

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Press release

Gangneung, 12 February , 2017

ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships #WorldSpeed

America's Heather Bergsma won her second World Title at the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships, when she edged out Ireen Wüst (NED) for gold in the ladies' 1500m on Sunday. Kjeld Nuis took his second title, grabbing gold in the 1500m.

Almost at the end of the Championships, Bo-Reum Kim delighted the home crowd with the first Korean title of the tournament, winning the Ladies' Mass Start. Joey Mantia (USA) took the Men's Mass Start gold.

Bergsma beats Wüst in epic battle

Before top favorites Bergsma and Wüst entered the rink for their golden battle in the final pair, Miho Takagi had surprised the pack with 1:55.12 in the second last pair. The 22-year-old Japanese prodigy beat Dutch Marrit Leenstra to set the best time so far. Leenstra finished in 1:55.85, which was also faster than defending champion Jorien ter Mors (NED), who had set the bar at 1:56.18 in the fifth pair. Takagi ended up taking bronze, with Leenstra in fourth place and Ter Mors fifth.

Bergsma and Wüst put up an epic fight in the final pair. The American sprinter started ferociously with the only sub 25 second opener (24.70). That was what Wüst, who opened in 25.56 had expected and feared: "This was the exact draw that I did not want, starting in the inner lane versus Heather. The logic is that she crosses ahead of me from the outer lane, and that's exactly what happened. Then it was up to me to stay calm and try to catch up in the last part of the race, which I managed but the finish line came thirty meters too soon. Well, I guess you can't change it in a 1530m, can you?"

Bergsma managed to hold on to the advantage she had built in the first half of the race, but she had just 0.11 left of the 1.01 she had at the 700m split. "I was a little nervous going into it, but I knew that I had to win time in the beginning and that was my plan. I definitely had to dig deep in the second lap, because if she would already have been ahead of me, mentally I would have been shut down," Bergsma said.

The American clocked 1:54.08 versus 1:54.19 for Wüst. "In the end I'm satisfied with my race," Wüst said. "I did not make any mistakes and I'm proud, but well.... it takes another year before I get a chance to take revenge. I came for gold, not for silver."

Second gold for superb Nuis

The Men's 1500m would also turn out to be a battle between endurance specialists and a fast man. The fast man won, with Nuis taking gold in 1:44.36, Denis Yuskov grabbing silver in 1:44.67 and Sven Kramer (NED) taking bronze in 1:45.50.

Kramer skated a balanced race, opening 24.1, and skating 26.5, 27.3 and 27.4 laps. "Maybe it was even a little too balanced," Kramer said. "After the opener and the first full lap I should

Official Series Hashtag: #WorldSpeed

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have skated a 26.3, but that's if you want to be critical. I have to be honest, 1:44.3 is just not possible for me at this stage. Of course I'd rather have won this race, but I won the 5000m and the 10,000m here, so it's not such a bad weekend after all."

Nuis and Yuskov faced each other in the penultimate pair. "I always said that I wanted to skate versus Yuskov," said Nuis. The Dutchman took advantage of his speed to take a big lead in the opener and the first full lap, but according to his coach Kosta Poltavets, Yuskov lost the race in the second full lap. "Normally it's a 25.9 and then a 26.4, that's where he lost the race," Poltavets said. Yuskov clocked 26.8 in the second lap, instead of the planned 26.4. His 27.9 in the final lap was faster than Nuis, but it came too late.

"This was the best 1500m I ever skated", Nuis said. "It was super relaxed, I did not have to do anything in the first 300m and I could also pull through easily towards the end." Yuskov, who had won the 1500m title in the three previous years, already planned for revenge straight after his race. "I skipped the first two World Cups this year due to injury, but I'm feeling better now. Still not first, but that's only a good motivation for next year."

Kim delights home crowd

Bo-Reum Kim had won two World Cup Mass Starts this season, and went into the race as the big favorite in front of a hopeful home crowd. The Korean did not let it get to her nerves however. She patiently waited throughout the race and stayed close to defending Champion Ivania Blondin (CAN), who had won the other two World Cup races this season.

The 2015 World Champion Irene Schouten (NED) also kept an eye on Blondin, but she crashed in the final lap, taking Japan's Miho Takagi down with her. Miho's sister Nana Takagi managed to escape from the collision and sprinted for the title with Kim, who came out on top.

"In the final lap, in the corner, it was very crowded. There was a collision, but I was trying to focus on my own corner work," Kim explained afterwards. Miho Takagi thanked her sister for the great team work she put up: "This medal is the product of two sisters. Our strategy was that I would take the gold and she the silver or the bronze. This crash was not part of our strategy, that was just unlucky."

Behind Kim and Takagi Heather Bergsma ran away with the bronze, after already having won the 1000m and 1500m World Titles. "I'm happy that I could show that I'm capable of doing something in the Mass Start as well. I'm definitely planning to skate the Mass Start at the Olympics as well," she said.

Mantia beats old friend from France

Joey Mantia won the men's Mass Start beating an old friend in a two-horse final sprint. Alexis Contin (FRA) got silver and seven seconds later Olivier Jean crossed the line to secure the bronze medal.

Mantia and Contin had pulled away from a six men breakaway, which had left the pack in the early stages of the race. Contin took his third consecutive World Championships Mass Start medal, after bronze in 2015 and 2016. "I'm not in the best shape of my life, because I had surgery to have my thyroid removed only two months ago" The 31-year-old French skater said. He especially enjoyed being on the podium with Mantia. "We already were on a podium together twenty years ago, at an inline race in France. We've been racing against each other for ages."

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Mantia also thought fond of their twenty year history. “It’s pretty wild to think we’d find ourselves side by side two decades down doing a different sport. I never would have guessed,” the American said.

Jean came from another different sport only 16 months ago. The Canadian won World and Olympic titles in Short Track, before changing to long track in October 2015. “It’s only sixteen months ago I tried clap skates for the first time,” he said. “I was always interested in long track, but I did not like the time trial format. So when I heard there was going to be a Mass Start I thought: that’s for me. Coming from short track eight laps already was very long for me, but I trained in marathon skating in the Netherlands for four months, so I was confident with my level of fitness”, he said.

Jean set up the initial six men break from which Mantia and Contin eventually escaped. “I was trying to get a some people together. We needed team work to stay away.” Jean got the others helping out, but Mantia did take the full load. “The Canadian and the Belarussian [Vitaly Mikhailov] kept the pace, so for me it was easy,” the American said. “I’m the faster field sprinter so even if the pack would catch us, I knew I still had a chance in the bunch sprint.” Mantia eventually used his speed to catch up with Contin and skate away from him in the final lap.

For full results of the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 2017 please refer to <http://www.isureresults.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 1500m Ladies

1	Heather Bergsma	USA	1:54.08
2	Ireen Wüst	NED	1:54.19
3	Miho Takagi	JPN	1:54.19

Medalists 1500m Men

1	Kjeld Nuis	NED	1:44.36
2	Denis Yuskov	RUS	1:44.67
3	Sven Kramer	NED	1:45.50

Medalists Mass Start Ladies

1	Bo-Reum Kim	KOR	8:00.79
2	Nana Takagi	JPN	8:00.90
3	Heather Bergsma	USA	8:01.36

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Medalists Mass Start Men

1	Joey Mantia	USA	7:40.16
2	Alexis Contin	FRA	7:41.11
3	Olivier Jean	CAN	7:47.62