

February 17, 2022

Beijing, China

## **Takagi saves the best for the last to win 1000m** **Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games**

She saved the best for the last. After having collected three silver medals in the Beijing National Speed Skating Oval already, [Miho Takagi](#) (JPN) finally seized her much coveted first individual Olympic gold in the 1000m. In a superb display of technique and power, the 27-year-old World Sprint Champion shattered the Olympic record by a 0.37 margin in 1 minute 13.19s, leaving [Jutta Leerdam](#) (NED) 0.64s behind in silver. World record holder [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) had to settle for bronze in 1:14.61s.

### **Spreading attention to exert focus**

Becoming World Allround Champion in 2018 and World Sprint Champion in 2020, Takagi (JPN) has shown that she's one of the most versatile Skaters in the world. At the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games, she started in all long track events apart from the 5000m and the Mass Start. After she won silver medals in the 1500m, the 500m and the Team Pursuit and placing 6<sup>th</sup> in the 3000m, one might think that her versatility comes at the cost of getting to the absolute top in one single distance, but Takagi proved that wrong with her 1000m title. She explained her approach: "I have a tendency to overthink everything, and because of this it is better that I race a lot of different events (...), because I can exert more focus."

For Takagi, all Beijing 2022 medals were special: "For every event, I don't want to pick. I give it my all in all my events. There have been lots of ups and downs for me, winning silver medals. To finally win the gold, I am happy, but I am happy not just for the medal, but because I could really give it my best today. That's why I am so content."

### **Non-Sprinter De Jong**

When Takagi took the ice, the three Dutch competitors were on top of the ranking, with Leerdam (NED) leading ahead of [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) and [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED). De Jong had set 1:14.92s before the ice cleaning break. Many others were faster in the opener and even at the 600m split, but De Jong's staggering 28.96s last lap proved too much for most. "It's interesting for a non-Sprinter in a field of Sprinters," De Jong said during the break after nine pairs. "We'll see what it's worth." It eventually got her into fifth position overall.

### **Leerdam's mis-stroke**

Leerdam (NED) came on in the second pair after the break. She took a much bigger margin over De Jong in the opener and was over a second ahead at the 600m split, despite a mis-stroke in second lap. Skating versus [Kimi Goetz](#) (USA), Leerdam faced a difficult first change-up at the backstretch. "I thought I could pass her by (coming from the outer lane), because I was so much faster but she crossed in front straightaway. I startled a bit and I had to cross behind her back, which was okay, but then maybe I lost a little focus when I entered the corner and I had so much speed." Leerdam still set the fastest middle lap of the field in 26.70s, and she maintained her speed well in the final lap to finish in 1 minute and 14.61s. "Right after seeing my time I thought it was quite fast. But I felt quite disappointed because I knew I was able to do even better if I didn't make the mistake," she said. She set a high bar. "But if I hadn't made that mistake, it would have been a time that really scared everyone, and this one... I knew it would be doable for Takagi."

## **Staggering final lap**

And indeed, Takagi (JPN) was the only one to go under Leerdam's time eventually. With 17.60s, the Japanese ace had the joint fastest opener with [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA). At the 600m split Takagi was 0.01 seconds slower than Leerdam, but she made all the difference with a staggering final lap, even outpacing De Jong with 28.71 seconds. "I was thinking I would be absolutely exhausted by that point," Takagi explained. "What Johan (coach Johan de Wit) told me, was that even if I get tired, I should never change how I skate. He said I shouldn't get too emotional and lose control, so I went into the corners and the straights just focusing on skating well, and getting a grip on the ice."

## **Bowe can rest easy**

Takagi's pair-mate [Angelina Golikova](#) (ROC) finished in 1:14.71s, which was the third time with only one pair to go. She eventually got pushed off the podium by Bowe (USA), who followed up her strong opener with 27.32s and a 29.69s laps for a total time of 1 minute and 14.61s. After winning 11 individual medals at the World Single Distances Championships, Bowe took her first individual Olympic medal (she also took Team Pursuit bronze with the USA in 2018). "It's an honor to win this medal today. This is my third Olympics, and the first time I've been able to come home with an individual medal," she said. Bowe could only watch at Takagi's race in admiration: "I got fueled when that (Olympic record) was announced. When I was seeing the lap times, (I saw) her put down a phenomenal performance, which was not unexpected. She has skated out of her mind (...) I left it all out there. Unfortunately (I) didn't bring home the gold, but I can rest easy tonight knowing that I left everything out there on the ice."

## **Olympic farewell for Wüst**

Wüst (NED) entered the rink after Leerdam had set the bar and she was not able to replicate her magnificent 1500m race in the final effort of her fifth Olympic Games. She was third after she crossed the line, but eventually ended up sixth in 1:15.11s. "I've got mixed feelings," she commented: "It was my last Olympic race, I thought the podium was possible, but I made some mistakes at the start, and then the whole race I was reaching forward instead of skating. It's quite hard for me, the 1000m, but it is what it is. In general my performances have been great. Champion in the 1500m, and the Team Pursuit, I was happy with too (...) I've only got one race left now, in Heerenveen, and after that, retirement."

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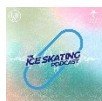
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Men's 1000m, 16:30 (local time)

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