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Salt Lake City, USA

## **Takagi breaks magic barrier**

**Miho Takagi (JPN) broke the magic 1:50 barrier in the Ladies' 1500m on Sunday. The Japanese ace outskated World Champion Ireen Wüst (NED) in the final pairing and finished in 1:49.83. Nao Kodaira (JPN) won the second 500m at the World Cup Final in Salt Lake City, and Irene Schouten (NED) surprised herself to win the concluding Mass Start event.**

**In the men's tournament, Japan won two gold medals on the final day of the 2018/19 Speed Skating season. Tatsuya Shinhama (JPN) won the 500m and Ryosuke Tsuchiya (JPN) took his first individual World Cup gold in the Mass Start. Kjeld Nuis (NED) skated another world record, having recorded the world's fastest 1000m on Saturday.**

### **Takagi in a league of her own**

Four ladies skated under the 1500m world record by Heather Bergsma, who set 1:50.85 at the Utah Olympic Oval in 2015, but only one broke the magic 1:50 barrier.

Brittany Bowe (USA) was the first to break Bergsma's time, clocking 1:50.32 in the fourth pairing versus Yekaterina Shikhova (RUS), who also finished under the previous world record, crossing the line in 1:50.63.

"It was a great race, and I was obviously happy to win the pair but I did not think that time would stand," Bowe said. "I knew 1:49 was going to win it today."

Miho Takagi took on Wüst in the final pairing and the Japanese silver medal winner at both the World Allround and the World Sprint Championships proved to be the best in combining speed and stamina in the middle distance. Leaving the World Champion behind, Takagi stopped the clock after 1 minute and 49.83 seconds. With 1:50.70 Wüst was also faster than the previous world record but she did not even end up on the podium.

Before her race Takagi did not know what time she had to skate to win. "I only knew that Bowe skated a world record but I don't want to know the time because I always want to skate my own race."

Like Bowe, Takagi had already expected a 1:49 winning time beforehand, saying: "I discussed it with my coach yesterday and he said anything is possible."

Bowe concluded the season on top of the final ranking in the 1500m. "This has been my best season so far," she said. "But hats off to Miho, she definitely deserved that win today."

Takagi finished second in the World Cup ranking. Wüst was third.

### **Kodaira wins last race but Herzog takes World Cup**

Following her win on Saturday, [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) also took gold in Sunday's 500m, but again she fell short of [Sang-Hwa Lee](#)'s (KOR) 2013 time of 36.36. Skating versus 500m World Champion [Vanessa Herzog](#) (AUT), Kodaira stopped the clock at 36.49.

Kodaira regretted the lack of opposition in the Ladies' 500m after Karolína Erbanová (CZE) quit last year. "This season it has only been Vanessa (Herzog) and me. We need more fast ladies to raise the level."

Herzog finished in 36.83 to take third place in the distance, behind [Olga Fatkulina](#) (RUS) who was two thousandths of a second faster in the final pairing.

With her bronze medal Herzog secured the 500m World Cup. She said: "This has been my best season ever. I won the European Championships, the World title in the 500m and the World Cup."

Kodaira, who won all World Cup races she skated this season, ended up in second place because she had skipped three races. Fatkulina took third place in the final 500m ranking.

### **Surprise win for Schouten**

[Irene Schouten](#) (NED) surprised herself by winning the final Ladies' Mass Start event, after having skated marathons on natural ice in Sweden in the lead-up to the World Cup final in Salt Lake City.

The Dutch World Champion took full advantage of her teammate [Melissa Wijfje](#)'s hard work to catch [Marina Zueva](#) (BLR), who tried to win with a strong breakaway. Wijfje managed to catch the Belarusian in the final lap, setting up the sprint perfectly for her compatriot.

Schouten kept [Bo-Reum Kim](#) (KOR) and [Ivanie Blondin](#) (CAN) at bay in the final sprint.

"I hadn't expected this at all," Schouten said. "Coming off the natural ice in Sweden, this fast track in Salt Lake City is something completely different. But the whole race went according to plan perfectly. When there's a breakaway, I always have Melissa to chase them down for me. I really have to thank her. It's actually quite tough that I'm the only one to get the medal, because this is a sort of a team event. This medal is partly hers as well."

With her second place on Sunday Kim secured the Mass Start World Cup, with Schouten second and [Francesca Lollobrigida](#) (ITA), who finished fourth on Sunday, in third place.

### **Another world record for Nuis**

Kjeld Nuis went in the second pairing of the 1500m, facing compatriot and teammate [Thomas Krol](#) (NED). The two Dutchmen started at a ferocious pace and clocked split times more than half a second under [Denis Yuskov](#)'s (RUS) 2017 world record.

"We clocked 1:05.8 after 1000m," Nuis commented. "Faster than yesterday's world record time in the 1000m. This was awesome. I've never skated this fast. This was so much better than yesterday. I was able to accelerate in every corner."

The fast beginning came at a price, however as both men struggled in the final corner.

"After such a fast 1000m you still have to skate another 500m and I was completely exhausted. In that final corner I barely managed to stay on my feet and I needed a hand on the ice to avoid a crash. If that would not have happened, this could have been a 1:39 something..."

Nuis eventually finished in 1:40.17, edging Krol by 0.36 seconds.

In the final pairing, Yuskov had a chance to recapture his record but the Russian was unable to match Nuis' and Krol's lap times, nor his own from 2017. With 1:41.49 he did manage to take bronze in the distance, which was enough to take home the 1500m World Cup. [Min-Seok Kim](#) (KOR), who finished fifth in 1:42.54, came second in the distance ranking and Nuis took third place.

### **Shinhama wins final 500m race**

Having already broken the 34-second barrier in 33.83 on Saturday, [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) shaved another 0.04 seconds off his personal best to set 33.79 on Sunday. None of the other sprinters were able to match the 22-year-old.

When [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS), who had set a world-record 33.61 on Saturday, took the ice in the final pairing versus countryman [Ruslan Murashov](#), the crowd expected another explosion of power. To the surprise and aversion of the crowd the Russians did not make an effort, however, skating like tourists on a quiet afternoon. After above-11-second openers they clocked 41.28 and 39.28 respectively. "Murashov was injured," coach Dmitry Dorofeyev said. "He could not skate fast but he wanted to secure the World Cup points. Kulizhnikov was tired and had already shown what he's capable of yesterday."

Shinhama was not amused. "I don't think it's fair sportsmanship. They took away my opportunity to beat them fair and square."

The Japanese sprinter was very happy about his own breakout season, in which he won three 500m races in the World Cup and a silver medal at the World Sprint Championships. Breaking the 34-second barrier was the icing on the cake. "I did not expect that yesterday but after that race I knew I could do it again today. It's been a great year. This season Kulizhnikov was still a little bit too strong but next year I'll be back."

[Min Kyu Cha](#) (KOR) came second in Sunday's 500m, clocking 34.03, while [Yuma Murakami](#) (JPN) took third place in 34.10.

Despite his twelfth place on Sunday, Kulizhnikov took the season's 500m World Cup, with Shinhama in second place and [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR), who was fifth in 34.28 on Sunday, in third place.

### **First individual World Cup win for Tsuchiya**

The 2018/19 season came to a conclusion with an exciting Mass Start race in which an attacking strategy paid off. [Ryosuke Tsuchiya](#) (JPN) and [Vitaly Mikhailov](#) (BLR) escaped early in the race and managed to lap the pack.

"That was my initial plan," Tsuchiya said. "I knew how the Belarusians skate and when I saw them in front I went for it."

Tsuchiya won the final sprint, with Mikhailov coming second. [Simon Schouten](#) (NED) won the sprint of the peloton to take third place.

For Tsuchiya it was his first individual World Cup win having won two gold medals in the team pursuit.

[Cheon-Ho Um](#) (KOR), who finished ninth, won the Mass Start World Cup. [Bart Swings](#) (BEL) and [Ruslan Zakharov](#) (RUS) came second and third respectively.

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

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series will be available on in some countries on the ISU Skating Channel.

#### **About ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series**

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating is a Series of international Speed Skating competitions which takes place annually. The Series started in 1984 and usually consists of six or seven Events including the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final. Skaters can earn points at each competition, and the Skater who has the most points on a given distance at the end of the Series is the World Cup winner of that distance. The World Cup Competitions held from November to December serve as qualifying events for entry quotas at the ISU European, World Single Distances, World Sprint and World Allround Speed Skating Championships. A number of World Cup titles are awarded every season; For Men: 500m, 1000m, 1500m, combined 5000m / 10,000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For Ladies 500m, 1000m, 1500m, the combined 3000m / 5000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For further information please visit [isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating](http://isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating).