



Press release

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Takagi takes second gold medal in maiden Mass Start

Nana Takagi (JPN) won the first ever gold medal in the ladies' Mass Start event on the final night of Olympic Speed Skating events at the Gangneung Oval. The 25-year-old Japanese thus seized her second gold medal at PyeongChang 2018, after having already collected the Team Pursuit title a few days before. World champion and home favorite Bo-Reum Kim (KOR) sprinted to silver, just ahead of Irene Schouten (NED), who took the bronze.

Takagi already won a Team Pursuit gold medal on Wednesday February 21, and she is the first woman from Japan to win two gold medals in any sport at the Olympic Winter Games. She is also the only woman to win two Speed Skating titles at PyeongChang 2018.

"I obviously wanted to win two gold medals but I wasn't totally convinced I could do it. It's an unbelievable feeling," she said. Nana's sister Miho had already won a bronze in the 1000m, a silver in the 1500 meter and joint gold in the Team Pursuit. "I was able to show that the Takagi family name is not just all about Miho but Nana, too. It was nice to achieve this in a new event, especially after I couldn't get it done individually."

Outsmarted and outpaced

Takagi outsmarted and outpaced top sprinters Schouten and Kim. Schouten was in front heading into the final lap, with Takagi in second place and Kim in third. Coming around the final corner, Schouten swerved a little to the outside, and Takagi took advantage to overtake her on the inside. Kim was in her back but Takagi did not give way on the final straight. "I still had my legs underneath me towards the end, enough to give it one good sprint for the finish," the winner said.

Schouten gave it her all to stay ahead of Kim, but she had to bow her head for the world champion. "I am very happy with this medal," Kim said. "I will treasure this medal forever. Ever since when I started at 14 or 15 I wanted to get a medal and I am very happy to get this medal for my country."

Missing a team-mate

Schouten was happy with the medal, but she regretted that the Dutch plans fell apart after the semifinals. "This was not according to our race plan," Schouten said. "Annouk should have attacked at 700m, she is in such a good shape. And then I would have gone flat-out at 300m. We would have gone so hard that nobody would have been able to pass. Unfortunately, Annouk fell in the semis and we had to adapt. Annouk injured her knee in the semis. She could not skate at her normal level in the final. "I was in the lead too early. The Estonian girl (Saskia Alusalu) was in the breakaway and the American girl (Mia Manganello) chased her down. I was right behind her and then she swerved to the outside at 600-700m, so suddenly I was in the lead. I knew it was too early but what could I do?"

Takagi and Kim were in my back for the whole race and they're just waiting. I just had to go all the way."

Well-deserved fourth

Saskia Alusalu (EST) ended up in a well-deserved fourth place. The Estonian skater attacked right from the start and skated ahead of the pack for more than twelve laps. The rest of the pack decided to save energy and everyone was looking at each other. Alusalu took a 200m lead and won the first, the second and the third intermediate sprint, crossing the line solo. Li Dan (CHN) was the most active skater in the pack. The Chinese skater accelerated twice and came second to the line in the first and the second intermediate sprint. It earned her a fifth place in the final ranking. Maryna Zuyeva (BLR) sprinted to second place behind Alusalu in the third intermediate sprint, and Mia Manganello then closed the gap towards Alusalu.

Blondin and Sato crash out in the semis

Despite her crash in the semifinals, Van der Weijden managed to qualify for the final, only to end up in fourteenth place. When title favorite Ivania Blondin (CAN) crashed out in the second semifinal, she took down Van der Weijden and Ayano Sato (JPN). The 2016 world champion looked set to win the second intermediate sprint, when she fell. Sato wasn't able to continue, but the Dutch and the Canadian got back on their feet to start a chase.

"I had a bit of a slip around the apex and the Japanese behind me kind of tossed me out of the way and I ended up falling because I lost balance, it happens. You see it in short track and you see it in Mass Start," Blondin explained.

Van der Weijden left Blondin behind and managed to get back into the pack after the third intermediate sprint. Heading into the final lap, Van der Weijden set up an attack. Nikola Zdrahalova (CZE) and Dan Li (CHN) joined her and the Czech lady won the final sprint. Van der Weijden managed to qualify second. Blondin and Sato were out. Claudia Pechstein (GER) qualified fourth gaining the full points for the second intermediate sprint after Blondin, Van der Weijden and Sato crashed. Heather Bergsma (USA), Francesca Bettone (ITA), Saskia Alusalu, and Luiza Zlotkowska (POL), were the others to qualify from the second semifinal.

Lollobrigida qualifies confidently

Francesca Lollobrigida (ITA) qualified confidently winning the first semifinal ahead of Dan Guo (CHN). The Italian, who won the Salt Lake City World Cup race in the Mass Start this season, only ended up seventh in the final, however. Schouten, Takagi and Kim did not bother in the final sprint after having won enough points in the intermediate sprints to qualify. Keri Morrison (CAN), Mia Manganello (USA) and Maryna Zuyeva (BLR) got the other spots from the first semifinal.

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.