

February 14, 2021

Heerenveen, the Netherlands

## **Wiklund makes history as Van der Poel beats World Record**

[Nils van der Poel](#) broke a world record at sea-level on Sunday – a feat many had thought to be impossible in modern Speed Skating. The 24-year-old Swede won the 10,000m world title in 12 minutes, 32.95 seconds. In the preceding 1500m, [Thomas Krol](#) (NED) won gold having been disqualified in Saturday's 1000m.

In the Ladies' competition [Ragne Wiklund](#) made history with a surprise win in the 1500m to become Norway's first female Speed Skating world champion since 1938. To conclude the Ladies' tournament [Irene Schouten](#) (NED) made up for a disappointing third place in Saturday's Mass Start with gold in the 5000m.

### **Van der Poel breaks 10K World Record**

Before he started in the third of six pairings in the 10,000m, [Nils Van der Poel](#), who won Sweden's first title in the history of the ISU World Single Distance Championships on Thursday when he claimed 5000m gold, paused for reflection. "I thought," he said, "this is the first time that I'll do a race where people expect me to win, and that is quite an uncomfortable feeling."

All Van der Poel could do was stay true to himself and enjoy the physical challenge that is skating 25 laps on the ice, because enjoying what you do is key to his sports philosophy.

And he enjoyed himself for 12 minutes, 32.95 seconds, 0.91s less than [Graeme Fish](#) (CAN) had enjoyed himself when he skated his world record at the World Championships at the high-altitude track in Salt Lake City last year.

World record times at sea-level have become rare in the past decades because air pressure is lower at high altitude and air resistance is a Speed Skater's biggest enemy.

[Sven Kramer](#) (NED) was the last skater to set a world record in an individual distance in Thialf, when he skated 10,000m in 12:49.88 in 2007.

Van der Poel might have been the only one who believed that he could break the world record in Heerenveen on Sunday.

"I wasn't surprised," he said. "We have trained for this for 20 months. We did training sessions in the past weeks and looking at the statistics of these sessions we concluded that the world record was in reach this weekend."

Despite anticipating skating a world record, Van der Poel went crazy with delight when he indeed managed to pull it off. But Van der Poel knows that he himself can be beaten tomorrow. "I think I motivated a lot of guys today and they motivated me too," he said.

And next year, the question is: who will come away with the Olympic title? Van der Poel, who described the 10,000m as "the soul of Speed Skating", added: "The key to this was 20 months of consistency and if you look at Fish now, that's exactly what he's doing, training and not competing this season. The preparations for this are similar to what Fish will have for the Olympic year and he's going to be great and motivated."

After Van der Poel had set his world record, his opponents could merely bow their heads. [Jorrit Bergsma](#) (NED) settled for silver, clocking 12:45.86.

“Of course I want to go for gold but I knew that was not feasible for me today. What Van der Poel does is very impressive.”

[Aleksandr Rumyantsev](#) (RSU) took bronze in 12:54.74, beating [Patrick Roest](#) in the final pairing. The Dutchman finished seventh with 13:09.42.

Rumyantsev’s bronze was his first individual World Championship medal and the experienced skater is aiming for another podium in Beijing next year. “I’m 34 years old. I guess it would be great to finish my career with an Olympic medal next year,” he said.

### **Krol gets up again**

[Thomas Krol](#) and [Kjeld Nuis](#) walked to the track together before the Men’s 1500m on Sunday morning. The respective 2019 and 2020 champions discussed their times and chances. Nuis explained: “We saw the winning time in the Ladies’ 1500m [1:54.61]. Usually [the men’s winning time] is about ten seconds faster...”

When Nuis clocked 1:44.11 in the third-last pairing, he therefore hoped it would be enough for the title but knew that Krol was still up in the final pairing and Nuis had not been able to beat his countryman in the 1500m this season.

Krol had watched the third movie in the ‘Lord of the Rings’ series on Saturday night to divert his thoughts from that day’s disqualification.

“It was a tough weekend, mentally, in many respects. Yesterday was a nightmare from which I wanted to wake up as quickly as possible. I can only blame myself [for the two false starts in the 1000m] but regardless of that result I knew that I would have another super chance today.”

And he used that chance to its full potential. With a faster opener than Nuis, Krol managed to stay ahead for the whole race and even though his final straight was difficult, the gold was his in 1:43.75.

“To skate in the final pairing of the World Championships is not easy,” Krol said. “You know all the previous times and that can distract you. But I prepared well for that and if you win it, it’s most beautiful in the final pairing because you know you’ve got it straight away.”

Nuis saw it and knew it too: “My own race was good,” he said. “I skated well and though my last 50 meters did not look like skating anymore, I would not have made it anyway. It hurts that I lost my title, but Thomas is the rightful winner. He skated so well.”

Krol and Nuis were in a league of their own in the 1500m, with [Patrick Roest](#) coming third in 1:45.49. The Dutchman leaves the Heerenveen bubble with shattered dreams. Despite a cabinet full of World Cup gold medals, and the Team Pursuit World title, he still yearns for that much-coveted individual World title.

### **Everyone crying but Wiklund**

Throughout Speed Skating history, Norway has been a powerhouse in the Men's competitions but the nation's Ladies have lagged far behind their male counterparts. Before 20-year-old Wiklund conquered the 1500m on Sunday, 1937 and 1938 World Allround champion [Laila Schou-Nilsen](#) was the only Norwegian lady to win a world title on the blades.

"I don't think I kind of realize it yet," Wiklund said. "When I was on the infield, everyone started crying and I couldn't take it in myself."

The Norwegian prodigy had never expected to top the 1500m podium in Heerenveen so soon. She explained: "I looked at the times from the previous World Cups before I went to sleep yesterday and I saw that I was almost precisely two seconds behind the gold. I thought [the World Championship] podium was in reach, but I never thought about the gold."

Starting in the seventh pairing Wiklund set a personal-best one minute, 54.61 seconds, and that appeared to be a high bar for the rest of the field. None of the other Ladies were able to skate under 1:55.

Having won the previous two World Cup races [Brittany Bowe](#) (USA) was the big favorite but she finished 0.42s short to take silver, barely holding off [Evgenia Lalenkova](#) (RSU), who took bronze in 1:55.09.

In the final pairing, Thursday's 3000m champion [Antoinette de Jong](#) (NED) and defending 1500m champion [Ireen Wüst](#) (NED) also failed to match Wiklund's time, finishing in fourth and fifth place respectively.

Wiklund had been too nervous to look at the scoreboard during those final races, while her teammates already cheered in excitement.

"I told the others, 'Don't jinx it, don't jinx it'," she laughed after the race.

Bowe paid tribute to Wiklund. "Of course, I wanted to win this one, but I can't say enough congratulations to Ragne [Wiklund]," she said. "She completely deserved that well-earned victory. To be a world champion at 20 years old, that's awesome."

Lalenkova, who won 1500m silver at the World Championships last year, was happy to bring home another medal after her bronze in the Team Pursuit on Friday.

"Today was a tougher medal than the Team Pursuit," she said. "The last two pairs I had my fingers crossed. Please, please, I'd been in fourth place six times last season and twice this season. Fourth place is OK in the World Cups, as long as I manage to get on the podium at the World Championships and the Olympic Games."

### **Schouten driven by disappointment**

[Irene Schouten](#) (NED) turned anger into speed after her disappointing bronze medal in the Mass Start on Saturday.

"Yesterday, I was really disappointed," she said cherishing the 5000m gold medal around her neck. "I had a lot of anger inside, I had to turn that into fast skating and I managed to. Now I'm super happy."

Schouten stopped the clock at 6:48.53 in the first of six 5000m pairings, with a game plan of decreasing lap times towards the end of her race.

“My first three laps were not good,” Schouten explained. “But in the 5000m you’ve got time to make amends.”

Many other Ladies started faster but slowed in the final laps. [Natalya Voronina](#) (RSU) limited the damage and finished second in 6:50.99, having scared Schouten with a fast opening section.

“Looking at that race, I thought I wasted too much time in the beginning,” Schouten said. “Some girls were four seconds ahead of me and that’s quite a lot. My final lap in 31.0 was pretty fast so I knew they would still lose a lot too, but to finally win this... awesome.”

[Carlijn Achtereekte](#) (NED) leaves Heerenveen with a bronze medal having finished in 6:52.22 and also lost out in the final laps. She had mixed feelings: “Today is the anniversary of my parents’ wedding day and my mother not being with us any more... I wanted to make her proud and I managed to, but partly. I’d rather have had that top spot on the podium.”

#### **Where to Watch**

Viewers will be able to watch the ISU Speed Skating competitions that will take place within the hub either via their national broadcaster / channel and for countries where there are no broadcasters, the ISU will offer a live stream on the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#).

All the information is available in the [Where to Watch](#) which will be updated after each competition. The individual announcements and entry lists will be published under the respective events as soon as they are available. For further information regarding the ISU Speed Skating Hub please visit: <https://www.isu.org/heerenveen2021>.

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