

February 24, 2019

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

Kulizhnikov and Kodaira crowned king and queen of Sprint

Pavel Kulizhnikov (RUS) won his third World Sprint crown in the men's event and Nao Kodaira (JPN) won her second ladies title as the ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships came to an end in Heerenveen (NED) on Sunday.

Third title is the best for Kulizhnikov

[Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) won his third World Sprint crown on Sunday, adding to the titles he won in 2015 and 2016. [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) clinched a surprise silver for Japan and [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED) grabbed bronze on home soil at Thialf Stadium.

Kulizhnikov closed in on the overall victory winning the 500m in style. The world record holder started in the final pair versus [Kai Verbij](#) (NED), who had blown his chances of success in the overall rankings after an awkward cross-over with Kulizhnikov in Saturday's 1000m.

Verbij bounced back by clocking 34.74 and taking bronze in the 500m on Sunday, but Kulizhnikov was in a league of his own in the shortest distance. The Russian rocket equaled the Thialf track record in 34.31. Shinhama was the only one to come close, taking second in 34.45.

Kulizhnikov went into the 1000m with a 0.63 second advantage over second-ranked Shinhama. The Russian said: "It was all very close and I knew I had to skate a very good second 500m to get myself in pole position for the final 1000m. After the 500m I could relax a little."

Comparing the 2019 title to the 2015 and 2016 World Sprint Championships, Kulizhnikov rated his latest victory higher, saying: "The first two titles were easy. This was a hard-fought battle so this gives me more satisfaction."

Silver after shoe repair

After climbing to second place in the rankings in the 500m on Sunday, Shinhama went into the 1000m with a 0.70 advantage over [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) and 1.13 over Nuis. The 22-year-old Japanese skater managed to keep both the Norwegian and the Dutchman at bay with the fifth-best time of 1:08.82 in the 1000m, to take silver in the overall standings.

Shinhama had shown impressive calmness on the first day of the Championship. He damaged his shoe with a mis-stroke in the first 500m and still managing to win the distance, but his shoe needed to be repaired within one and a half hours before the 1000m. Shinhama said: "The shoe broke after 50 meters and I skated the rest of the race with loose shoelaces. Luckily enough my team was able to fix it before the start of the 1000m."

Shinhama's silver was the first Japanese medal at in the World Sprint Championships since Keiichiro Nagashima's bronze in 2010. The youngster had surprised himself, but not so much his coach Johan de Wit (NED), who said: "The good ones come quickly and Shinhama is very good. We can see that in training."

The skater himself credited his coach for the progression in Japanese speed skating, saying: "The Japanese ladies did very well with coach Johan de Wit at the PyeongChang Olympic Games last year. That has inspired the men and this year he has become the men's coach too, which has helped us raise the level."

Second 1000m win hands Nuis bronze

Nuis won the 1000m in 1:07.80, with Kulizhnikov coming second in 1:08.62 and Lorentzen third in 1:08.73. The Dutchman made up a 0.43 second deficit to surpass last year's champion for the third podium spot.

"I'm super happy," said Nuis. "It's great to have won two 1000m races at these championships. The level is so high. Kulizhnikov is just too good. I had to skate a personal best in the 500m and a track record in the 1000m, which was just a bit too much today."

Kodaira feels 'a bit Dutch' after title win

[Nao Kodaira](#) won her second World Sprint Title on Sunday in Heerenveen, the Netherlands, where the Japanese star feels at home having lived and trained in the country between 2014 and 2016. Kodaira's compatriot, World Allround Champion [Miho Takagi](#), took a surprise silver medal and birthday girl [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) claimed the bronze.

Kodaira started the second 500m of the weekend with a 0.26 lead over Takagi and the Olympic Champion increased the gap with a smooth race in 37.41. Despite being 0.14 slower than Saturday, the 2017 World Sprint Champion won the race, with Bowe coming second in 37.67. [Angelina Golikova](#) (RUS) came third in the first distance in Sunday on 37.71.

Bowe, who beat [Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT) in the penultimate 500m pairing, said: "The 500m was probably the best I've had all season, so I'm super pumped on that." The American 2015 and 2016 Champion, who turned 31 on Sunday, did not catch up with Takagi in the rankings, however. The Japanese skater finished fourth in the 500m in a personal best of 37.74, and later won the 1000m.

In the longer race Kodaira defended her overall leading position relatively easily, coming third to take her second World Sprint title. "I knew I had a 1.17 gap and I just thought, keep calm and don't make any mistakes," she said.

"This is a dream come true. To become World Champion in Thialf stadium, fantastic. I feel a bit Dutch. My heart is a little bit orange and to see so many people in the stands here, it's so beautiful."

Surprise Takagi wants Sprint and Allround

Takagi had a 0.18 second lead over Bowe in the final event and the 24-year-old Japanese still thought she could make up lost ground against Kodaira in the 1000m.

She managed to beat her compatriot, Takagi clocking 1:14.56 to finish first, but it was not enough to take the title. Bowe finished in 1:14.64 for second and Kodaira secured the overall title with a third place in 1:14.96.

As reigning World Allround Champion Takagi surprised the speed skating world with her silver medal in Heerenveen. "Sometimes I surprise myself, especially after today's 500m," said Takagi. "But I'm still a little bit disappointed. I wanted gold, and I thought I could make up that one-second gap, but Nao was too strong."

Next week Takagi will defend her World Allround title in Calgary and after the races in the Netherlands she went straight to the airport for a flight to Canada on Monday.

"It was my dream to be on the podium in both the World Sprint Championships and the World Allround Championships in one season and this was the last season that it was possible (next season the two tournaments will be held at the same venue on the same weekend)," she said. "I don't know how this event will affect my performance next week. It's good for speed in the 500m and the 1500m."

Bowe feels blessed

Bowe had to make up 1.35 seconds on Kodaira in the final 1000m to win the title. "I thought if anybody can do it, I can do it," she said. "I went to that starting line thinking that I had a chance to win. Obviously I fell far short of that, but if you're not going out there to win what are you skating for?"

"Miho and Nao skated phenomenally. Nao is in a class of her own this weekend and Miho had some of the best races of her life. I'm blessed to be on the podium with those two ladies in a packed Thialf. It couldn't be better."

The ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships is available in some countries on the [ISU Skating Channel](#).

About ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships 2019

The 50th ISU World Sprint Speed Skating Championships were held in Heerenveen, which hosted these Championships for the seventh time. Skaters competed in two 500m races and two 1000m races over two days to decide the champion in an overall classification.

For further information please visit the [event home page](#).