

November 12, 2021

Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Poland

Jackson (USA) flies to first gold as Gao (CHN) gears up for home Olympics with debut ISU World Cup Speed Skating win

[Erin Jackson](#) (USA) enjoyed a flying start to the Olympic Speed Skating season in Tomaszów Mazowiecki (POL) on Friday. The US sprinter won the first Women's 500m of the 2021/22 ISU World Cup series with a track record. Irene Schouten (NED) also clocked a track record to win the Women's 3000m. In the day's Men's races, and with the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games in front of a home crowd within sight, [Tingyu Gao](#) (CHN) looks to have caught up with the world's best sprinters right on time. Gao grabbed a career-first World Cup win and a track record. In the 5000m [Nils van der Poel](#) (SWE) also pulverized the track record to take gold.

Jackson surprise

Jackson was paired with [Olga Fatkulina](#) (RUS) in the penultimate of 10 heats and left her opponent behind straight from the start with a 10.39s opener.

Only [Angelina Golikova](#) (RUS) and Marsha Hudey (CAN) were faster over the first 100m, but the Russian World Champion had a slower lap and finished in 38.08s to come fourth, while Hudey ranked 19th.

Jackson was surprised by her first World Cup victory. She didn't compete internationally last season, missing out on the Heerenveen bubble do to a badly timed eye injury.

"I was moving from one house to another, and a bungee cord snapped and got stuck in my eye. So, I was out for a month or so," she said.

Jackson's win showed once again that the transition between inline skating and Speed Skating can be very successful. She switched sports in 2017.

"My first season was 2017/2018 season. It didn't feel easy at the time but, looking back, it was kind of a quick transition. So I ended up going to the 2018 Olympics. And that was my first international event."

At those Games in PyeongChang, Jackson ended up 24th in the 500m. Winning her first World Cup race in Poland gives her a better perspective for the 2022 Games in Beijing.

"It's still early in the season, of course. It's like anyone's game, but I'm going for the top, of course."

Silver and bronze

Fatkulina couldn't keep up with Jackson but managed to get on to the podium in third place in 38.07s.

"I was surprised with Erin's speed," she said. "But I followed my plan and got the bronze, not so bad for the first stage of the World Cup."

Silver medalist Kodaira had already beaten her own 2019 track record by 0.03 seconds before Jackson and Fatkulina got on to the ice.

The Olympic Champion was back in the international field after Japan decided not to travel to Europe for the shortened bubble season in Heerenveen last year.

“I’m so happy that we can compete with the other nations again,” she smiled. Having suffered from a back ache over the past few years Kodaira was also happy to be able to skate without pain, which means more to her than her results at the Olympic Games in Beijing next February.

“I want to enjoy skating. Gold, silver or bronze, that doesn’t matter.”

Schouten not used to winning yet

[Irene Schouten](#) (NED) has already won 13 Mass Start races in the World Cup over the past eight years but she won her first World Cup gold medal in a classic distance only last season. She also won the 3000m and 5000m races at the Dutch national championships in October, and in Poland she started the international campaign with another 3000m gold in a track record four minutes, 04.00 seconds.

“Winning, I never get used it,” she smiled.

Schouten beat [Isabelle Weidemann](#) (CAN), who ended up second after also having broken, in a previous pairing, the 2019 track record, which was set by [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE) and had stood at 4:06.13. Sáblíková herself finished in sixth place in 4:07.46, while [Francesca Lollobrigida](#) (ITA) took bronze in 4:06.52.

Weidemann’s track record had not distracted Schouten.

“I was not really looking to the other girls but of course I saw the time and I thought OK, it’s possible to beat.”

During her race, Schouten did have to make amends, however.

“I saw my second lap and it was really slow. I knew, if I want to win, I had to be faster than that lap, so then I thought OK, now I need the speed. I built up the speed and my laps went faster.”

Happy as she was with the gold medal, Schouten realized that the season’s still young.

“I’m really happy but it’s not really important at the moment for me. It’s more important for getting in a good shape in the qualification for the Olympics.”

Fuel for training

Weidemann was excited to be able to start a regular international World Cup season again.

“It’s really exciting. I used it a lot as fuel this summer, through our hard training blocks, to remember that we get to come back and race and the team is just so stoked to be here.”

Like Schouten, she knows that being on the podium in November doesn’t say much about her chances at the Olympic Games in February.

“I’m trying not to read too much into it. The season is so long and obviously all of us want to do the best we can at the Olympics. I’m trying to take it slow, and I feel really great that I get to at least push the top, but (there is) lots of work left to do.”

Gao’s encouraging gold

Gao’s previous best World Cup results were the silver medals he won in Harbin (CHN) in 2016 and in Minsk (BLR) in 2019.

“I’m very excited about my first World Cup gold,” he said. “But the main goal this season is to go to the podium of the Beijing Olympic Games.”

Gao left silver medalist [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) 0.28s behind in Poland. Last season’s World Champion [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) came third, trailing by 0.42s.

The big gap with the rest of the field did not make Gao overconfident.

“All the 500m skaters are about the same level,” he said. “Winning encourages me again to put in the extra effort.”

Canada’s odd man out

Dubreuil noted that he was the odd one out, being the only non-Asian skater in the top five of the 500m, after [Yuma Murakami](#) (JPN) and [Joon-Ho Kim](#) (KOR) finished fourth and fifth, respectively.

“I always say that I want to skate against all the best skaters in the world, all the guys that were not there last year [the four Asian skaters in the top five], when I won the World Championships.

“Obviously two guys beat me today but my goal is to beat everybody, and I’m happy everybody’s here. It’s makes for more exciting races and I think over time it’s going to bring the best out of me.”

The difference between Gao and the rest of the field was the opener, according to Dubreuil’s analysis.

“When you open 9.32 (seconds), then you have a pretty big lead, right? And it’s not like his lap is bad. His lap is as good as ours.

“It’s just one race but, at the same time, today he was clearly the best and I expect him to win a lot of medals this fall, but we’ll see how it builds up throughout the year. We all want to be better in February than we are now. But today he was extremely impressive.

“It means some homework for me. I’m probably never going to open 9.32. If I want to beat him, I need to go into high 9.4, or at least a low 9.5, and have a better lap than he does.”

Van der Poel picks up where he left off

Having surprised the international Speed Skating community last year with a World Record in the 10,000m at low-lying Thialf in Heerenveen (NED), Nils van der Poel picked up where he left off at the start of the new World Cup season.

“Feels like it that way,” he laughed, having shattered [Patrick Roest](#)’s (NED) 2019 track record by almost four seconds, coming home in six minutes, 15.56 seconds.

Van der Poel left the rest of the field more than five seconds behind, with [Ted-Jan Bloemen](#) (CAN) taking silver in 6:20.94, and Roest edging out compatriot [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) by 0.19s for the bronze in 6:21.03.

The big gap did not mean a lot, Van der Poel said.

“It doesn’t say as much as Jorrit (Bergsma) skating a 6.07 in Heerenveen (at the Dutch national championships in October). It’s a hard track to be fast on (in Tomaszów Mazowiecki). I’m from Sweden, I’m used to slower rinks.”

Yet, Van der Poel looked ahead to the rest of the season with confidence.

“I just did pretty well. It’s the place to be right now but you shouldn’t underestimate the other skaters. This is not where we’re usually competing.”

Bloemen agreed with Van der Poel about the track.

“I was really excited to measure myself with the rest of the world. The slower tracks like these, it’s difficult for me (being used to training at the fast Olympic Oval in Calgary). So I’m really happy to come out second here.”

Bloemen did not want to downplay Van der Poel’s effort, however.

“A 6.15 here today is really impressive. I must say, I expected to be a little bit closer to the winning time with my race, so good on him.”

Three-time and reigning Olympic Champion [Sven Kramer](#) (NED), who qualified for the Dutch World Cup squad by the skin of his teeth in October, clocked a disappointing 6:30.097 for ninth place in the B Division.

“You hope for an upward line”, Kramer said. “But today just was not good enough. I can’t really put the finger on the sore spot, but it has to improve, that’s obvious.”

500m Women

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

3000m Women

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 3000m Women](#)

500m Men

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

5000m Men

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 5000m Men](#)

The event entry quotas for the individual distances will be determined by the [Special Olympic Qualification Classification \(SOQC\)](#) based on results from the different ISU World Cup Speed Skating Competitions and the full details are available in [ISU Communication 2405](#).

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

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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For further information on ISU Speed Skating visit <https://www.isu.org/speed-skating>

ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series 2021/22:
[Tomaszów Mazowiecki \(POL\) – Nov 12 – 14, 2021](#)
[Stavanger \(NOR\) - Nov 19 - Nov 21, 2021](#)
[Salt Lake City \(USA\) - Dec 03 - Dec 05, 2021](#)
[Calgary \(CAN\) – Dec 10 - Dec 12, 2021](#)
[Final – Heerenveen \(NED\) – Mar 12 - Mar 13, 2022](#)

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. However during the Olympic season the Series consists of five Events.

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 and during the Olympic season they are Olympic Qualifying Events. 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 Women 500m, 1000m, 1500m, the combined 3000m / 5000m, Mass Start, Team Pursuit and Team Sprint. For further information please visit isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating.