

February 13, 2021

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

Bowe embraces the pressure to take gold as Verbij capitalizes on improving form

The USA's [Brittany Bowe](#) collected the third 1000m world title of her career, beating defending champion [Jutta Leerdam](#) (NED) in a head-to-head battle in Heerenveen on Saturday. [Marijke Groenewoud](#) (NED) surprised the pack – and herself – when she crossed the line first to become the youngest-ever Ladies' Mass Start champion at the ISU World Single Distance Championships.

In the Men's competition [Kai Verbij](#) (NED) cashed in on his steeply rising performance curve in the Heerenveen bubble, winning his career-second 1000m World title, and [Joey Mantia](#) (USA) celebrated his third Mass Start world title to equal legendary compatriot [Shani Davis](#) with three golds in the same distance.

'Human' Bowe feels the pressure and wins gold

[Brittany Bowe](#) was on a mission after last year's disappointing World Championships on home ice in Salt Lake City. Having won the two 1000m World Cup races in January, the US athlete felt the burden of being favorite again.

"Pressure is definitely a privilege because not many people get to feel it," the 32-year-old said. "It's whether or not you can embrace it. It doesn't always go the way you want it to go. Sometimes you're able to deal with it and sometimes you're not. We're not machines, we're only humans."

On Saturday she managed to cope with it perfectly. She skated in the penultimate pairing versus [Jutta Leerdam](#) and executed her game plan meticulously. She continued: "The draw was good. You always want to be paired with the best competitor and starting from the inner lane is always nice in the 1000m because you can chase in that last inner [corner]."

"The race went exactly how I replayed it time and time again in my head, and I was really happy to cross the line and see that green number next to my name."

That green number indicated the winning time of one minute, 14.12 seconds. Leerdam took silver in 1:14.67. Both skaters were slower than they had been at the World Cups. Weather conditions are less favorable with more resistance due to high air pressure this weekend.

Leerdam explained: "You skate against a wall and you have to work hard to cut through."

"Of course, I wanted to win gold but I got silver and I have to be satisfied. I'm on the podium with 1500m and 3000m skaters, which tells a lot about the conditions today."

Leerdam, a pure sprinter, referred to Bowe and bronze medalist [Elizaveta Golubeva](#) (RSU) as specialists in longer distances. Golubeva proved that by not only skating the 1000m on Saturday, but the Mass Start too.

"It was a very hard day for me," Golubeva said, "having to start in the 1000m after the semis in the Mass Start. But I've got a medal with a personal best and surprised myself."

Confused Groenewoud forgets to cheer for maiden title

Golubeva finished 15th in the Mass Start, which was dominated by the Dutch, who ended up with a confused gold medalist.

[Marijke Groenewoud](#) (NED) crossed the finish line first, having planned to lead out the final sprint for [Irene Schouten](#) (NED), who ended the race in third place.

Groenewoud said: “In the final 100m I did not see Irene and I suddenly saw [Canada’s Ivanie] Blondin, and she wasn’t supposed to win. I knew I had to skate until the end because when I did that at the World Cup it got me a bronze medal.”

With the Dutch tactics in disarray, Groenewoud did not seem to realize that she had actually won the world title.

“It was too confusing to cheer,” she smiled, “But on the podium I put my arms up in the air.”

In the Dutch game plan Groenewoud would have led out for Schouten, who is considered to be the fastest when it comes down to a bunch sprint, but things went wrong in the penultimate lap of the race.

“There was a little miscommunication. Jillert [coach Jillert Anema, NED], would whistle if I were to make pace at 700m from the line and he would shout if I had to make pace at 500m. He did the latter, but Irene had not heard that and she told me to go earlier, so I did sort of something in between. For me it played out perfectly, but less so for Irene. She was caught up in the hustle behind and did not manage to get out.”

When Schouten finally managed to break free, she was too late to push for gold and finished with the bronze medal behind [Ivanie Blondin](#) (CAN), who complimented 22-year-old Groenewoud with her golden World Championship debut: “Marijke deserved that win, for sure. She had way more speed than I did. I tried to set up on the outside to try to pass her on the inside, and there was none of that.

“In a way, I’m kind of happy for her because this is her first World Championships and becoming World Champion, that’s great. She’s really cute and really nice and it’s easy to support someone that’s friendly and nice like that.”

Verbij on the up ‘like cryptocurrency’

When [Kai Verbij](#) (NED) faced Thursday’s 500m winner [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) in the third-last pairing of the 1000m, only [Håvard Lorentzen](#) (NOR) and [Marten Liiv](#) (EST), the previous duo, had finished in under one minute, nine seconds. The Norwegian and the Estonian just fell off the podium, however.

Verbij crossed the line in 1:08.05s, with Dubreuil finishing 0.51 seconds later to claim bronze. [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RSU) took silver.

With Krol, the 2019 silver medalist, and Kulizhnikov, the world record holder and defending champion, skating in the penultimate and the final pairings respectively, Verbij and Dubreuil were far from certain of glory at the time, but Krol messed up his start and Kulizhnikov fell short.

“I don’t know what happened,” Krol said after his disqualification for two false starts. “I did not stand still twice, and then you’re out. That’s the rules and those rules apply to me too.”

In the final pairing Kulizhnikov, who had already won 500m silver on Friday, managed to beat Dubreuil's time, but his 1:08.31 was 0.26s short of Verbij's.

"It was my third 1000m this season and I got silver," Kulizhnikov said. "I have two silver medals after all the troubles with COVID-19 [the 26-year-old was infected in December] and muscle problems at the World Cup 2. I think it's a good result."

Dubreuil had mixed feelings about his bronze medal. "I got lucky today," he said. "I think Thomas [Krol] would have beaten me for sure but we'll never know. It's unfortunate for him but I did my own race and my race was OK but I would have liked for him to race. I want to beat guys and I don't want to win because they do two false starts. I feel bad for him."

Verbij, who beat Krol in the 1000m at the last World Cup before the World Championships, was happy with his medal and progress. "I had some ups and downs this season, and if you look at my pre-season, I had not expected this [World title]," he said.

"But since I'm in the bubble my performance has gone upwards steeply. I'm like a cryptocurrency, but it's a cryptocurrency that doesn't lose value."

Mantia matches Davis' achievement

[Joey Mantia](#) (USA) won the Men's Mass Start with a powerful sprint in the final lap, leaving [Arjan Stroetinga](#) (NED) and [Bart Swings](#) (BEL) behind to take silver and bronze respectively.

Collecting his third Mass Start gold puts Mantia level with his legendary countryman Shani Davis as only US skaters to win three world titles in a specific event at the ISU World Single Distance Championships. Davis won 1500m gold in 2004, 2007 and 2009, and went one better in the 1000m, taking the title in 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2015.

"Really?" Mantia said. "That's cool, but Shani has a few more Olympic medals than I, so he's still winning."

Mantia felt great coming into the World Championships, which had not been obvious beforehand.

"[It's been] a weird few weeks," he explained. "After having COVID in December I didn't really know what to expect."

"I was skating pretty well in practice but I was really, really tired all the time. The last two World Cups were really rough. The races weren't overly fast but I just felt I couldn't keep up. I had no legs."

Hard work and training volume to build stamina over the past two weeks helped Mantia back into shape and technically he felt better than ever.

"I said to my coach, 'Man, if I get on to the ice and my body gives me what I want it to give me, I'm going to win.' I was extremely confident."

During the 16-lap race, Mantia could hide away in the pack, while [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) chased the early escapees [Artur Janicki](#) (POL) and [Peter Michael](#) (NZL).

Once the two were caught with about five laps to go, Mantia was ready to roll.

He added: "I felt like I could do whatever I wanted and coming down to five laps, I was just licking my chops because I knew, given the opportunity and a clear line, I should be able to win."

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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