

January 17, 2021

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

Dutch take four European crowns at season start in Heerenveen Hub

[Antoinette de Jong](#) and [Patrick Roest](#) were crowned European Allround champions at the first of four events of this year's international Speed Skating season in the Heerenveen Hub, while [Jutta Leerdam](#) and [Thomas Krol](#) grabbed the Sprint titles to put the Dutch on top in all four events. [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE) took bronze in the Ladies' Allround competition to claim a record 12th medal in the European Allround Championships.

Confidence boost in 1500m

[Antoinette de Jong](#) led the classification at the halfway point but the defending champion was not confident heading into the final day, after losing more than four seconds to [Irene Schouten](#) in Saturday's 3000m. De Jong made up for that in the 1500m. Taking the ice in the final pairing, De Jong left her main rival for the title far behind from the start.

"It was all or nothing," De Jong said. "After that 1500m race it felt as if my lungs fell out of my body. In yesterday's 3000m I lost so much time. I had just a small buffer left and I knew I had to make a difference in the 1500m."

And what a difference she made: De Jong won the 1500m in one minute, 54.83 seconds, and increased the gap over Schouten to 9.87s in the 5000m. Facing Schouten again in the final distance, De Jong kept her rival behind for most of the race, only to concede just over two seconds in the final laps. Schouten skated 6:55.38 to finish second in the 5000m and De Jong came third in 6:57.72. [Martina Sáblíková](#) won in 6:53.22.

Schouten happy with silver

Schouten was all smiles after finishing second in the overall rankings. "I never expected to be on the podium here, so I'm happy," the 28-year-old said. "On the other hand, I'm a winner and to come second... it's a bit mixed-feelings."

"My 1500m could have been better but even if I had skated half-a-second faster, I wouldn't have come out on top. Antoinette [de Jong] is so good in all four distances. That makes her the well-deserved Allround champion."

Sáblíková takes record podium spot

Behind De Jong and Schouten, a tight three-horse race for third place unfolded on the final day. [Elizaveta Golubeva](#) (RUS) started the 5000m in third place overall after coming fifth in the 1500m in 1:56.64. [Joy Beune](#) (NED) threw her name into contention with a third place in the 1500m, climbing to fourth place in the ranking, but [Martina Sáblíková](#) eventually claimed the overall bronze medal.

The five-time World champion started the 5000m in fifth, 2.63s behind third place, but left the others far behind winning the final distance in 6.53.22. Beune eventually had to settle for fifth place overall, and Golubeva for seventh, while [Natalya Voronina](#) (RUS) climbed to fourth.

Sáblíková's bronze was her 12th medal in the European Allround Championships, a total unmatched by any other speed skater. Eight-time champion Gunda Niemann-Stirnemann (GER) took 11 medals in total, the same amount five-time champion [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) has collected. Wüst, with four silvers, remains above Sáblíková, who has three, in the all-time medal rankings.

Roest wins with biggest margin since 1998

Was there any lingering doubt after the first day that [Patrick Roest](#) would bring home his career-first European title? If there was, the three-time World champion shattered it winning the 1500m in 1:45.53 to increase his lead to more than twenty seconds over [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#) (NOR) in the final 10,000m. Eventually he won with a 2.061 points gap, the biggest winning margin in the European Allround Championships since 1998.

"This one fits well in the list," Roest said after collecting his medal. "It's not just another day at the office, I really had to skate for this and I'm very happy with the title."

Battle for silver

Behind the indomitable Dutchman, Pedersen had to fight for his podium spot after coming third in the 1500m with 1:46.20. His young compatriot [Hallgeir Engebråten](#) came second over the distance (1:46.14), but [Marcel Bosker](#) (NED) had to make up only seven seconds in the 10,000m to catch Pedersen, after the Dutchman's fourth place in the 1500m (1:46.66).

Pedersen skated versus Engebråten in the penultimate pairing and finished in 13:23.63. Bosker and Roest faced each other in the final pairing and Roest tried to help his teammate beat Pedersen for silver. "We had agreed to skate a bit together in the first part of the race," Roest said. Marcel [Bosker] had to make up some time and if you skate together these first few laps come easier."

For Bosker the race had not been easy at all, however. "Until five laps before the finish everything was fine, but then the lights went out," he said. Despite his troubles, Bosker managed to skate 13:16.25, which left him 0.44s ahead of Pedersen to take overall silver. "Pedersen used to be my youth idol," Bosker said. "To defeat him and get silver at the Europeans is something I dreamt of as a kid."

Stunning 10,000m by Van der Poel

Before Roest, Pedersen and Bosker entered the rink for their final battle, [Nils van der Poel](#) fought his own in the 10,000m. The Swedish runner-up in Saturday's 5000m finished in a staggering personal best of 12:42.80 in the first pairing.

None of van der Poel's opponents were able to break the 13-minute barrier in Heerenveen on Sunday. "The idea today was to try and do some 0.5s [30.5 second laps] in the first ten laps and see where that led me. I kind of did that and it felt pretty good," he said. "The 10,000m is not complicated. You have to believe in yourself and stay mentally strong to keep pushing these lap times."

Van der Poel was too far behind in the overall ranking to be in contention for the podium, but his stunning 10,000m lifted him to fourth place overall.

One distance too far for Golikova

Heading into the final 1000m, Golikova defended a 0.57-second gap over Kok and a 0.7-second difference over Leerdam. It proved to be enough to keep Kok at bay, but World 1000m champion Leerdam recovered her stride in her favorite distance and managed to beat Golikova in difficult circumstances. With 1:14.00, Leerdam won the final distance and the overall classification. Golikova finished fifth in the final distance, clocking 1:15.66, and grabbed overall silver. Kok's 1:15.12 in the final 1000m was third-best and gave her overall bronze.

"I was tired," silver medalist Golikova said. "It's not easy, four distances in one weekend." The Russian's first medal in an international sprint classification, having won 500m silverware previously, led to feelings of both disappointment and satisfaction. "A silver medal is great," she said, "But the gold... it was so close. I don't know what I could do more so I think it's good for now."

Leerdam was all smiles. "Yesterday I messed up everything and today was just a good day. Eventually I made up for everything in that final distance," she said. "The ice was a bit softer [than Saturday], therefore I could put pressure in my strokes, which I wasn't able to do yesterday. It was completely different. Physically I felt good [yesterday] but I did not get it back from the ice and now I did so that's great. I did not have this one [European Sprint title] yet. It's the second time I raced in this event and last time out I came fourth, so I'm very happy."

Frustrating win for Verbij

The Men's Sprint tournament resumed with a chaotic 500m on Sunday. [Kai Verbij](#) (NED) who had blown his chances of winning a third consecutive title when he crashed in Saturday's 500m, redeemed himself with a superb 34.58s to win the distance. The victory provided the defending champion with frustration rather than consolation since it served as a reminder that he could have been in contention for another title.

After Verbij's stunning display, [Nico Ihle](#) (GER) crashed out of the race badly. The ice had to be repaired and the following pairings were delayed. It did not affect [Thomas Krol](#) (NED), however. The Dutch 1000m and 1500m specialist, for whom the 500m is an anomaly, finished in 35.30s to stay on top of the standings. [Hein Otterspeer](#) (NED) did not have enough pace in the 500m to really threaten his teammate. With 35.12s he came fifth in the penultimate distance, placing him second overall, 0.32 behind Krol in the final 1000m. [Joel Dufter](#) (GER) came sixth in the second 500m (35.23s) and retained third place in the overall ranking.

Stamina key for Krol in sprint tournament

Apart from fourth-ranked [Viktor Mushtakov](#) (RUS) crashing out of the classification, the final 1000m did not alter the top of the final rankings any further. Krol won in a solid 1:08.02 to claim the title in an event he had not given top priority, placing his focus instead on the 1000m and the 1500m at World Cup events and the World Championships.

"I saw this event merely as a bonus," Krol said. "The 500m is not my hobby but I've done a couple of good ones lately. And if you add that up to my 1000m, it can take you a long way. The 1000m is key to the overall Sprint classification. The field in the 500m is very close but only few sprinters can maintain their pace in the final lap of the 1000m and I've just got the stamina."

Duffer's bronze was his first medal at an international Sprint championships event. "I'm feeling pretty great," he said. "I had no idea where I would stand internationally beforehand so I didn't have any expectations. It's fantastic to start like this in this silly season."

Where to Watch

Viewers will be able to watch the ISU Speed Skating competitions that will take place within the hub 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](#).

All the information is available in the [Where to Watch](#) which will be updated after each competition. The individual announcements and entry lists will be published under the respective events as soon as they are available. For further information regarding the ISU Speed Skating Hub please visit: <https://www.isu.org/heerenveen2021>.

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