

December 7, 2018

Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Poland

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Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) won the 500m and the 1000m, while the Japanese men won Team Pursuit gold on the first day of the first ever ISU World Cup Speed Skating in the Arena Lodowa in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Poland. In the ladies' competition, Brittany Bowe (USA) left her rivals far behind in the 1000m, while Vanessa Herzog (AUT) won the 500m and the Japanese ladies collected their 10th consecutive World Cup gold in the Team Pursuit.

### **Kulizhnikov takes sprint double**

Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) is back on top. The 500m World record holder won the 500m and the 1000m in Tomaszów Mazowiecki on Friday.

In the 500m the Russian rushed to a track record time of 34.83. Ryohei Haga (JPN) came second in 34.98 and Olympic Champion Håvard Lorentzen (NOR) took bronze in 35.10. Kai Verbij (NED) finished fifth in 35.24.

Kulizhnikov climbed to third place in the 500m World Cup ranking after a disappointing campaign in Japan in November. The Russian has 212 points, 10 behind second-placed Lorentzen. Tatsuya Shinhama (JPN) stays top with 242 points, despite finishing sixth in 35.24 on Friday.

In the double sprint distance, Kulizhnikov skated to another track record of 1:09.23, leaving Verbij 0.68 seconds behind in second. Lorentzen came third in 1:10.07.

"He's more or less the old Kulizhnikov, the one we saw about four years ago", Verbij said.

"He also makes little mistakes, but he definitely is the man to beat in the 500m and the 1000m at the moment. Still, there are quite a few guys who come very close: Kjeld Nuis (NED), Lorentzen, myself."

With 148 points, Verbij took over the 1000m World Cup lead in the absence of Nuis, who did not skate in Poland. Lorentzen is second with 134 points and Kulizhnikov lies third with 120 points.

Olympic 500m Champion Lorentzen is satisfied with his World Cup results so far. "I've been consistently on the World Cup podium in all races except for one 1000m, in which I came fourth", he said.

### **Team Pursuit gold for Japanese men**

The Japanese men followed the ladies' example in the Team Pursuit, Seitaro Ichinohe, Ryosuke Tsuchiya and Shane Williamson clinching gold. Japan clocked 3:47.50 to leave Olympic Champions and World Cup leaders Norway 0.26 seconds behind. Russia came third in 3:47.82.

Japan national coach Johan de Wit (NED) believes the Japanese Team Pursuit men will be a force to be reckoned with in the near future.

"They definitely have the same potential as the ladies. I think we have the youngest team on the ice and they already took gold here. And it's not only the guys who were skating today, there's a couple more who can skate a good Team Pursuit," he said.

"We've been working on this for three years. Japan did not have many endurance riders in the past. We evaluated last year and we came to the conclusion that we needed a bigger squad to train with. We do have a bigger team now with sprinters, middle distance riders and endurance specialists and it is already paying off."

### **Herzog takes over in absence of Kodaira**

After winning the first four 500m races of the season, [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) did not travel to Tomaszów Mazowiecki. In her absence [Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT), who had come second in all four previous races, took full advantage to take gold in a track record time of 37.97. [Olga Fatkulina](#) (RUS) took silver in 38.07 and her compatriot [Daria Kachanova](#) collected her second career bronze World Cup medal.

Herzog rose to the top of the 500m World Cup standings with 276 points. On Saturday, she will have a chance to increase her lead over Kodaira, who is second with 240 points. Fatkulina, currently third with 218 points, will be aiming to overtake Kodaira on Saturday. The Japanese sprint queen will return for next week's World Cup event in Heerenveen, Holland.

### **Bowe leaves opposition in her wake**

"I'm starting to find my stride again", said [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) after she dominated the 1000m race. Bowe shattered [Natalia Czerwonka](#)'s track record (1:17.44) to finish in 1:15.39. She left pair mate [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) behind from the start and consistently increased her gap during the race, from 0.33 seconds at the 200m split, to 0.83 seconds at the 600m split and 1.03 at the finish line. Takagi still took hold of the silver medal, while Kachanova clinched her second bronze medal of the day in 1:16.57.

"My goal was to not blow it in the first 200m and the first lap, but just to try to stay consistent, because I knew Miho would have a hard last lap," said Bowe, who was in front at the final crossover after coming from the outer lane.

"When I went over the top of her in that last lap, I knew I was on a good one, so that got me over the finish line."

Bowe was glad to be back on top in World Cups after two years of struggles due to a concussion injury.

"It seems like it's back to my old self. It's been a really tough two years. I had a dream come true with bronze at the Olympics in Team Pursuit and it feels good to be back on top again in the 1500m and the 1000m.

"Who knows, I might be on the other end next week. The level of the girls that are skating right now is pretty awesome," she added.

Bowe overtook Nao Kodaira and Vanessa Herzog, who finished sixth in 1:17.08, to move top of the 1000m World Cup ranking. Bowe has collected 157 points in three races, while Takagi is second with 148 points and Herzog lies third with 146 points. Kodaira has dropped to sixth place on 108 points.

### **Tenth consecutive World Cup gold for Japan**

The Japanese ladies claimed their 10th consecutive World Cup win in the Team Pursuit. [Ayano Sato](#) and the Takagi sisters [Miho](#) and [Nana](#) finished in 3:02.49 to beat Russia's [Yevgenia](#)

Lalenkova, Natalya Voronina and Elizaveta Kazelina, who came second in 3:04.10. Canada (Ivanie Blondin, Isabelle Weidemann, Keri Morrison) took bronze in 3:05.70. Japan leads the World Cup rankings with 360 points, ahead of Russia (300) and Canada (290).

For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series please visit: [isu.org/speed-skating](https://isu.org/speed-skating). Results are [here](#) and you can follow the discussion on social media by using #WCSpeedSkating and #SpeedSkating.

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series will be available on in some countries on the ISU Skating Channel.

### **About ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series**

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating is a Series of international Speed Skating competitions which takes place annually. The Series started in 1984 and usually consists of six or seven Events including the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final. Skaters can earn points at each competition, and the Skater who has the most points on a given distance at the end of the Series is the World Cup winner of that distance. The World Cup Competitions held from November to December serve as qualifying events for entry quotas at the ISU European, World Single Distances, World Sprint and World Allround Speed Skating Championships. A number of World Cup titles are awarded every season; For Men: 500m, 1000m, 1500m, combined 5000m / 10,000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For Ladies 500m, 1000m, 1500m, the combined 3000m / 5000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For further information please visit [isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating](https://isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating).