

November 24, 2019

Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Poland

Japanese sprinters bounce back, as Schouten outguns friendly foe Blondin in Mass Start

Japan took gold and silver in the men's 500m with [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) and [Yuma Murakami](#) only 0.002 seconds apart at the top of the ranking. Canada's [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) came third to win his first individual World Cup medal in two years, and the Netherlands won the men's Team Pursuit, confidently beating silver medallists Japan.

Concluding the second leg of the ISU World Cup Speed skating in Tomaszów Mazowiecki on Sunday, [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) beat [Ivanie Blondin](#) (CAN) in the ladies' Mass Start, reversing last week's order on top of the podium. In the 1500m [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) retained her first place in the World Cup classification with a second consecutive win and a track record.

Japanese sprinters show resilience

Shinhama and Murakami both completed the 500m in 34.73, with Shinhama taking the gold just two thousandths ahead of his compatriot. The Japanese sprinters thus made amends for a disappointing 11th place in the Team Sprint on Friday.

Shinhama said: "Our coaching staff had a strong word with us [after Friday's Team Sprint] so the atmosphere in the team was tense. Winning the 500m was the only thing we could do and I was trying to win, no matter how.

"I made a bit of a mistake at the first corner, so my race wasn't great, but I'm on the top of the podium and that's all that mattered."

Before the Japanese sprinters took to the ice, Dubreuil had been the only one to break the 35-second-barrier in Tomaszów, stopping the clock at 34.97. With [Jun-Ho Kim](#) (KOR) finishing in 34.99, only four skaters managed to stay under 35 seconds on Sunday.

Dubreuil was excited to be back on the individual podium after his 500m gold in Heerenveen in November 2017. He said: "It's amazing. We win medals in the Team Sprint, but the reason I fell in love with speed skating is because of the individual races, so to be two years without a podium is too long.

"I was in the B group last week, and then to win a medal in my first race [in the A Division], that's a great start. It was my objective to win a medal in one of the first four World Cups, so that's already done. Obviously I want to repeat that race and get on the podium more frequently. I'm really looking forward to skating again in two weeks [at the World Cup in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan on 6-8 December]."

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 500m Men](#)

New strategy pays off for Netherlands

World champions the Netherlands started confidently in the first World Cup Team Pursuit race of the season. [Patrick Roest](#) (NED), [Douwe de Vries](#) (NED) and [Marcel Bosker](#) (NED) faced Japan,

who were able to keep up for five laps. While the Dutch managed to maintain the same pace throughout the eight circuits, [Seitaro Ichinohe](#) (JPN), [Riku Tsuchiya](#) (JPN) and [Shane Williamson](#) (JPN) tired in the final three laps.

It was a new strategy that paid off, the Orange squad explained, after they took turns at the front every lap instead of changing after every 600m. Roest said: "We did short stints at the front because it's tough ice. You'd say it's slower because the change-ups cost time, but on a heavy track like this it's better because you don't blow yourself up."

Veteran skater De Vries, who won his career 10th World Cup gold in the Team Pursuit, agreed: "We already discussed this idea during the summer. Marcel [Bosker] suggested to do it here and I totally agreed. I've never seen a good team do it like this [in the Team Pursuit], but it went very well."

Wüst dominates in 1500m

Last season Wüst came second when [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) won the 1500m at the World Cup in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, setting a track record in 1:57.32. This year they swapped roles. Reigning Olympic and world champion Wüst took another gold medal and track record in 1:56.627, after her win in Minsk last week.

"I'm very happy," Wüst said. "It was a very tough race, which you can tell by looking at the last lap, but I was able to hold on to my pace. It was relaxed fast."

Wüst left pair-mate [Evgenia Lalenkova](#) (RUS) 0.65 seconds behind, but the 29-year-old Russian was very happy too. "This is my first individual medal in a World Cup," she said. "Last year I was fourth one or two times and last week I finished fourth too, so now that I'm finally third, I'm very happy."

"Skating versus Wüst was good for me, because I can go fast and she helped me going fast from the start so she was a very good pace-maker for me."

Takagi skated immediately after Wüst had taken her track record, but she was not able to reclaim it. Heading into the final lap, the 25-year-old Japanese still had a 0.05 advantage over Wüst, but the final lap proved too much. With 1:57.17, Takagi took second place, but she was happy too.

"Of course coming first is better, but last week I was sixth so today second is better," she said. "I'm on the way up. The speed is not bad, but I have to work on that last lap."

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 1500m Ladies](#)

Respectful rivals in Mass Start

The happiness extended to the ladies' Mass Start. The bunch stayed together in the 16-lap race so it all came down to a final-lap sprint in which Schouten and Blondin were the ones to beat again.

This time out, Schouten came from behind Blondin's back, swerving past her rival on the outside in the final corner. But Blondin did not give in and the two were level heading into the home straight. Eventually Schouten pipped Blondin to the line. Olympic Mass Start champion [Nana Takagi](#) (JPN) finished third.

"This was by the book," Schouten said. "I could come from behind and I could get past her [Blondin]. She still managed to get level, and then it's a one-on-one on the final straight. To win that one is super."

Blondin congratulated Schouten and the two were all smiles afterwards.

"I'm not disappointed with second," the Canadian said. "I like Schouten, we're so competitive. In the past it was a negative competitive, but now it's positive. We both accepted that we are rivals. I started joking around with her a little and she gave it back to me and that lightened the mood. Also, me having Rimmelt [Eldering, a Dutchman] as my coach and him always telling me that Schouten is not that bad of a girl and that I should really go for a beer with her, which hasn't happened yet, but it's a nice environment to compete in. I'm happy for her and I feel that she was really happy for me last week."

Schouten, 27, agreed with 29-year-old Blondin: "Our rivalry has changed. Five years ago we were younger and now we're enjoying it better. We are both fair in the race and that's something you cannot say about everyone in the field. On the ice we are rivals but off the ice we're OK. We respect each other. It's the same with the Italian ([Francesca Lollobrigida](#), who came eighth in Tomaszów Mazowiecki). On the track we are rivals, but off the track she's just a nice girl."

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings Mass Start Ladies](#)

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[Minsk \(BLR\) - Nov 15 – 17](#)

[Tomaszów Mazowiecki \(POL\) – Nov 22 – 24](#)

[Nur-Sultan \(KAZ\) – Dec 6 – 8](#)

[Nagano \(JPN\) – Dec 13 – 15](#)

[Calgary \(CAN\) – Feb 7 – 8](#)

[Final – Heerenveen \(NED\) – Mar 7 - 8](#)

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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.