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Sofia, Bulgaria

Schulting (NED) usurps Choi (KOR) to take Ladies' title as Lim wins Men's crown for dominant Korea

Suzanne Schulting (NED) overtook Choi Min Jeong (KOR) as she became only the second European ever to win the Ladies' World Short Track Championship, while Korea's Lim Hyo Jun sealed the Men's title by a huge margin in Sofia on Sunday.

Suzanne Schulting (NED) capped the perfect season by being crowned the overall Ladies' winner at the 2019 World Short Track Championship at the Arena Armeec in Sofia on Sunday.

She became only the second European to lift the title in its 44-year history and beat one of its greatest ever racers, Korea's Choi Min Jeong – who had won three of the last four editions – into second place in dramatic style.

"I am incredibly happy right now," said a jubilant Schulting after finishing first in the 3000m Superfinal to seize the title. "It's bizarre, incredible. I won this because I trained so, so hard last summer. This really counts.

"After my Olympic title at PyeongChang over 1000m, I wanted to prove that I am not a one-day fly [one-season wonder]. I won so many races this year. I won the European title, so that encouraged me to come to Sofia and finish with the World title. All credit to my coach, Jeroen Otter."

Schulting had faced an uphill battle at the start of the day: defending champion Choi had a significant lead after a difficult Saturday for the Netherlands racer. She left the rink in tears after being penalised in the 1500m, but put some vital points on the board by getting bronze in the 500m.

"After the 1500m I really felt frustration, but I thought I had to get back my focus for the 500m. The day started disappointingly but ended really well. Maybe I was a little more aggressive in the 500m because of it."

It meant Schulting needed to win Sunday morning's 1000m, and she did so impressively. She started the race at the front and stayed there thanks to her raw power. Choi moved up from the back with two laps to go, showing some incredible speed, but couldn't quite catch her rival on the line. Kim Boutin (CAN) finished third.

Choi entered the Superfinal still wearing the leader's Red Hat; Schulting would simply have to finish ahead of the Korean to take it for herself. And she made her move on the second-to-last corner, thundering through to victory. Choi was second and fellow Korean Kim Ji Yoo third.

Schulting won gold with 81 points, just five ahead of Choi. Boutin got the overall bronze, with 37.

Choi, who was World Champion in 2015, 2016 and 2018, was graceful in defeat.

"I am happy. I got a heavy injury [this season], so I did better than I thought I would," she said.

"Suzanne is very strong. She has improved her start, which is very fast, and she has a lot of power. She is also very calm mentally, which helps her a lot. It is a very tough Ladies' field that is not easy to win. I like having good rivals, and them being so good makes me improve."

With Choi still just 20 and Schulting 21, their rivalry looks set to run for a number of seasons.

Netherlands discipline manager Wilf O'Reilly believes Schulting's Olympic gold gave her a huge mental boost that has led to her dominance this season.

"I think after the Olympic Games, this became a real profession for Suzanne," he said.

"I wasn't just, 'I like to do my hobby, which is sport, and I'm really good at it'. The success took her to another level in Holland - she was their sportswoman of the year. Some people struggle with such attention, but she has been incredibly professional."

Choi found some consolation in the final event of the day, as she was part of the Korean Ladies' Team that won relay gold. Russia were second and Canada third.

The Netherlands lost out, with Schulting regretful that she couldn't help give her teammates a taste of the glory.

"The only thing that was sad today was that I didn't do well in the relay, and I really feel bad for my teammates," she said.

"It was my fault. I wanted to end the day with a title that we could celebrate together. But it's good motivation for us to move onto next season as a team."

But Choi will also be bristling to take her crown back. The Korean has got the legendary Chinese skater Yang Yang's record of six World Championship titles in her sights.

"I am confident going forward that I can win more," she said. "I want to win lots and lots, again and again. I don't know if I can win as many as Yang, but I will try."

Lim speeds to Men's World crown to cement Korea's dominance

Korea's men confirmed their total dominance at the 2019 World Short Track Championships as [Lim Hyo Jun](#) lifted the overall title by a huge margin then helped his team storm the 5000m relay.

Lim's teammate [Hwang Dae Heon](#) was his only realistic challenger at Sofia's Armeec Arena but he was penalised in the 3000m Superfinal and finished second overall.

"I came to the World Championships for the first time last year and finished fourth, so I am really happy to win this time," said Lim.

"And it is great that my teammate got second place. On the ice we always try to win, to beat each other, but off it we are friends."

Lim and Hwang had been virtually inseparable all weekend - in every sense. In Saturday's 500m Hwang had impeded his teammate on the line, handing Lim the gold. Hwang then won the 1500m, meaning the pair went into Sunday on the same points.

Sunday's 1000m would thus be crucial. [Semen Elistratov](#) from Russia led from the front before the Korean duo simultaneously attacked him on the final bend. It seemed like Hwang would beat his rivals on the inside, but instead Lim came around the outside and grabbed the points. Hwang was second and the Russian came third.

It was left for the Korean duo to scrap out in the Superfinal - and scrap they did. Once again, the speedy Elistratov was the frontrunner. And once again, Hwang impeded his Korean teammate while trying to make a high-speed late pass. Hwang was handed a penalty and Lim sealed first place - along with the overall title - ahead of Elistratov and [Keita Watanabe](#) (JPN).

Lim finished on 102 points in the overall standings, with Hwang getting silver with 55 despite two disqualifications and Elistratov taking bronze on 44.

Despite their literal on-ice wrestling, the Korean duo insisted there were no hard feelings and they embraced on the finish line.

“It was a big fight but he is like a younger brother to me,” said Lim. “We have a great relationship, and no matter who wins it makes me happy.”

Hwang added: “I am a little disappointed, but I learned a lot from the penalties. Next time I want to prepare better, and to win. But as a teammate, I am happy for (Lim). We learn from each other. And now we have to go back to Korea and compete for the national selection.”

The pair then combined with [Lee June Seo](#) and [Park Ji Won](#) to win the 5000m relay. China were second and Hungary third.

The dominance of 22-year-old Lim and Hwang, 19, was made all the more extraordinary by the fact they hadn't even been their nation's top skaters this season.

Park had dominated the 1000m at the World Cups, with [Hong Kyung Hwan](#) close behind, while [Kim Gun Woo](#) had been hard to beat over the 1500m.

In the face of this Korean monopoly, their rivals could only joke.

“They are lucky, and they copy all my moves, so I'm not really happy with that,” quipped Hungary's [Shaolin Sandor Liu](#).

“But really, they are always so good. They have so many quality skaters, it's so hard to beat them,” he added.

With a squad so strong and so young, there is no sign of the Korean dominance ending any time soon.

For full results [click here](#) and catch up on 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.