

February 12, 2015

For immediate release

**ISU World Single Distance Championships 2015 - Heerenveen (NED)
Thursday - Day 1**

Martina Sáblíková (CZE) and Jorrit Bergsma (NED) took home gold on the first day of the World Single Distance Championships in Heerenveen's Thialf stadium. Erik-Jan Kooiman was the only skater to set a personal best time, when he took silver in the 10.000m on Thursday. It's the last tournament in the current accommodation, that hosted international competitions since 1987. The stadium will be renovated and construction work will start on Monday.

Sáblíková regains world title 3000m

Martina Sáblíková and Ireen Wüst (NED) started as red-hot favourites in the Ladies' 3000m. The two of them finished on the podium of every 3000m World Cup race this season. The Dutch and the Czech fought their classic duel in the final pair. Wüst started fast, but she never managed to create a big gap. After 1800m Sáblíková accelerated, Wüst countered at first instance but she couldn't keep up with Sáblíková's final laps of 31.6 and 32.1. The Czech set 4:02.17 versus 4:03.46 for reigning Olympic Champion and 2013 World Champion Wüst, who finished with a 32.6 and 33.4 lap. It was Sáblíková's third world title in the 3000m after 2007 and 2012, when the championships were held in Heerenveen as well.

Sáblíková said: "I wanted to take the lead before Ireen, wait what she would do and then try to get faster. I think I was lucky. And I was well prepared by my coach Petr Novak."

Wüst: "It feels like I lost gold. If you have a career like me, only titles count. I skate to win, so I am a bit disappointed. On the other hand, I fought with everything I had. I started too fast, the second lap went a bit slow and then I could get back and keep it fast. But watching her (Sáblíková) skating away in the end, felt really bad. I don't think she is stronger than usual, I am weaker, but I still believe I have a good chance in the 1500m and Team Pursuit later this week."

Marije Joling (NED) took the bronze with a great race, starting with laps of 31.0, 31.1 and 31.4, which was even faster than Wüst would do in the final pair. In the second half of the race her laps went up 32.0, 32.5, 33.0 and finally 34.3. She set 4:05.51, only two seconds slower than her personal best. Most other skaters missed their personal best times by at least five seconds. Joling managed to keep Jorien Voorhuis (NED, 4:05.76) and Claudia Pechstein (GER, 4:05.95) behind.

In the first pair Marina Zueva, the first skater from Belarus ever in the 3000m, also got as close as two seconds to her personal best when she set 4:15.09 to finish fourteenth.

Joling: "Last week I was fourth in Hamar, behind Carlijn Achtereekte. She was not racing so I knew it was possible to reach the podium. The first lap of Wüst and Sáblíková was very fast. They had some sort of a strange slow second lap, but after that I knew they would be faster. They have been the better for years, so I am happy that I can be number three."

Excitement in the 10,000m

Netherlands claimed all previous 15 gold medals in the 10000m at the World Single Distances Championships. The Dutch even managed a clean sweep on some occasions, but that's not possible anymore. From this year on, the maximum amount of participants per country is two instead of three.

When Sven Kramer announced that he would not start, Erik-Jan Kooiman got the ticket on Tuesday. Kooiman beat Bob de Jong in the Dutch qualification. De Jong had never missed a World Championship 10,000m race since 1997. The 28-year-old debutant Kooiman gave up a steady job as a geography teacher to be a full-time skater for four years. He raced in the third pair and until half way went side by side with Ted-Jan Bloemen (CAN), with low 31 laps. But then Bloemen gave away. Kooiman had saved the best for the end. He brought his mainly 31.1 laps down to four laps below 31 (30.7), to take seven seconds of his previous best time: 13:02.57.

Before the last two pairs took the ice, Kooiman knew he had done something special: "It's a pretty good time, and it could be enough for a medal. Silver would be nice. It is my home rink and I felt at ease. I knew a personal best was possible. In the end I had a couple of 30.8, 30.9 laps, and even Jorrit has to work for that."

After Kooiman, Germans Alexej Baumgärtner and Patrick Beckert started in the fourth pair. Beckert was the strongest, in spite of torn ankle ligaments in December. He set 23 consecutive 31 laps, to finish in 13:10.95.

In the penultimate pair Sverre Lunde Pedersen (NOR) had a small advantage over Beckert, but the Norwegian ruined it in the final two laps, with a 32.3 and a 33.9 lap. He ended up fourth in 13:12.40.

In the final pair Bart Swings (BEL), who celebrated his 24th birthday, noticed halfway that he could not compete for a medal and decided to save energy for his races later this week.

Olympic Champion Jorrit Bergsma started in a staggering pace. He did not just aim to beat the fast time of his team mate Kooiman, but he was on track record schedule with laps between 30.4 and 30.8 for two third of the race. Towards the end, the laps went up and he had to forget about the track record but his 12:54.82 was impressive nevertheless.

Bergsma said: "Kooiman set the bar high. It can be tough in the last laps. He is quite new (in the field of top 10,000m skaters) and rapidly improving, so I didn't know what his time was worth. I skated 13:03 in similar conditions here and on a bad day it can be really tough. Of course I had my doubts, for if a 10k doesn't work out it can be torture."

Beckert twittered: “Yesss! Finally, finally I’ve got it. Bronze on the 10,000m at the World Championships”. To the German press he said: “I am just so thrilled. Finally the big goal is accomplished. Instead of accelerating in the end, this time I tried to keep the tempo high from the beginning. You need to take a risk if you want to win a medal.” For the German men it was the first medal since the team pursuit medal in 2008.

For full results of the ISU World Single Distance Championships 2015 please refer to <http://www.isureults.eu/> and <http://live.isureults.eu/2014-2015/heerenveen-3/index.htm>

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series is available as a live stream on the ISU Skating Channel. Please note that geoblocking may be required in certain territories
<http://livemanager.eurovision.edgesuite.net/isu/index.html>

The ISU World Single Distance Championships will continue tomorrow Friday in Heerenveen with the ladies’ 1000m and 5000m, the men’s 1500m and Team Pursuit.

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ISU World Single Distance Championships Heerenveen (NED) - Medal Winners day 1

3000 m Ladies

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	4:02.17
2	Ireen Wüst	NED	4:03.46
3	Marije Joling	NED	4:05.51

10,000 m Men

1	Jorrit Bergsma	NED	12:54.82
2	Erik-Jan Kooiman	NED	13:02.57 P
3	Patrick Beckert	GER	13:10.95

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