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Inzell, Germany

Herzog (AUT) and Murashov (RUS) shake up podium to claim first world titles

After racing unbeaten in the 500m since November 2016, sprint queen Nao Kodaira (JPN) finally lost her crown to Vanessa Herzog (AUT) at the ISU World Single Distances Championships on Thursday. The Austrian challenger skated a personal best and a track record (37.12) on the rink in Inzell that she calls home to win the first world title of her career.

In the men's competition Ruslan Murashov (RUS) stepped out of the shadow of his feted countryman Pavel Kulizhnikov to also win his first world title. The 26-year-old took gold in the Men's 500m while world record holder Kulizhnikov could only finish seventh.

Austrian off to a flyer for first world title

[Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT) started in the tenth pairing versus [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) and before defending champion Kodaira, who skated in the twelfth and final pairing. The first 100 metres were crucial. Herzog said: "Brittany did a false start and I was really nervous. I like to stand a bit passive on the ice, so that I don't do a false start. Eventually I got away well: 10.43 is my fastest ever opening.

"A lot of people said that I could win. I knew I had the fastest full lap in the 500m. Last week (at the World Cup in Hamar) I was very close already. This week she (Kodaira) did not skate 10.2 in the opener and that was my luck."

Herzog was especially pleased to win the first world title of her career at the Max Aicher Arena. "This is my home base in speed skating," said the 25-year-old. "I live two and a half hours from here and I train here a lot. My whole family is here and all my friends. I'm so happy I can celebrate this with them."

Olympic champion Kodaira opened in 10.37, a little faster than Herzog, but not fast enough to compensate for the slower full lap. She crossed the line in 37.20 and had to settle for silver, 0.40 ahead of compatriot [Konami Soga](#) (JPN), who took bronze.

Kodaira said: "It's a pity, but Vanessa skated very well and I respect her. My start was good, but after about 50m it was a little unstable. That was a bad moment.

"I am good enough, despite coming second. So I hope to be able to show that tomorrow (in the 1000m)."

Japanese restore honour but still pursue perfection

Sisters [Miho](#) and [Nana Takagi](#) and [Ayano Sato](#) made amends for Kodaira's loss, taking gold in the Team Pursuit. They set a track record time of 2:55.78 in the final pairing versus Russia's [Elizaveta Kazelina](#), [Yevgenia Lalenkova](#) and [Natalya Voronina](#), who collected bronze in 2:57.72.

The Netherlands ([Antoinette de Jong](#), [Ireen Wüst](#) and Joy Beune) took silver in 2:56.20, despite having trained in this particular line-up only for the first time on the morning of the race.

Wüst said: "With this little preparation, finishing only four-tenths of a second behind Japan is very good. They skate together all season and that makes a world of difference."

Despite having skated a lot together, the Japanese had trouble with their team work. Japan national coach Johan de Wit (NED) said: "The race was not so good actually. Miho had a good start, but our second skater (Ayano Sato) let the speed go down a little too much. The third skater (Nana) accelerated, she skated very well, but those changes (in speed) are not what we are used to. We normally skate a stable pace. Because of those fluctuations, the time went up a little too much towards the end and that's a pity."

"We did not change strategy. We had the same tactics we had during the Olympics, but this year we don't have the luxury of being able to do a full program with all the riders and Ayana had to finish her school this year and she missed two months in the summer. That's what she lacks in stamina now. But hey, we still become world champions, so I can't complain too much."

The skaters agreed with their coach. Miho Takagi said: "I'm very happy to win, but the race wasn't 100% for us. As a starter, I was a little bit too fast. I think we still can improve."

Nana Takagi said: "This (the World Single Distances Championships in Inzell) is the biggest event in this season, so I felt it's a very good thing for us. Netherlands was faster than I expected and all other teams are improving. We cannot relax after this victory."

Track record win for Murashov

The Men's 500m was very competitive, with the first 19 finishers all skating under 35 seconds. Olympic champion [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) skated in the third-last pairing and was impressed by the display of speed before him. "Ronald ([Mulder](#), NED) skated 34.5 in the first pairing already and then Murashov did a 34.2 before me too. That's superfast," he said.

With 34.22, Murashov broke Kyou-hyuk Lee's (KOR) 2011 track record by more than a tenth of a second. It inspired Lorentzen to do something special too. "I need the big scene to get the adrenaline running," he said.

With 34.35, the Norwegian skated a personal best to take silver. It was a relief after a difficult home World Cup in Hamar last week. He said: "Last week was frustrating because I felt good but the times were not good. We checked my equipment after Sunday. Jeremy (Wotherspoon, coach) made some changes to the radius and the bend of the blade. Small changes can have a big impact."

Kulizhnikov, 24, skated in the final pairing but had a mis-stroke in the corner and clocked 34.53 to finish seventh and allow countryman [Viktor Mushtakov](#) to hang on to the bronze medal with a personal best of 34.43.

Murashov was too surprised to be happy. He said: "I did not dare to watch Pavel's race and after he finished I just could not believe that I was the World Champion."

Netherlands take revenge in Team Pursuit

After losing his 5000m world title on Thursday, [Sven Kramer](#) wasted no time getting back on top of the podium when he anchored the Netherlands to victory over Norway in the Team Pursuit. Norway had beaten Netherlands in the Olympic Winter Games semi-finals last year before going on to claim the gold medal.

Kramer was joined by [Douwe de Vries](#) and [Marcel Bosker](#). The Dutch men had never raced together before and held their first joint training on Friday morning. Despite the short preparation, they broke the 2011 USA track record by three seconds, clocking 3:38.43.

It was 22-year-old Bosker's first senior world title. "But he skates as if he's got years of experience," said 36-year-old Douwe de Vries, who won his third Team Pursuit gold in the World Championships. "Our race was far from flawless, but we could solve everything without even having to say anything. I've never had to coach Marcel the way I have had to do with others in the past."

Bosker knew the secret of the Dutch team: "We've all been able to put our egos aside. I had to push Douwe in the beginning, because he's not such a fast starter. That cost me a lot of energy, for which I paid towards the end. So I skated a little less in front, and Sven is such a class-act, he could pull us through."

Norway ([Håvard Bøkko](#), [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) and [Sindre Hendriksen](#)) skated 3:40.80 to take silver and Russia's [Aleksandr Rumyantsev](#), [Danila Semerikov](#) and [Sergey Trofimov](#) clocked 3:41.31, clinching the bronze.

Thursday's 5000m champion Pedersen was Norway's locomotive again. Bøkko said: "That's how we won the Olympics last year. Sverre is so strong. I had to scream to him to wait for us all time. He pulled us through all three final laps, which feels like skating a full 1500m at maximum pace for me. Getting silver is a bit disappointing at the moment, but the Netherlands were very strong today."

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

The ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships is available in some countries on the ISU Skating Channel.