

# INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: AVENUE JUSTE-OLIVIER 17  
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66

CH 1006 LAUSANNE  
TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 77

SWITZERLAND  
E-MAIL: media@isu.ch

Press release

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## ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships #WorldSpeed

Martina Sáblíková won her ninth consecutive 5000m title on day 3 of the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships. Kjeld Nuis took his maiden World Title in the Men's 1000m, and Heather Bergsma took gold in the ladies' 1000m. Sven Kramer closed the day with gold in the 10,000m.

### Ninth 5000m title for Sáblíková

Martina Sáblíková won her first 5000m title in 2007 and retained it every year since. In between she also took the Olympic title in 2010 and 2014. The 29-year-old Czech long distance specialist started in the final pair facing a 6:53.93 bar set by Claudia Pechstein (GER), who had won the 5000m title in 1996 and 2003. It proved tougher than Sáblíková had expected. "It was very hard. In the training the ice was very fast, but when I saw my 32.0 after the first lap, I thought ok, maybe it [the ice] is slow. Then I skated 32.8 and 33.1 and I really had to work hard. But the conditions are the same for everybody."

Although Sáblíková was struggling, her split times were faster than Pechstein's throughout the race. She stopped the clock at 6:52.38 to take her ninth 5000m World Title. Sáblíková couldn't tell whether she would aim at a tenth in 2019. "I'm going for the Olympics first and I really don't know whether I'll go on in 2019."

Behind Sáblíková and Pechstein Ivanie Blondin set 6:57.14 to grab the bronze medal. "It was a great race from start to finish," the 26-year-old Canadian said. She was a bit frustrated after just missing out on a medal in the 3000m and the Canadian women crashing in the Team Pursuit earlier this week. "The 3000m got to me personally. I really wanted that medal and I was so close. Yesterday, the Team Pursuit was another jab at me, so it's a great feeling to finally put in the effort and show how fierce I can be on the ice, and finally come home with our [Canada's] first medal this weekend." Blondin will aim at Mass Start gold on Sunday. "I know I'm strong, I just have to be mentally prepared and be smart about it."

### Nuis nails it

Kjeld Nuis finally brought it home. The 27-year-old Dutchman took his career first World Title after two silver and two bronze medals in the 1000m. "On the podium I just thought: don't cry, don't cry," he said. "As a little kid I saw Rintje Ritsma on the podium with the national anthem, and now it's played for me, that's super."

The win did not come easy, because the pressure was high. "Of course I felt the pressure, but when I'm on the ice, I don't feel it. And I've created this pressure myself. I did not lose one single international 1000m race this season, so it was logic that everybody would say I had to win the World Title too, so pulling it off is great."

Nuis defeated compatriot Kai Verbij in the 10th pair. Verbij, who managed to beat Nuis at this year's Dutch national single distance championships, crossed the line in 1:08.78 to take bronze.

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“I beat him twice this season and I always have the mindset of being able to beat him”, Verbij said. “But I focused on my own race. I made a little mistake at the start. I wanted to start as quick as possible to get that little edge over my opponent, but I stuck my skate in the ice. But Kjeld skated a very good race and he deserved the win. If my race would have gone better, maybe I could have gained two tenth of a second, but even then I would not have won.”

Vincent De Haître put his name in between the two Dutchmen. The Canadian took silver in 1:08.54. De Haître had won the only 1000m World Cup race in which Nuis did not skate this season. He started with a lot of confidence. “So far this week I was really working on speed and my coach told me that my last lap was the better part of my race, which was surprising because that was not my main focus. That was being relaxed and getting up to speed as efficiently as possible.” The Canadian was happy with the Gangneung track. “I guess I really benefited from this ice surface, which reminds me of Calgary. This gives me a lot of confidence for tomorrow [1500m].”

## **Bergsma superb in Ladies’ 1000m**

Like Nuis, Heather Bergsma had not lost a 1000m World Cup race in which she participated this season, so like Nuis she had to deal with the pressure of going into the race as the clear cut favorite. “I do feel a little pressure”, she said. “But I think that’s ok, because it gets the adrenaline going. I really try to stay within myself, stay focused and do what I need to do.” And that’s exactly what she did.

Defending champion Jorien ter Mors was the first of the favorites to take the ice. She skated 1:14.66. “I’m not happy, but I don’t think I could have gone any faster”, she reflected upon her race. “If you look at the whole season, this was a good race. I think that finally I’m back fit again, but this is the World Championships so the rest is super fit.”

Nao Kodaira was one of those others in super shape. The 31-year-old Japanese, who took 500m gold on Friday, beat Ter Mors’ time when she clocked 1:14.43. Bergsma skated in the penultimate pair and the American was the only one to break the 1:14 barrier when she crossed the line in 1:13.94. “The whole week the ice has been very fast. I’m shocked at how fast the ice is, but it feels very good and I’m really excited that the Olympic Games will be here next year,” Bergsma said.

## **Kramer takes gold after epic long distance battle**

After the spectacular male and female 1000m races, the long distance specialists concluded the day in thrilling fashion. Ted-Jan Bloemen was the first of the favorites to set a time in the second-last pair and the world record holder clocked 12.54.63.

Sven Kramer and Patrick Beckert were next in line. Beckert’s main aim was to beat Bloemen, as Kramer was out of reach from the start. “I knew I had to skate a national record because Ted-Jan skated 12.54. Last year in Salt Lake City I skated 12.55 and that was my first time under 13 minutes. I managed to keep my lap times flat and even go a little faster in the end.” Beckert managed to stop the clock at 12:52.76, good enough to beat Bloemen for the bronze medal, but still far behind Dutch arch rivals Kramer and Bergsma. “Sven and Jorrit are at another level than the rest of the world, but the gap will get smaller step-by-step. We’ve come closer in the 5000m. I will be happy with a bronze medal at the Olympics next year, but at the Olympics it’s just one day, you never know.”

Beckert was especially proud because he had chosen his own road to the top, separate from the

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German team, after the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi. “I made my own program, I trained in the Netherlands last year, and this year I went back to Germany with my own coach, separate from the German team. People often said it wouldn’t work, but I believed in this way. Maybe I’m a little crazy, but you have to be a little crazy to skate a 10,000m and today I showed that my plan works.”

Ahead of Beckert, Kramer had set his sights on Bloemen’s Salt Lake city World Record (12.36,30). The Dutchman came just over two-and-a-half seconds short, but his 12:38.89 was a personal best and a Dutch national record, which in Kramer’s case is the same thing. In the final pair Jorrit Bergsma attacked Kramer’s time ferociously. The reigning Olympic champion had faster splits between 4000m and 9200m, but had to bow his head in the last two laps. “This hurts because I felt that it was possible [to beat Kramer],” Bergsma said. Bergsma lapped pair mate Moritz Geisreiter at the 7200 split, and he thought that this might have cost a bit too much energy. “At that point I skated a 29.6 lap, maybe that was just a little too much of a good thing.”

Kramer did not dare to watch Bergsma’s race on the infield. “I was in the locker room without a television, but I heard the lap times coming in and when he skated 29 laps I thought oops. But then I heard my team mates coming down the stairs cheering and I knew it was all right,” he said. Kramer said that he had started with the World Record in mind. “But I’m happy with this time. Even if Jorrit would have beaten me I would have been satisfied with this time, because it’s good.”

For full results of the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 2017 please refer to <http://www.isureults.eu/>

## About ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 2017

The ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships consists of single distance races. The 2017 Championships take place in Gangneung (KOR) and serves as the official test event for the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games. The competition format will be the same at next year’s Olympic Winter Games. The Ladies will compete in the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 3000m and 5000m, Team Pursuit and Mass start race over 16 laps. The Men’s competitions are the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 5000m, and 10000m, Team Pursuit and Mass start race over 16 laps. Mass Start will make its Olympic debut in 2018.

## ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships Gangneung (KOR)

### Medalists 5000m Ladies

1	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	6:52.38
2	Claudia Pechstein	GER	6:53.93
3	Ivanie Blondin	CAN	6:57.14

### Medalists 1000m Men

1	Kjeld Nuis	NED	1:08.26
2	Vincent De Haître	CAN	1:08.54
3	Kai Verbij	NED	1:08.78

### Medalists 1000m Ladies

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1	Heather Bergsma	USA	1:13.94
2	Nao Kodaira	JPN	1:14.43
3	Jorien ter Mors	NED	1:14.66

## Medalists 10,000m Men

1	Sven Kramer	NED	12:38.89 NR
2	Jorrit Bergsma	NED	12:43.95
3	Patrick Beckert	GER	12:52.76 NR