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LeMay Doan grabs gold, Okazaki wins 500m skate bronze



Japan's Kyoko Shimazaki placed 5th

Catriona LeMay Doan claimed Canada's first Olympic gold medal in women's speed skating Saturday with a well-deserved win in the 500-meter event while Japan's Tomomi Okazaki took the bronze.

LeMay Doan, who took this season by storm after switching to slap skates, rounded the M-Wave indoor track in a new Olympic record time of 38.21 seconds and finished with a two-race total of 1 minute, 16.60 seconds.

Susan Auch clocked 38.51 for a 1:16.93 total and won her second straight Olympic silver in this distance.

The final race of the day pit LeMay Doan and Auch together side-by-side and they put on a dramatic show for the roaring crowd.

Auch, who trailed LeMay Doan by a mere 0.03 second after Friday's races, had a faster split-time at the 100-meter mark but LeMay Doan took command around the final bend and held on for victory.

It was Canada's third Olympic gold medal, men's or women's, in the history of the sport. Gaetan Boucher won the men's 1,000 and 1,500-meter races at the 1984 Sarajevo Olympics.

Okazaki, meanwhile, became the first Japanese woman to earn a medal in the 500 meters after posting 38.55 seconds, matching her national record time on Friday, for a total of 1:77.10.

German world sprint champion Franziska Schenk finished fourth overall in 1:17.45 while Japan's Kyoko Shimazaki was fifth in 1:17.68.

For the first time in the Olympics, two races were held for both the men's and women's 500 meters to provide fair racing conditions and more consistency in the results. (Kyodo News)

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