



Press release

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Japanese ladies set world record in Team Pursuit

The Japanese ladies are on fire this season and they showed it again in the Team Pursuit on Saturday. They broke their own world record to add another gold to their impressive tally. [Heather Bergsma](#) (USA) claimed her first World Cup gold this season in the Ladies 1000m, [Kai Verbij](#) (NED) did the same in the Men's 1000m and the Dutch men took home the men's Team Pursuit gold on day 2 of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating in Calgary.

World record for Japan

In the ladies' Team Pursuit Japan ([Miho Takagi](#), [Nana Takagi](#) and [Ayaka Kikuchi](#)) faced the Netherlands ([Antoinette de Jong](#), [Marrit Leenstra](#) and [Lotte van Beek](#)) in the final pairing.

Both teams were on pace to break the world record (2:55.77) that [Nana Takagi](#), Miho Takagi and [Ayano Sato](#) had set three weeks ago in Heerenveen. Japan kept the Dutch ladies at bay, heading into the final 200m with a 1.29 second advantage.

But misfortune struck for the Netherlands when Van Beek crashed on her way to the finish line and Japan crossed first in 2:53.88.

Not perfect yet

The Japanese ladies have won the Team Pursuit World Cup title for the past two years but they have stepped up their game again this season.

"We have trained together for years now and we have all improved individually this year," Miho Takagi said.

She did not want to look forward to what is in store for next week's World Cup event in Salt Lake City.

"I don't know who will skate next week. This race was not perfect yet. The last time we skated in this particular line-up was three years ago and we were not able to execute everything perfectly today.

"We have four members in our team and we want to bring it up to a level where it doesn't matter for the outcome in which line-up we actually skate."

Olympic concerns for Dutch ladies

Dutch national coach Geert Kuipers was disappointed about the crash.

“It’s not as easy as everybody always seems to think,” he said.

“We couldn’t train much in this line-up together because we only heard that Ireen [Wüst] would not be able to skate late last week.

“For Lotte [van Beek], it was four years ago since she last participated in this team. I could blame her for everything, but that doesn’t help. She skated a fantastic race until she crashed. What can you say?

“We skated on national record pace. The result is quite annoying, especially because we’re not yet sure of Olympic qualification because of that.”

Japan leads World Cup ranking

Germany’s [Claudia Pechstein](#), [Roxane Dufter](#) and [Gabriele Hirschi](#) took silver in 2:56.76, and Canada’s [Ivanie Blondin](#), [Kali Christ](#) and [Isabelle Weidemann](#) collected bronze in 2:56.80.

Japan leads the World Cup ranking with an immaculate record, ahead of Canada and Germany. The Netherlands are seventh. The first six teams qualify directly for the Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang.

Bergsma wins ladies’ 1000m after Kodaira crash

[Heather Bergsma](#) (USA) took advantage when 1000m World Cup leader [Nao Kodaira](#) (JPN) crashed out in the final pairing.

Bergsma clocked 1:13.37 in the penultimate pair to beat [Yekaterina Shikhova’s](#) (RUS) 1:13.70. The Russian skater had set the pace in the seventh pair against compatriot [Olga Fatkulina](#), who ended up fifth in 1:13.90.

Kodaira took the ice in the final pair against [Marrit Leenstra](#) (NED), and the Japanese sprinter started like a rocket, with a 17.35 second opener.

A shock went through the stadium, however, when Kodaira slipped on the second inner corner and crashed into the boards.

She got to her feet and finished the race in 2:05.88. Her coach Yuki Masahiro said she had a bruised left thigh but no serious injuries.



Bergsma was disappointed not to have seen where Kodaira's superfast opener might have taken her.

"It's a bummer," she said. "You want to see what she can put out there today. With 17.3, she was incredibly fast in the opener. I guess we'll see what she can do in Salt Lake City next week."

Leenstra completed her race in 1:13.72 to clinch a bronze medal and Shikhova took the silver.

Bergsma was happy to collect her first World Cup win of season after two difficult weekends in Heerenveen and Stavanger.

"I improved a lot," she said. "I was looking for a little speed today. I think that was good, the first 600m, so I'm happy with that."

Verbij wins Men's 1000m after Kulizhnikov disqualified

[Kai Verbij](#) (NED) took gold in the men's 1000m in Calgary on Saturday after fastest finisher [Pavel Kulizhnikov](#) (RUS) was disqualified for crossing the marker irregularly in the inner corner.

It was Verbij's second career individual World Cup gold but he downplayed the achievement.

"The first time [last season's 1000m in Berlin], [Kjeld Nuis](#) did not skate, so that actually was a sort of present," he said.

"And this time Kulizhnikov is disqualified. It looks nice on paper but I still feel like I never really won a World Cup race myself."

Verbij started in the final race against Norway's [Håvard Holmefjord Lorentzen](#) and finished in 1 minute, 6.93 seconds, just 0.03 faster than Nuis, who took silver.

Lorentzen, who led the 1000m World Cup rankings after winning in Stavanger two weeks ago, looked a little unstable. He could not catch Verbij in the final inner corner and clocked 1:06.98 to end up third.

Nuis skated in the penultimate race against Kulizhnikov, who finished in 1:06.88, just ahead of the Dutchman, whose silver was his first World Cup medal this season.

"I lacked a little confidence," Nuis said.

"Jac [coach Jac Orie] said after the race that it was really good. It's such a small gap. The top skaters are so close. Last year I already had a couple of gold medals around my neck at this stage of the season, now it's the first [medal]."

“The past two World Cups I was not fit. Now I am fit but you still have to show it, so therefore, this race is a good confidence booster.”

Verbij’s victory enabled him to take the lead in the 1000m World Cup standings with 260 points, ahead of Lorentzen (240) and Nuis (180).

In the men’s B Division, 18-year-old [Jae Woong Chung](#) (KOR) skated a world record for juniors in the 1000m, finishing in 1:08.41. He broke Beorn Nijenhuis’ (NED) 2003 Calgary world record of 1:08.53.

Dutch men bounce back in Team Pursuit

The Dutch made amends for their 10th place in the Team Pursuit on home soil in Heerenveen three weeks ago, winning the event at the Calgary Olympic Oval on Saturday. Japan took silver and Norway clinched the bronze.

The Dutch skated in a different line-up than three weeks ago, with [Sven Kramer](#) coming in for [Jorrit Bergsma](#) and joining [Jan Blokhuijsen](#) and [Koen Verweij](#).

Coach Geert Kuiper chose not to take any risks with Olympic qualification at stake.

“We told each other to be smart because we couldn’t afford any mistakes,” he said.

“That’s why the world record was never a goal for us. We just went out there for a winning time.”

Finishing in 3 minutes, 36.11 seconds, only 0.54 seconds short of the world record, the Dutch achieved just what they had aimed for: setting a winning time early.

Many other teams had difficulty staying on their feet. Russia, Canada and USA all crashed out of the race.

Canada’s [Denny Morrison](#), [Ted-Jan Bloemen](#) and [Benjamin Donnelly](#) started in rapid fashion but a crash in the second lap put paid to the home crowd’s hopes for a world record.

Japan’s [Shota Nakamura](#), [Shane Williamson](#) and [Seitaro Ichinohe](#) managed to stay upright in their race against the USA, who crashed out in the final lap. Japan finished in 3:38.65 to take the silver medal.

Norway faced World Cup leader Korea in the final pair. Korea had trouble keeping a tight formation, whereas Norway’s [Sverre Lunde Pedersen](#), [Håvard Bøkko](#) and [Simen Spieler Nilsen](#) clocked 3:38.94 in a solid race to take the bronze.

It was enough for Norway to grab the World Cup lead in the Men’s Team Pursuit, with Korea and the Netherlands in second and third positions.

Dutch coach Kuiper no longer worries about Olympic qualification for his men. The first six nations in the World Cup ranking after four events qualify directly, and the last two spots are given to the teams with the fastest times.

“I think we are certain [to qualify],” he said. “Even if we would end up outside the top six our 3:36 is better than other teams outside the top six would be able to skate.”

Full [results and classifications](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using **#WCSpeedSkating** and **#SpeedSkating** and watch the live stream on the [ISU Skating Channel](#).

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About ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2017/18 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. Skaters can earn points at each competition, and the skater who has the most points in a given distance at the end of the series is the World Cup winner of that distance. Skaters also accumulate Grand World Cup points each time they compete in a distance. During the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final, the Lady and the Man with the most Grand World Cup points is crowned the Grand World Cup winner.

The results in the individual distances in the World Cup ranking are the main qualifying method for the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships.

A number of World Cup titles are awarded every season. For Men: 500m, 1000m, 1500m, combined 5000m/10000m, Team Pursuit, Mass Start and Team Sprint. For Ladies: 500 m, 1000 m, 1500 m, the combined 3000m / 5000m, Team Pursuit, Mass Start and Team Sprint.