Sverre is so strong. He can open and today we had him two-and-a-half lap behind us, and then he goes as hard as he can. Many teams can learn from us. Take for example changing the lead every lap. You lose 0.1 or maybe 0.2 seconds with a change. We don't need to change much, because we have Sverre in front and we have a hard time to follow him. When it was two laps to go I even lost him and he had to brake a little."

At PyeongChang 2018 Norway already won two gold medals in speed skating, more than they have done at a single Winter Games for the first time since 1994, when Johann Olav Koss won the men's 1500m, 5000m and 10,000m. Bøkko was extremely proud to break Dutch speed skating dominance: "It's a pretty nice feeling to look down on them on the podium. I can't wait until tomorrow (at Medal Plaza)."

Broken clap skate

Sven Kramer and Patrick Roest, who had taken over from Koen Verweij in the Dutch team, had to do most work in the Dutch team, because Jan Blokhuijsen broke one of the two springs in the mechanism of his left skate at the start.

"I think you can compare it to cycling a time trial on a flat tyre," the Dutchman explained. "It's like racing on one skate and if you have to do a 26 second lap, that's very hard. It's just not possible to



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push on the straights, it's less of a problem in the corners, but I don't think that's the reason we don't skate a 3.36 (final time)."

Sven Kramer admired Blokhuijsen for finishing the race the way he did. "I've been there myself. It's like skating on one leg. He skated very well despite that, but it's annoying. Let alone that Norway skated a fantastic time, I don't say that we would have beaten them, but it doesn't help of course."

The threefold Olympic 5000m champion also explained why the Dutch are always struggling to form a good squad for the Team Pursuit. "That's got something to do with our speed skating culture. We have the system with commercial teams, which makes skaters grow to exceptional levels individually, but they never train together. It has advantages, but it's not ideal for the Team Pursuit. Of course you can say that we should train more for the Team Pursuit, but that also costs. Bøkkø doesn't win individual gold medals, neither does Pedersen nor the others."

Korea beats Kiwi's in thrilling semi-final

With Korea seizing silver behind Norway Jaewon Chung became the youngest man to collect a speed skating medal at the Winter Games, at 16 years and 245 days. He broke the record held by Alv Gjeestvang (NOR), who was 18 years and 137 days when he claimed bronze in the men's 500m in 1956. Chung's team-mates gave him confidence: "Before we stood up at the start line, my teammates told me that I didn't need to feel pressure. During the competition, there was a lot of support from the Korean audience so it was very supportive."

Korea qualified for the final in a thrilling battle versus New Zealand. The home country was about two tenths behind lap after lap, with Peter Michael (NZL) dragging his team mates for almost the entire race. The crowd got more excited after every lap as the Korean men took turns in the lead against Michael. The lone warrior wouldn't give in, but he had to bow his head when Seung-Hoon Lee took Korea by the hand in the final lap. Korea eventually beat the Kiwi's by a 0.71 margin.

Italy disqualified

Canada took seventh place, after beating USA in the 7-8 final. Japan finished sixth, beating Italy in the 5-6 final. The Italians were disqualified for crossing the line.

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.