

March 12, 2022

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

## Wüst and Kramer wave farewell in packed Thialf at World Cup Final

[Ireen Wüst](#) and [Sven Kramer](#) (NED) waved the Thialf home crowd farewell at the ISU World Cup Final in Heerenveen on Saturday. Wüst, who came fourth in the 1500m at the World Cup final, collected 13 Olympic medals (6G, 5S, 2B) and multiple European and World titles, while Kramer won nine Olympic medals (4G, 2S, 3B). Kramer had already skated his last competition at the Beijing Olympic Games. Before the Dutch speed skating icons celebrated with the public, [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) secured the 1500m World Cup, while [Erin Jackson](#) (USA) took her fifth 500m World Cup win of the season. In the men's competition, [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) managed to take 500m silver after a horror week, [Kjeld Nuis](#) (NED) made amends for missing the Olympic 1000m, and [Nils van der Poel](#) (SWE) had his own farewell race in the 5000m.

### The end of an era

The farewell of Kramer and Wüst marks the end of an era. "We've held on for quite a while didn't we?", Kramer joked after he had been decorated by Dutch King Willem Alexander, had one of the Thialf corners named after him and carried out a final lap of honor in his hometown stadium.

The Dutchman won a record nine World Allround Championships, 10 European Allround Championships, 21 World Single Distance titles and nine Olympic medals (4G, 2S, 3B).

Kramer entered international speed skating with a bronze medal at the World Allround Championships in 2005, and finished with a 16<sup>th</sup> place in the Mass Start in Beijing. His last season may not have been what he had dreamed of, but Kramer's entire career is unmatched in the history of speed skating. He left the ice without regrets.

The now officially retired speed skater is going to focus on a role in the management of his trade team with coach Jac Orië, and he hopes that the younger generation will pick up on his legacy.

"The greatest example of arrogance is to think you're irreplaceable," he said. "What I'll miss most, is preparing for the really important moments, when you know it has to happen, and there's no excuse. That drive is nowhere else to be found in life. But I'm going to discover how things will be different."

### Worst preparation ever

Before Kramer and Wüst waved goodbye to the public and even before most skaters packed their blades to head off for Thialf on Saturday morning, [Laurent Dubreuil](#) (CAN) was at the airport in Oslo. The Canadian World Cup leader in the 500m, had to withdraw from the ISU World Sprint Championships in Hamar because of a positive Covid-19 test last week, but had managed to get a negative test on Friday to become eligible for the World Cup final.

He looked back on last week and on his rollercoaster Saturday: "I was disappointed first, extremely surprised, because I had no symptoms. I raced really good on the first day of World Sprints. I felt like the Championship was mine, and that nobody could beat me, and then the only thing that could actually make me not win happened."

Dubreuil came in fourth in the Olympic 500m, but the Hamar disappointment had been a bigger blow. He said: "That fourth place at the Olympics, I got three guys who beat me, that's sport, but catching Covid during the World Championship, you can't do anything about it. That's the worst thing, you don't control it."

Dubreuil was desperate to skate at the World Cup final in his beloved Heerenveen, where he would meet up with his wife and daughter, but he did not get a negative PCR test before Friday afternoon, only being able to catch a plane on Saturday morning.

"I got to the airport at 4AM, caught a flight at 6:30AM, landed at 8:45AM, waited for my bag for an hour and a half because my blades were in it. Then I got a shuttle bus over here. I got on the ice without warming up, warmed up a bit on ice and then an hour later I was racing.

"It was the worst preparation you can imagine, the worst of my career. And obviously it's not the best race of my career, but with the circumstances...it's the best race I've ever done. I would have been happy finishing 10<sup>th</sup>."

Dubreuil eventually finished in 34.53 seconds to take silver. [Tatsuya Shinhama](#) (JPN) won in 34.38s and his compatriot [Wataru Morishige](#) took bronze in 34.53s.

Dubreuil retained his lead in the World Cup rankings with a 62 point gap over Shinhama, who's in second. With Morishige close by in third, Dubreuil still has a fight on his hands to secure the World Cup in the final race on Sunday.

"I have 24 hours to recover and tomorrow I hopefully have one more good race in me," he concluded.

### **Nuis makes amends**

Dubreuil also raced the 1000m, but the Olympic silver medalist had emptied the tank already and finished 13<sup>th</sup> in 1 minute and 9.91 seconds. [Kjeld Nuis](#) won the distance in 1:08.05, making amends for having failed to qualify in this distance for the Olympic Games in Beijing, where he did manage to defend his 1500m title successfully.

"I did not skate a 1000m for a long time," the Dutchman said. "I thought, I'll show them. I was really eager to win this 1000m, to show that I can be the best in this distance too."

Olympic Champion [Thomas Krol](#) came in second in 1:08.24 and took the 1000m World Cup, while [Hein Otterspeer](#) (NED) completed a Dutch podium sweep in 1:08.70.

### **Van der Poel says goodbye with endurance World Cup**

[Nils van der Poel](#) (SWE) finished the season and his career as a professional speed skater with an expected win in the 5000m. The 25-year-old Olympic 5000m and 10,000m champion, who also added the World Allround title to his trophy cabinet last week, stopped the clock at 6 minutes and 8.81 seconds, with [Bart Swings](#) (BEL) taking silver in 6:15.12 and [Davide Ghiotto](#) (ITA) seizing bronze in 6:19.38.

Van der Poel, who has publicly shared his excruciating training schedule on the internet (<https://www.howtoskate.se/>), confirmed his decision to quit as a professional speed skater afterwards. He'll continue as a hobby skater, he said. "We do have these 250 meter rinks and we'll race 300m to 10,000m meters, like an Allround program. And you get to choose the songs during your race, so you just choose the most annoying songs, so the other skater has to listen to it. That's really fun." Furthermore the Swedish world record-holder in the 5000m and 10,000m will try to share his sports experiences.

"I'm going to try to get a little vacation, and then I'm going to do some public speaking to begin with, I get a lot of requests. And then eventually I'll set a new goal and go for it, we'll see."

What's the most important thing he takes away from his speed skating career?

"It's my life I think. I really got to know myself in a way I don't think I would have otherwise. I was forced to realize my weaknesses on this path towards the striving for perfection, and I think the secret to that is really love, caring for yourself and those around you. I think that's the biggest lesson."

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

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 1000m Men](#)

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

## Speed skating queen Ireen Wüst waves farewell to her home crowd as Takagi wins 1500m World Cup

“It was the most awesome experience of my skating career,” [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) said. At age 35, having collected 13 Olympic medals (six gold, five silver, two bronze) and multiple European and World titles, the Dutch speed skating queen of a generation waved the Thialf home crowd farewell at the ISU World Cup Final in Heerenveen on Saturday. Wüst finished fourth in her last race as a professional speed skater, leaving the 1500m World Cup gold to [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN). [Erin Jackson](#) (USA) took her fifth 500m World Cup win of the season, retaining her lead in the ranking with only Sunday’s race to go in the shortest distance.

### Standing ovation

After having no spectators in the Heerenveen stands since Covid-19 hit in early 2020, the speed skating community couldn’t be happier to have a full house in Thialf again.

It was the perfect environment for Wüst’s swan song. She said: “After two years in a packed Thialf, with the home crowd, all my family and friends, my big supporters they all were there for me cheering.

“Even before I skated, I already got the standing ovation. Everybody was cheering for me, so that got me really emotional.”

Wüst faced Miho Takagi in the final pairing of the 1500m.

Takagi said: “I was so happy looking forward to skate here with such a huge audience and with Wüst. I feel so special to have shared much of my skating career with Ireen.”

As much as Takagi appreciated and respected her opponent, on the ice she was merciless. With 24.25s in the first 300m, she had the fastest opener, leaving Wüst 0.91s adrift already. In the following 800m, Takagi increased the gap and she hung in for the final lap to finish in 1 minute and 53.32 seconds, only 0.22s short of Wüst’s 2020 track record. Wüst herself stopped the clock at 1:54.77 to come fourth. [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) took silver in 1:54.33, and [Ragne Wiklund](#) (NOR) bronze in 1:54.75.

“It was not my best 1500m, but I enjoyed every second of it,” Wüst said. “I enjoyed Beijing, but this (the audience cheering for the skaters) is what you miss, we missed it for two years. The sound, it was incredible.”

### Jewel in the crown

Wüst’s gold medal in the 1500m at the Beijing Olympics was the jewel in the crown of an Olympic journey which began at the 2006 Games in Torino. The Champion rated her latest Olympic title as “just one of my six gold medals, one of my children.”

Looking back on her 16-year-long professional speed skating career, she pointed out one title which had meant a little more than all the others.

“Winning the 1500m in Inzell (GER) in 2019 after Paulien died, I think that was my ultimate high (her close friend and former World Allround Champion [Paulien van Deutekom](#) died of cancer in January 2019), and of course after that all the Olympic gold medals and the World Championships Allround.”

After the race Wüst, together with [Sven Kramer](#) (NED) who also waved farewell, was honored by the Dutch King Willem-Alexander, Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte, and IOC president Thomas Bach.

What the future holds in store for Wüst, only time will tell. “First holiday, and then we’ll see after.”

### World Cup for Takagi, Bowe second

Having won the final race of the World Cup season, Miho Takagi, who took Olympic silver behind Wüst in

Beijing, also won the 1500m World Cup. [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) and [Ayano Sato](#) (JPN) came in second and third in the 1500m World Cup ranking.

Bowe joined the farewell party for Wüst with a big smile. "I can't think of a better way to end the season. Even just getting on (the ice) for warm-up, I had to hold back tears with the (crowd in the) corners there cheering," she said.

"It's just such an honor to race in this building and to skate this 1500m, celebrating Ireen. I can't put into words how much it has meant to race my entire career against her. So for this to be the end of the road here, is just the beginning of her legacy. Words can't express how honored I am to be her friend and a rival of hers."

Bowe did not feel like quitting herself just yet. The 34-year-old said: "I'm a racer. My heart's still in it, my head's still in it. I will have to take some time just to see where the mind and body are. I can't say that I'm done standing right here today, but we'll see."

Takagi had enjoyed the packed Thialf rink too. The Japanese Olympic 1000m Champion did not know if she would be back racing in Heerenveen next season, however: "I haven't decided yet. I have to take rest and I need to think about my future. I think maybe a change of environment would be good, but I have to think about it."

### **Jackson in pole position to win 500m World Cup**

Before the farewell race of Wüst, [Erin Jackson](#) (USA) won her fifth 500m World Cup race this season, and the first as reigning Olympic Champion. With 37.32 seconds, she kept Dutch [Femke Kok](#) (NED) 0.32s adrift. [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) came third in 37.72s.

Jackson definitely enjoyed skating in front of a huge crowd. "This is only my second time skating in Thialf, even during the warm up the crowd was just amazing. It's really cool."

Being 48 points ahead of Kodaira in the ranking, Jackson is in pole position to secure the 500m World Cup on Sunday. "I think it would be awesome to finish out the World Cup season, winning the rankings," she said. "That's my goal here."

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

ISU World Cup Speed Skating [Standings 1500m Women](#)

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

### **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](http://isu.org/WorldCupSpeedSkating).