

March 9, 2019

Sofia, Bulgaria

Van Ruijven wins historic Ladies' gold for Netherlands as Korean duo take Men's titles

Lara van Ruijven won the Netherlands' first ever Ladies' World gold medal, while Korean men Lim Hyo Jun and Hwang Dae Heon topped the podium in a dramatic day at the World Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Sofia.

Van Ruijven takes historic Dutch gold in dramatic World 500m final

The Netherlands won their first ever Ladies' gold medal at a World Short Track Speed Skating Championships as [Lara van Ruijven](#) triumphed in a fast and furious 500m final in Sofia on Saturday.

Van Ruijven led throughout the race but looked to have lost out when [Martina Valcepina](#) (ITA) powered around the corner and beat her to the line by a fraction - sending the Dutch skater to the floor in the process.

But after a lengthy consultation, the judges decreed that Valcepina – winner of the last two 500m World Cup golds – had committed a foul.

[Kexin Fan](#) (CHN) was moved up to silver and [Suzanne Schulting](#) (NED) up to bronze.

"My dream came true and I can't believe it, I have to cry," Van Ruijven said. "To become the first Dutch woman World Champion is indescribable. I knew I had the power to win today, so I really went for it.

"The only pity is that I couldn't celebrate winning when I crossed the line, because I was too busy falling over. The only thing I thought was 'oh no, I've thrown it away'.

"I went in with Suzanne (Schulting) at my side today, and so to finish one and three is a great result. We didn't make a plan before the race - we just both went for it, and I won. I'm so emotional. To get both of us on the podium was great."

The third-placed finish provided some consolation for Schulting, the season's dominant athlete, who also missed out in the 1500m earlier in the day after being penalised for a lane change in the semifinal.

But seeing her teammate take gold at the Arena Armeec brightened her mood.

"The competition is open again," Schulting said after picking up overall points for finishing in third position. "It's amazing that Lara has become a World Champion, and it's great for me that I take some points. The day started badly and then got a lot better."

The Ladies' 1500m was won by Olympic champion [Choi Min Jeong](#) (KOR), who skated with calm authority through qualifying and the final.

Many had expected an exciting head-to-head battle with Schulting, but the Netherlands skater's elimination made it a much easier last race for Choi.

She stalked at the back of the pack until six laps remained, then glided to the front.

"I didn't have the best start to the season, and then I had an injury in the third World Cup, so today I am very happy to win a World Championship gold," Choi said.

Canada's [Kim Boutin](#) put up an excellent fight but eventually had to settle for silver, her best performance yet at a World Championships, while [Sofia Prosvirnova](#) (RUS) was third.

"I felt very strong, and it's my first silver at a World Championship, so I'm very happy," said Boutin. "I took a big break after the Olympics and that was helpful for me mentally coming into the season.

"In the World Cup I tried really hard to beat her (Choi). I feel stronger now, and she's a great person to compete against."

Choi goes into day two wearing the leader's Red Hat, with Van Ruijven in second and Boutin third.

However, Van Ruijven tipped her compatriot Schulting to create more Dutch history on Sunday.

"The 1000m tomorrow is her favourite event, so I think she can win that and become overall World Champion. She is so strong at the moment," Van Ruijven said.

Whatever the outcome on Sunday, it has already been a memorable weekend for the Netherlands.

Korean men seal double gold in eventful World finals

Korean duo [Lim Hyo Jun](#) and [Hwang Dae Heon](#) won gold in unconventional fashion as a series of crashes, penalties and restarts marked two of the more unusual Men's finals in the history of the World Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Sofia on Saturday.

Both the 1500m, won by Lim, and the 500m, won by Hwang, ended in high drama at the Arena Armeec.

The 1500m final had to be stopped and restarted halfway through its first attempt, after [Keita Watanabe](#) (JPN) bundled over [Samuel Girard](#) (CAN), who was leading the race. The crash padding system was pushed out of place as they collided heavily with it.

Watanabe was eliminated and they started again, with a seemingly unshaken Girard leading from the front once more.

But on the final corner, Hwang and Lim overtook the Canadian in a blaze of speed. Hwang crossed the line first but impeded Lim and was penalised. Lim therefore took gold, with Girard taking silver and another Korean, [Lee June Seo](#), claiming bronze.

"I was trying very hard, so I'm very happy," said Lim, who added his first World Championship gold medal to the 1500m Olympic gold he won at PyeongChang 2018.

For runner-up Girard, taking silver was a rewarding outcome despite his misfortune in the original race.

"It was strange that after the crash, the mat was pushed out of place, and I think the judges made the best decision for the security of the race by calling it back and starting again," said the Canadian.

"It was a bit frustrating because I was burning after all those laps, but it was the best option for safety.

"I knew the other guys were going to think 'Sam must be a little tired now', because I'd been in the lead before it was restarted. But I decided to go against that and show I'm strong, so I went to the front again. And it worked pretty well.

"There was a big fight on that last corner. It's really hard fighting against the Korean team because they've got so many great skaters. When you're together, you can work with your teammate to get you both on the podium.

“So I split the pack. I feel good that at least I’ve made it onto the podium. I was trying to protect my lead on the last corner, but I’m really happy how it turned out.”

If the 1500m was action-packed, the 500m was just as eventful.

First there was the unusual sight of [Shaolin Sandor Liu](#) (HUN) having to leave the ice after being disqualified for two false starts. It capped a difficult day for the Hungarian, who also got a penalty in the 1500m semifinal.

His exit left a three-man field for three medals, but in the restarted race Hwang and [Wu Dajing](#) (CHN) collided going into a corner and hit the padding system.

For a moment, it seemed that injury or disqualification might lead to another restart with only one athlete lining up - China’s [Ren Ziwei](#).

But the judges allowed all three men to begin again and this time they all finished, with Hwang holding off Wu to win.

“I was in a lot of pain from the crash, but I kept going. I’m very happy, because he is the best,” said Hwang of Wu.

Meanwhile, the man who is regarded as the king of the 500m was left disappointed.

“I always want to win, I never want to lose,” Wu said.

“We will look within ourselves to keep improving. Ren and myself have performed well, so we will keep going. We always aim for the top, and I haven’t lost much since 2018. I will keep trying.”

Hwang goes into day two in the leader’s Red Hat, with Lim in second place and Girard in third.

For full results [click here](#) and follow the event with #OneHandDown on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

About ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships

The ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships have both a single distance and allround format. A total of 10 World 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.