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Beijing, China

Indomitable Schouten reigns supreme in long distances **Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games**

The closer she comes to the line, the faster she gets. [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) is the only woman who's able to bring her lap times down when the going gets tough. Adding the 5000m Olympic gold to Saturday's 3000m title, the 29-year-old Dutchwoman reigns supreme in the Women's long distances at the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games. [Isabelle Weidemann](#) (CAN) stepped up from 3000m bronze to 5000m silver, and [Martina Sáblíková](#) (CZE) seized bronze to complete her medal set in the distance.

Sáblíková's even pace

Sáblíková (CZE) started in the first pair after the ice-cleaning break, facing a time of 6 minutes and 56.99 seconds set by world record holder [Natalya Voronina](#) (ROC). The 2010 and 2018 Champion, who added a silver in 2018, was not too impressed: "After the times, which I skated in training, I thought that I could do faster than 6:56s. I was hoping for 6:50 or 6:52," Sáblíková said. Skating at a very even pace with one sub-32s lap and eleven sub-33s laps, she finished in 6 minutes and 50.09 seconds. "When I came to the finish I saw 6:50 and thought, okay that's a really good time."

Most special distance

Next up was Weidemann (CAN) versus [Ragne Wiklund](#) (NOR) in the penultimate pair, and after having won bronze in the 3000m on Saturday, she also went in confidently. "I was still nervous today, but I was a lot more in control. I felt powerful going to the line. The 5000m is very special to me. It's the event that I love the most. I don't have to start out as fast, so it's not as nerve wracking, (but) I'm always nervous to skate at the Olympics."

Weidemann did not focus on lap times. "I wanted to skate technically really well today. I wanted to focus on my tactical cues. The 5k can be really long so I wanted to just focus on skating for the first few laps." She also thanked Wiklund for keeping up with her in the first few laps: "It helped, I had a pair that was right with me for a little bit. I haven't skated with somebody like that for a while. So I wanted to be in control for the first few laps and I knew that the fight was going to come early." Weidemann managed to keep her lap times under 33s as well, even adding three sub-32 laps halfway through the race, to finish in 6 minutes and 50.09 seconds.

Emptied the tank

"I really, really emptied the tank today," she said. "I gave all my energy. So I looked up I couldn't really see the time. I haven't skated that deep into the hole in a while and I was just trying to stay on my feet." Loving long distance skating, Weidemann welcomes every bit of competition she can get in the Women's field. "(Wiklund) is a great competitor and she's a young star coming up through the distance world, and we need more women skating the distance events. So it's always a pleasure to skate with somebody that can hold their own." Wiklund eventually came in fifth in 6:56.34s behind fourth placed [Francesca Lollobrigida](#) (ITA).

Indomitable Schouten

Lollobrigida herself skated a personal best and an Italian record in 6:51.76s in the final pairing versus the indomitable Schouten. The 3000m Champion smashed the 20-year-old Olympic record of 6:46.91 set by [Claudia Pechstein](#) (GER) in Salt Lake City (USA), finishing in 6:43.51s. “A great race and great to have such a good time, a Dutch record too,” she smiled. The double Olympic Champion was not as nervous as she had been before her first event on Saturday. “In the previous (distance), there was so much pressure. I wanted to become an Olympic champion so much and after that, I could call myself one. There’s not many people who can say that, and now I’m even a double Olympic Champion.”

Despite the lesser nerves, Schouten got the racing fire lit when she saw Weidemann’s time. “I thought, wow, now I really have to make an effort, but I felt well and when I saw six laps on the board, I could bring it down smoothly.”

Powerful weapon

Bringing the lap times down is Schouten’s not so secret but very powerful weapon and she’s the only one who does it in the Women’s field. “When I lose two tenths in the third lap, I don’t panic, because I know I’m faster (than the others) in the second part of the race. I often even win a full second in the final lap (...),” she explained. “It’s in my body, it’s training, it’s also the marathon (Schouten does a lot of marathon skating back in the Netherlands), in which I also have to skate the final lap fastest.”

Weidemann almost enjoyed watching her own time being beaten: “Schouten is incredible,” she said. “I wanted to cheer for her. I knew that I couldn’t, but just watching her skate. She takes the level up so much. I hope in the future that I can push her time and push the event even more. I think the faster more women can go, the better. And watching her skate has given me a fire for sure for the summer.”

Counting medals

After having won two Olympic titles already, Schouten is still in the mix for another two (Team Pursuit and Mass Start). “I’ve had the easy ones now, she said. “In these events (classical distances as opposed to the Team Pursuit and the Mass Start) you’ve got control.”

Schouten is the fifth woman to win the 3000m and 5000m double at an Olympic Winter Games, following [Yvonne van Gennip](#) (NED) in 1988, [Gunda Niemann-Stirnemann](#) (GER) in 1992, Pechstein in 2002, and Sáblíková in 2010.

Sáblíková herself became the most decorated Olympian from the Czech Republic, summer or winter, breaking a tie she had been in with cross-country skier Katerina Neumannova. Having won so much silverware already, did not make it any easier for her to start in the 5000m after Saturday’s fourth place in the 3000m. “When I was 20-years-old, I was not so nervous as I was now. Because now, I think too much about everything. (All the medals) I have in my gallery (...) Everybody who looks at me and they say, okay, Sáblíková is at the start and she will have a medal. And, oh my god, it’s so hard to do that.”

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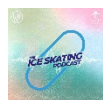
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