

Press release

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Third consecutive world record for Japanese ladies

Japan's ladies skated a third consecutive world record to win the Ladies Team Pursuit at the fourth leg of the 2017/2018 ISU World Cup speedskating in Salt Lake City on Friday. Canada's men got redemption for last week's crash with gold and a national record in the Men's Team Pursuit. Compatriot Alex Boisvert-Lacroix (CAN) took back-to-back gold in the 500m, and Nao Kodaira (JPN) added another 500m gold to her tally.

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It does not seem to matter who skates for Japan alongside Miho and Nana Takagi in the Ladies Team Pursuit. As long as the sisters take the ice, it's world record time.

In Salt Lake City, Ayano Sato (JPN) joined the Takagis to break the world record for the third consecutive time.

The same line-up at the first World Cup this season in Heerenveen shaved 0.02 seconds off Canada's 2009 Calgary world record of 2 minutes and 55.79 seconds. Last week in Calgary Ayaka Kikuchi (JPN) joined the Takagi sisters to clock 2:53.88.

With Sato back in the team Japan took on Canada in the final pairing at the Utah Olympic Bowl. They easily outpaced Ivania Blondin, Keri Morrison and Isabelle Weidemann (CAN) to finish in 2:50.87, another three seconds faster than their previous record. Canada ended up fifth in 2:56.61.

Despite making a habit of breaking the world record, Miho Takagi was surprised about how fast they went.

"The condition is good, but this time is amazing," she said.

The Japanese seem undecided on their best line-up for the Team Pursuit.

"All the skaters are good. Today, this was the strongest team, but next month? I don't know," Sato said.

The Netherlands (Marrit Leenstra, Melissa Wijfje, Lotte van Beek) took silver in a new national record time of 2:55.57, and Germany (Claudia Pechstein, Roxane Dufter, Gabriele Hirschbichler) grabbed bronze in 2:56.14.

Van Beek got redemption for last week's crash in the final 200m of the Team Pursuit race, which put Olympic qualification in jeopardy.

"This feels like revenge for last week," she said. "That was the first time in four years I skated a team pursuit. To crash and take the whole team out at such a moment, that gave me a really bad feeling. It's super to make up for that with a national record."

“We skated a good race and we managed to stay calm.”

Leenstra said: “Last week we actually also skated very well, so that’s what we wanted to bring with us, only this week we needed to take it 200m further.”

Redemption for Canadian men

The Canadian men made amends for their crash in the Team Pursuit on home soil in Calgary last week. Ted-Jan Bloemen, Denny Morrison and Benjamin Donnelly (CAN) won the Team Pursuit in Salt Lake City in a new national record of 3 minutes and 36.44 seconds.

Morrison was part of the Canadian team which set the previous record 10 years ago. After a motorcycle accident in 2015 and a stroke in 2016, Morrison feels blessed to be back at the top level.

He said: “This is real testament not just for what I’ve been through, but also how these guys in training all summer held me along. Now I felt like I could do something back to the team. To help this team break the national record is an incredible feeling.”

Donnelly was the one who crashed last week. The 21-year-old said: “It’s great to have a sort of a redemption race for last week. It’s good to prove what we can do this way.”

Jordan Belchos was the one left out of the line-up in the Salt Lake City race, but both Morrison and Bloemen do not believe the personnel change made much difference.

“I thought these other three would break the record,” Morrison said.

“In this team pressure is a privilege. After last week there was a lot of pressure on this team and I think we turned that pressure into something beautiful.”

“I don’t think the line-up really matters,” added Bloemen.

“We’ve been training a lot together in the summer and you can see how we skate together. We are always close to each other and today we brought it home .”

Italy and New Zealand took silver and bronze and both skated a national record too.

Italy’s Andrea Giovannini, Nicola Tumolero and Riccardo Bugari finished in 3:36.54 and New Zealand’s Reyon Kay, Shane Dobbins and Peter Michael clocked 3:36.79.

Back-to-back 500m gold for Boisvert-Lacroix

After winning his first individual World Cup gold in the 500m in Calgary last week, Alex Boisvert-Lacroix (CAN) immediately added another on the opening day in Salt Lake City on Friday as he set a season best time of 34.15 seconds.

The Men’s 500m was fast and furious with three national records and the season’s best was bettered three times.

Dai Dai Ntab (NED) was the first to beat the 34.31 that Boisvert-Lacroix clocked last week in Calgary. The Dutchman finished in 34.26, but he had to settle for fourth place eventually.

Mika Poutala (FIN) also set a new season's best when he finished in a new Finnish national record of 34.17 in the seventh pair. He ended up with a silver medal. Ronald Mulder (NED) took the bronze with 34.22 in the final pair.

Apart from Poutala, Chinese Gao Tingyu (34.34), who came fifth, and German Nico Ihle (34.35), who came seventh, also skated national records.

With the high speeds in Salt Lake City many skaters had difficulties holding the final inner corner. World record holder Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) drifted way into the outer corner, which cost him dearly. The Russian clocked 34.40 to finish ninth.

Poutala attributed his medal and national record to a magnificent final inner corner.

"I have been skating really fast this fall in training, so I knew the feeling," he said. "But I haven't skated that fast in a race yet. To go this fast and be able to hold that final inner is amazing.

"I was a little bit struggling in the first two World Cups this season and I changed blades after that. Since then I have been skating really good and I got the confidence back."

Boisvert-Lacroix said of his consecutive victories: "We haven't seen this in a while. I think Pavel (Kulizhnikov) was the last one to win back-to-back. It's nice to be on the same level as him to be able to do that.

"It's really hard to go on after a win, recompose and come back to a race. Today I felt amazing, even in my warm-up I felt I had it. I knew I was going for a personal best. To win today, I needed a personal best.

"I don't want to be cocky, but it wasn't a perfect race. At my entry in the second corner, I did an extra two steps. I was able to recover because I'm a short-tracker, I can correct almost everything. But maybe I could have skated a 34.0 without that mistake."

Kodaira takes gold in Japanese national record

Nao Kodaira (JPN) added another World Cup 500m gold to her tally on the first day of the Salt Lake City World Cup. The 31-year-old World Champion rushed to a Japanese record of 36.50 seconds, leaving world record holder Lee Sang-Hwa (KOR) 0.21 behind in the final pairing. Arisa Go (JPN) took bronze in 37.17.

Kodaira and Lee were the only ladies to break the 37-second barrier in the first A Division event at the Utah Olympic Oval on Friday.

"Unfortunately the air pressure was high, so no world record," Kodaira said after the race.

The Japanese ace will have another go at the world record on Saturday. Last week in Calgary, Canada, Kodaira struggled with neck pain after a crash in the 1000m.

"That's all over. I'm feeling 100 percent now," she said.

Lee did not have much time for chit-chat, but she was happy with her performance. With 10.26 she had the fastest opener of the field, 0.01 faster than Kodaira.

“I’m getting closer (to Kodaira) every week,” the Korean said.

The Ladies 500m started with a nasty crash, when Janine Smit (NED) slipped away in the final corner and hit the boards hard. She did not finish, but did not seem severely injured.

Her pair-mate Kaylin Irvine (CAN), who was hindered by Smit’s crash, got another chance in a re-skate. With 38.52 she eventually finished in 18th place.

Full [results and classifications](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using **#WCspeed** and **#SpeedSkating** and watch the live stream on the [ISU Skating Channel](#).

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About ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2017/18 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. Skaters also cumulate Grand World Cup points each time they compete in a distance. During the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final, the Lady and the Man with the most Grand World Cup points is crowned the Grand World Cup winner.

The results on the individual distances in the World Cup ranking are the main qualifying method for the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships.

A number of World Cup titles are awarded every season, for Men: 500 m, 1000 m, 1500 m, combined 5000 m / 10000 m, Team Pursuit, Mass Start and Team Sprint. For Ladies 500 m, 1000 m, 1500 m, the combined 3000 m / 5000 m, Team Pursuit, Mass Start and Team Sprint.