

2026 Winter Olympics in Milan

Inspired Italy win shock men's speed skating team pursuit gold, Canada successfully defend women's title

MILAN, Feb 17 (Reuters) - An inspired Italy delighted the home crowd with a stunning victory in the Olympic men's team pursuit final as Canada's Ivanie Blondin, Valérie Maltais and Isabelle Weidemann delivered another seamless performance to beat the Netherlands in the women's event and retain their title on Tuesday.

Italy's men upset the U.S. who arrived at the Games as world champions and gold medal favourites.

Spurred on by double Olympic champion Francesca Lollobrigida, the Italian team of Davide Ghiotto, Andrea Giovannini and Michele Malfatti electrified a frenzied arena as they stormed to a time of three minutes 39.20 seconds - a commanding 4.51 seconds clear of the Americans with China taking bronze.



The roar inside the venue as Italy powered home was thunderous as the crowd rose to their feet, cheering the host nation to one of their most special golds of a highly successful Games.

Canada's women crossed the line 0.96 seconds ahead of the Netherlands, stopping the clock at two minutes 55.81 seconds, and Japan rounded out the women's podium by beating the U.S. in the Final B.

It was only Canada's third gold medal of the Games, following Mikael Kingsbury's win in men's dual moguls and Megan Oldham's victory in women's freestyle big air.

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Canada back-to-back Olympic champions in women's team pursuit

Team Canada defended their Olympic speed skating title in the women's team pursuit at Milano Cortina 2026 on Tuesday (17 February) with the same team that won gold at Beijing 2022.

Netherlands claimed silver after ousting Japan, the silver medalists from four years ago, in the semi-finals, with the latter winning bronze in the B-final against Team USA.

Ivanie Blondin, Valérie Maltais and Isabelle Weidemann added a second Olympic gold medal in the event to their résumés as they won the gold with a typical display, starting relatively slowly and building up speed.

Reigning world champions, the Netherlands, headed into the lead courtesy of Joy Beune, Marijke Groenewoud and Antoinette Rijpma-De Jong, with the widest margin ahead of the Canadians a 0.75 second split.

With three laps to go, though, the North Americans swallowed the gap with one circuit of the 400m-long track and crossed the line in a time of 2:55.81 to the Dutch trio's 2:56.77.

That made it a second medal at the Milano Speed Skating Stadium for Maltais after bronze in the women's 3000m, and a first medal each in Italy for Blondin and Weidemann. Blondin and Maltais now have three Olympic medals each, and Weidemann has four.

"It is a lot of pressure, but like Val said in an interview we did a while ago, it's an honour to be in that position as returning Olympic champions," said Blondin. "It's the same team, there's some sense every single time we go to the line that we're calm, collected and one unit. That's very powerful. It gives us a lot of confidence going into every single race."



The Netherlands, meanwhile, won a fourth straight medal in this event, with Beune claiming her first Olympic medal on her debut. It was a second Olympic medal for Groenewoud after bronze in Beijing in this event, while Rijpma-de Jong won her fifth.

The Japanese team of Sato Ayano, Takagi Miho and Noake Hana, meanwhile, made no mistake in the B-final to cleanly beat the Team USA trio of Brittany Bowe, Mia Manganello and Greta Myers by 3.50 seconds.

A misstep in the semi-final against the Dutch, breaking up slightly just before the finishing line, devastated the Japanese side who re-grouped to

Bronze represented Japan's third straight medal in the event, which also includes gold at PyeongChang 2018. Both Sato and Takagi were part of the 2018 and 2022 teams, while today's bronze was Noake's first Olympic medal.

Takagi also gains additional kudos for winning 10 Olympic medals (summer or winter) for her nation, the fourth Japanese athlete in history to match or beat that number. The 31-year-old is also the first Japanese athlete to win 10 Winter Olympics medals.

"I honestly feel very happy," said Takagi. "Until the very end, we never gave up fighting and we challenged ourselves, and I think this medal is the result of that."

"Of course, there is still some frustration that we could not quite beat the Netherlands in the semi-final, but even so, after skating two races in one day and attacking both of them, this bronze is something we can be proud of."