

January 8, 2022

Heerenveen, Netherlands

## **Roest takes 5000m gold as Kok and De Jong win first European titles**

Dutch skaters impressed again on the second day of competition at the European Championships in Heerenveen, taking all four gold medals on offer. [Patrick Roest](#) (NED) won the 5000m title as the Dutch men also sealed European Team Sprint gold. In the women's competition, [Femke Kok](#) (NED) and [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) won their career first European titles in the 500m and 1500m respectively.

### **Roest takes gold as Kramer says goodbye**

[Patrick Roest](#) (NED) won the European 5000m title on Saturday as Dutch speed skating legend [Sven Kramer](#) said farewell to an empty Thialf Stadium in Heerenveen, finishing sixth in his final 5000m race. [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) (NOR) missed out on a 5000m ticket for the Olympic Games after teammate [Hallgeir Engebråten](#) was faster in Heerenveen, taking bronze behind Roest and [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED). Earlier on Saturday, the Dutch men claimed European Team Sprint gold.

### **Norwegian qualification battle**

There was huge pressure on Pedersen and Engebråten, battling for the sole Norwegian Olympic 5000m slot in Heerenveen. Engebråten was the first to take on the ice in the second pairing.

"Before the race I was pretty nervous," he said. "So far this season, it's been pretty close (with Pedersen in the 5000m), so it was really nice to beat him and see that I had the level to compete with the best skaters in the world."

The 22-year-old from Hamar finished in six minutes and 13.67 seconds to take bronze, more than seven seconds faster than Pedersen, who ended up ninth in 6:20.99.

The 29-year-old Pedersen, who had struggled to recover from a bike accident in the summer, was devastated.

"It's easy to forget that I was in bed this summer, not even imagining I could be standing here now," he said. "But still, I'm really disappointed that I did not manage to seize that Olympic 5000m ticket."

Pedersen will travel to the Beijing Games to defend Norway's Team Pursuit title, and he will have to skate an individual distance in order to be eligible for the squad. Norway manager Bjarne Rykkje said no decision had yet been made about which individual event Pedersen will skate, but it will be either the 1500m or the Mass Start.

### **Roest and Bergsma winding down to gold and silver**

In contrast to their Norwegian counterparts, Dutchmen Roest and Bergsma were winding down at the European Championships, having qualified for the Olympic 5000m and 10,000m.

When Bergsma entered the rink in the penultimate pairing, Engebråten still stood top. The Dutchman repeatedly hit split times just a few tenths slower than Engebråten's but managed to make the difference in the final lap, finishing in 6:13.47.

"We really focused on the Olympic trials," Bergsma said. "That was a tough period and I feel the backlash now. It was difficult to refocus for this race and, taking that into account, my time is not too bad.

"The race was not super bad, but not as steady as I would have wanted. Normally I would have had more left in the tank towards the end. I didn't have that today, but that's fine."

Roest went into the race with a similar feeling. Knowing the times of Bergsma and Engebråten, he knew what was necessary for gold.

"I saw the other guys struggling. Therefore, I knew it would be dangerous to aim at that time. I decided to start a bit slower to explore what would be possible. In that case you can still step it up and win. If you start too fast, you might blow up and lose too much.

Roest managed to step up his pace to finish in 6:11.54.

"Of course I always want to go faster, but this was as much as I could do today. To win a European title is beautiful, because it's a title, but in the end it's about the Olympics this year."

### **Absent Van der Poel**

At the Olympics, Roest will have to deal with [Nils van der Poel](#). The Swedish World Champion has been unbeatable this season, but he skipped the European Championships in Heerenveen to train.

"He's not here, so we'll never know what he could have done," Roest said. "You cannot beat someone who's not competing, so it's a tough call. We know he's the big favorite (for the Olympic title), but I'll give it my all in Beijing and then we'll see what the result will be."

### **Kramer's last race in Thialf**

Kramer will skate his career final international 5000m race in Beijing, and on Saturday he finished sixth in his final international 5000m race in Thialf, the stadium next door to where he grew up.

"Today was not a really good day," Kramer said. "We had a really good day yesterday (winning the European Team Pursuit title), and overall I'm satisfied with the weekend and the qualification for the Olympics.

"I skated already four Olympics before. For sure it's going to be special to skate the Olympics for the fifth time in Beijing, but most important for me is to do my job over there and try to get a gold medal in the 5000m and maybe Team Pursuit."

Asked what legacy he would like to leave in the speed skating world, Kramer said: "I started speed skating because I really liked it and I enjoyed the sport, and that's the most important thing also for future speed skaters."

### **Team Sprint gold for Netherlands**

The Dutch men won the European Team Sprint title, with [Merijn Scheperkamp](#) launching the orange bullet train towards the fastest split time of the field. Second man [Kai Verbij](#) extended the lead before giving way to [Tijmen Snel](#) to finish it off in one minute and 19.71 seconds.

For Scheperkamp and Snel, it was their first international title.

"I'm happy with this title, but to me the individual distances are more important," Scheperkamp said.

"We had not trained for this event specifically, but we're teammates and we train together on a daily basis. This morning we did a trial start with the three of us. To win the title is nice, it tells me that we're on the right track."

Norway were just 0.11s short of the Dutch, thanks to a powerful display from third man [Håvard Lorentzen](#), who was 0.46s behind the Dutch split time after [Bjørn Magnussen](#) and [Henrik Fagerli Rukke](#) set him up for the final lap. Poland's [Marek Kania](#), [Damian Zurek](#) and [Piotr Michalski](#) took bronze in 1:20.54.

### **Kok and De Jong claim their first European crowns**

[Femke Kok](#) (NED) and [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) won their first European titles in Heerenveen on Saturday. Kok took gold ahead of [Angelina Golikova](#) (RUS) and [Daria Kachanova](#) (RUS), who were relieved to skate at all after being quarantined this week due to positive Covid-19 tests in the Russian squad. De Jong concluded Saturday's action with gold in the 1500m.

### **Maiden title for Kok**

Kok skated in the sixth of ten 500m pairings, before the fast Russians and Polish favorite [Andzelika Wójcik](#) took to the ice. The 21-year-old finished in 37.32 seconds, only 0.02 slower than the time she set to qualify for the Olympics Games at the Dutch trials last week.

In the following pair, World Champion Golikova came up 0.11 short, and in the final pairing Kachanova and Wójcik finished third and fourth in 37.58 and 37.69.

For Kok, the European gold was her career-first international title in the senior ranks.

"I'm very happy," she said. "Of course I already had a Dutch title in the senior ranks, but a European title is even more beautiful."

Kok won the race after skipping the Team Sprint event on Friday due to a strained muscle.

"Yesterday, it was too big a risk to start, but today it felt good. I got scared when I had a false start, because that's extra impact, but luckily enough I did not feel anything during the race."

### **Emotional medals**

Golikova and Kachanova came up short of the gold, but celebrated their medals emotionally.

"We had five days or maybe more without any ice," Golikova said. "I really didn't know what I would get today. I just kept all my power, my mental strength, and I thought: it doesn't matter what I'll get today. The important thing was to be strong inside myself."

Kachanova said: "It was a very emotional moment for me to get the medal after quarantine. I thought that I lost a bit of feel for the ice, but in the training I realized that I could still fight for a good result."

### **Competing with the best**

Kok was happy to see Golikova and Kachanova back on the ice having been quarantined.

"It was great that they could skate today. I always want to compete with the best and they are super good. It would have been a pity if they would not have been able to skate today."

At the Olympic Games, Kok also hopes to compete with the best, but [Erin Jackson](#) (USA), who leads this season's 500m World Cup having won four races, failed to qualify after coming third in the US trials.

"I really feel sorry for her," Kok said. "You would say that they just can't leave her home. It's such a shame. I want to race against the best and she just belongs up there."

### **De Jong takes 'special' 1500m crown**

Antoinette de Jong took on [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) in the final pairing of the women's 1500m. Despite two European Allround titles and a World Single Distance title in the 3000m, the 27-year-old had never won a European Single Distance title before, while Wüst was defending her 2020 European title in the 1500m.

In a tight race De Jong took a small advantage in the opener and the first full lap, and she managed to hold on to her lead towards the finish line in one minute and 53.81 seconds. Wüst was 0.27 seconds slower.

"This is a special title, because it's the first," De Jong said. "The race was far from easy, because yesterday's 3000m (in which De Jong won silver) had cost a lot of energy, but I was able to bounce back well and I'm really content to skate under 1.54 in Thialf again."

With [Irene Schouten](#) seeming to be unbeatable in the 3000m, De Jong admitted she has switched her focus.

"Two years ago I would not have imagined that this (the 1500m) would ever be my main distance. I always felt frustrated when I crossed the finish line, but now I've grown to love it. I think that the 1500m (more than the 3000m) is the distance in which it has to happen for me (in Beijing)."

### **Wüst gearing up for fifth Olympics**

Wüst will again be one of De Jong's main rivals in Beijing. She was relieved after having qualified for her fifth Olympic Games last week.

"The Olympic trials are the most important for us (Dutch skaters) after the Olympics. It's hard competition, the hardest competition in the Netherlands. Mentally it's hard, physically it's hard. I'm still tired from it. Because it's in the Netherlands (the European Championships), I compete. If it would have been somewhere else, I would have stayed home.

"It was not good enough, because I didn't win. There were some good parts in it and there was parts that could have been better. I take all the good parts, building it to the Olympics: then it has to be a perfect race."

### **Second bronze for Lollobrigida**

[Francesca Lollobrigida](#) (ITA) finished third in 1:54.50, taking her second bronze medal of the weekend after Friday's 3000m.

She surprised herself with a different approach to the race than she had in the 3000m the day before, when she had a rocket start.

“This race the beginning was so slow,” she said. “It was the opposite of yesterday. I was tired from yesterday. All the Italian team are pretty tired from the training camp. But I’m quite happy to be on the podium. This gives me the energy to keep going into training camps.”

With Sunday’s Mass Start, Lollobrigida will skate one more race before going into a final training camp for the Beijing Olympic Games.

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

### Where to Watch

Viewers will be able to watch either via their national broadcaster / channel and for countries where there are no broadcasters, the ISU will offer a live stream on the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#). You will find the full list in the [Where to Watch news here](#).

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