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Dordrecht, Netherlands

‘Superhero’ Schulting and elder Liu take top European honours

Dutch star wins Ladies’ title on home ice while Hungary’s Shaolin Sandor Liu takes Men’s gold on final day of ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships

Schulting crowned Europe’s best on thrilling final day

Dutch skater [Suzanne Schulting](#) sent the home crowd delirious with delight as she secured the overall title and led her team to relay glory on a high-octane final day of action at the ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships.

Perhaps teammate [Lara van Ruijven](#) best summed up the achievements of the 21-year-old who defied crippling nerves and the heavy burden of home expectation to top the podium three times in Dordrecht, the Netherlands.

“She is like a superhero,” van Ruijven said. “To do it with all that pressure, she showed everyone that she is the true European champion. You could see in the superfinal how strong she is and she has so much confidence right now.”

In the end, Schulting needed all that confidence and more to secure the coveted title of Europe’s finest after suffering a serious setback in her favourite event, the 1000m. Not only is Schulting the reigning Olympic champion at this distance but she also came into the European Championships having won every 1000m World Cup gold medal contested this season.

But, after being penalised in her semifinal for changing lanes, the Dutch star was forced to watch from the sidelines as Russian rival [Sofia Prosvirnova](#) grabbed gold in the day’s opening event ahead of France’s [Tiffany Huot Marchand](#) and a delighted [Elise Christie](#) (GBR).

It proved all the motivation Schulting needed to subsequently dominate the 3000m superfinal.

“I had to win the 3km to win the overall and I did it, that is an amazing feeling,” said Schulting, who went into the gruelling final individual event behind Prosvirnova on points in the overall standings. “I have been so nervous the whole week and now to have got it done, it feels so good. I am really happy it’s over.”

Joyful Dutch procession

With the overall gold added to the 1500m crown she won on Saturday, the Ladies 3000m relay turned into a joyful procession for Schulting and the Dutch team who were cheered to the rafters throughout.

“That is what you want, to win with so much to spare and then to be able to celebrate like that with the crowd is fantastic,” Schulting said.

The home quartet finished half a lap clear of the Russians, who enjoyed a magnificent final day, particularly given that star skater Prosvirnova later revealed she had been suffering from back spasms in the lead-up to the championships.

“It’s really hard to believe,” said the 21-year-old who left Dordrecht as the 1000m champion and overall silver medal winner. “I have come second overall before (2015 and 2017) but this one is the most valuable for me because I got injured a few weeks ago and felt really weak. I didn’t expect to win any medals at all.

“I haven’t done any gym (work) for three weeks but I learned that no matter what happens you just have to try or you will regret it.”

Great Britain’s Christie was another to smash her own expectations in Dordrecht. The 28-year-old’s troubled 2018 was well documented and the three-time world champion confessed to being “4kg overweight” and “out of shape”. Despite this Christie returns home with a silver and two bronze medals.

“I have come into this competition before as fit as a fiddle and not had results like that, so to do that after everything – the crappiest year – I feel so proud of me and my team,” said the skater who finished third in the 1000m and the 3000m superfinal on the final day to secure bronze overall, having taken silver in the 1500m on Saturday.

“We had a funding cut and we still managed to get on the podium,” Christie added. “I can’t wait for next year now, when I am actually fit. I have learned so much.”

The final word, however, must go to the darling of the Dutch crowd.

“I have been so focused,” Schulting said. “It’s been an amazing week and now I can go and enjoy it.”

Lius waltz to European one-two despite Elistratov’s best efforts

Hungary’s outstanding Liu brothers once again proved too good for the rest as the men’s events at the 2019 ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships finished with a familiar sight: Hungary atop the podium.

Led by elder sibling Shaolin Sandor, the Lius won a quite extraordinary four of the five gold medals on offer in Dordrecht, the Netherlands.

Having shared gold and silver between them in both the 1500m and 500m on the opening day of finals, [Shaolin Sandor Liu](#) stamped his unquestioned authority on proceedings on Sunday by waltzing to the overall individual title before teaming up with younger brother [Shaoang Liu](#) to lead his country home in the Men’s 5000m Relay.

“They are a level better at this moment,” Dutch skater [Daan Breeuwsma](#) said. “We all need to work really hard to catch them. They were too good this weekend, they deserved it all.”

Breeuwsma was part of the Dutch quartet which fought hard to stay level with the Hungarians through much of the relay final but ultimately, once first Shaoang and then Shaolin Sandor took the baton over the closing stages there was only ever going to be one result.

“I am carrying too many medals today,” joked Shaolin Sandor, who left the Sportboulevard arena with three golds and a silver medal in his luggage. “I am really proud. I could get used to this feeling.

“We always come in believing that we can win but I think this is the first time we could actually do it.”

Breeuwsma did point out that it was the first time in recent memory his team has had to race without the powerful presence of four-time world champion, Sjinke Knegt who is recovering in hospital following a serious house fire.

“Without Sjinke it is different of course, it was a lot harder,” Breeuwsma said. “But I think we did pretty good, I think the silver was the max result we could get today. Hopefully next year Sjinke is back and we can go for first place again.”

The day had started with a surprise: a men’s final in which a Liu did not triumph. After Shaoang Liu had fallen in his semifinal, Shaolin Sandor had the unfamiliar sensation of racing for gold without his younger brother in the 1000m finale. It proved a step too far with Russia’s [Semen Elistratov](#) bursting past the elder Liu at the start of the final lap to claim a seventh European career gold medal.

Rare taste of defeat

“I was missing my brother a little bit,” Shaolin Sandor laughed after the race. “My legs felt like stone, really heavy. I was biting my teeth together, I wanted to be winning but second is not bad at all.”

The 23-year-old’s relaxed attitude – he later revealed he had woken up and decided to “show off more” – meant he was far from fazed by the rare taste of defeat. Going into the 3000m superfinal with a healthy lead in the overall standings no doubt helped.

Aware that neither [Yuri Confortola](#) (ITA) nor [Vladislav Bykanov](#) (ISR) – the eventual first and second place finishers – were a danger to the overall standings, the Lius were content to let the pair breakaway early and control the pack. The plan worked to perfection with Liu senior confirming overall gold and junior taking overall silver.

Elistratov added the overall bronze to his collection before joining the parade of skaters in awe of the Hungarian duo.

“Today they were just stronger,” the Russian said. “It was difficult to fight with them. I was very happy to win the 1000m gold and we wanted the relay gold so I was keeping some energy in the 3km for that but we weren’t able to stay with them.”

Find [results and classifications here](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using [#EuroShortTrack](#) and [#OneHandDown](#), and find out [where to watch the ISU European ShortTrack Speed Skating Championships](#).

About ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships

The ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships have both a single distance and allround format. A total of 10 European titles are up for grabs, Ladies and Men 500m, 1000m, 1500m, allround and Team Relay. The allround classification is based on the results of each skater in the three individual distances 500m, 1000m and 1500m.

After the completion of the three distances the top eight-point scorers and ties on the eighth position will skate the 3000m Super Final. For the individual distances the final points 34, 21, 13, 8, 5, 3, 2 and 1 are awarded to Final A and Final B Skaters in descending order. In the case of a penalty or did not finish in the Final A, the skater(s) concerned will be awarded points equal to the winner of the Final B. In the case of a penalty in the Final B, the skater(s) concerned will not be awarded any points. No points are awarded to Skaters who receive a yellow or red card or did not start the race.