

January 11, 2020

Heerenveen, Netherlands

Wüst and Krol win 1500m, historic medal for Switzerland

[Thomas Krol](#) (NED) completed his 1500m sweep on the opening day of the ISU European Speed Skating Championships, adding the European title to the national and World titles he already had under his belt. Russia won the men's Team Sprint with bronze medallists Switzerland writing history by seizing their country's first medal at any European speed skating championships.

In the women's competition [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) added a title she did not have yet to her impressive list of honours. The reigning Olympic Champion left Russians [Yevgenia Lalenkova](#) and [Yekaterina Shikhova](#) behind to win the ladies' 1500m. [Angelina Golikova](#), [Olga Fatkulina](#) and [Daria Kachanova](#) (RUS) made amends for their compatriots, winning the ladies Team Sprint.

"Two weeks ago, I won my first national title in the 1500m," Krol said. "Last year I already won the World title and now the European title, which actually is sort of in-between."

The 27-year-old Dutchman was the only one to skate under 1:44, setting a new championships record in 1:43.67. [Denis Yuskov](#) (RUS) came second in 1:44.80, just 0.02 ahead of bronze medal winner [Patrick Roest](#) (NED).

At the first European Single Distance Championships two years ago in Kolomna, Russia, Krol had come second behind Yuskov.

"That was a different Thomas," Krol reflected on the race in Kolomna. "That was a Thomas who made room to let Yuskov go ahead [at the crossing], while he actually had priority. A lot of things have changed since then. The roles have reversed."

Krol skated the fourth fastest 1500m time in history in Thialf, but couldn't touch the track record of 1:43.36 set by Yuskov in 2015.

"It is special, but I'm still not the fastest ever and that's something I really would like to do some time still."

Yuskov was happy to take silver behind Krol. "It's my best time of the season. I'm happy for Thomas because he's a really good person."

Yuskov also looked back at his own track record. "Five years ago, when I skated 1:43 here, that was in space. Now there's Thomas and two or three guys who can make it."

Roest was a bit disappointed to miss out on the silver by only a 0.02 second margin, but he had not expected to be able to beat Krol's time when he got onto the ice in the final pairing.

"When Thomas skates a time like that, I know it's going to be difficult. When he clocks 1:43, I know I skate for second place."

Swiss stunner in Team Sprint

Krol had fully focused on the 1500m and decided to skip the Team Sprint event because he did not have enough time to recover. The Dutch team therefore did not appear in the Team Sprint at all, leaving the floor open for a Swiss surprise.

[Oliver Grob](#), [Christian Oberbichler](#) and [Livio Wenger](#) (SUI) seized bronze in 1:21.44, taking the first ever medal at any European speed skating championships.

"We knew we had the opportunity," Wenger said. "There was a chance today with Holland pulling out."

Wenger understood why the Netherlands had decided not to start, but regretted it too:

"I understand Thomas for sure, I see where he's coming from. But I think it's very sad for the public especially in Thialf. I believe a lot of others had the same thing. The Italians had two [skaters in] the 1500m, the Polish one, the Russians had on. I was in the 1500m. I really believe they [the Netherlands] should have raced because I think they could have won it today."

In absence of the Dutch, Russia ([Ruslan Murashov](#), [Viktor Mushtakov](#) and [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#)) took the honor setting a new championship record in 1:18.92. Norway took silver in 1:20.18.

Kulizhnikov, who had been hampered by injury troubles earlier this season, was happy to be back and pain free.

"My injury is over. But I don't have much experience in the Team Sprint. It's only the second time I skated this event, but the time was very good, so I'm satisfied."

First European title for Wüst

Wüst started in the eighth of ten pairings, against her long-time rival [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE) and she paced her race well, leaving Sáblíková behind from the start and finishing with a 31.16 second final lap to stop the clock at 1:54.88.

Sáblíková was the only one to skate faster in the final lap, but the Czech endurance specialist was too far off the overall pace to have a shot at the podium. She finished fifth in 1:55.52.

Wüst was happy with her final lap, but not so much with the rest of her race:

"I'm moderately satisfied. The first 300m was not the way I wanted, the next lap neither, therefore I had to do it all in the final lap and that appeared to be the right tactic today."

Shikhova started in the final pairing and knew what she had to do to beat Wüst:

"It's always nice to see the [other] skaters before. They skated really fast and that gave me motivation in My own race."

Knowing what to do, is easier than executing that plan, however. Shikhova was a little faster than Wüst in the first 300m and also had a small advantage at the 1100m split, only to bow her head in the final lap. The Russian finished in 1:55.31.

"I started a little too relaxed in the first lap," Shikhova said. "That was a big mistake. I think that if I would have skated the fastest first lap, I could have had a bigger gap before heading into the final two laps."

Shikova's missed out on Wüst's time, and eventually had to settle for bronze behind compatriot Lalenkova, who had set 1:55.22 to be on top after the fifth pairing.

"I did not know whether it would be enough or not. With every pair on the ice [after me] I was praying please..."

Although she got beaten by Wüst, Lalenkova was all smiles: "This is my first medal at the European Championships, of course I'm happy."

Before Friday's 1500m Wüst had already collected a total of eleven medals in European Allround Championships, but she had not skated at the first European Single Distance Championships two years ago in Kolomna, Russia, so her 1500m gold was a first.

"Yes it is," Wüst said. "I'm super happy, it's super cool to become European Champion in front of an almost sold-out Thialf [Stadium]."

Substitute Wüst in Team Sprint

Wüst added a Team Sprint silver racing as a substitute for [Jutta Leerdam](#) (NED) with Femke Kok and [Letitia de Jong](#).

"It's very special to skate in this fantastic atmosphere," Wüst said.

The Dutch ladies, who had won the Team Sprint World Cup albeit in a different line-up, finished in 1:26.62. The Russian ladies took gold in a championship record of 1:26.17, with Poland taking bronze in 1:28.25.

Where to Watch

Viewers will be able to watch either via their national broadcaster / channel and for countries where there are no broadcasters, the ISU will offer a live stream on the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#). You will find the full list in the [Where to Watch news here](#).

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