

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: CHEMIN DE PRIMEROSE 2 - CH 1007 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 7 E-MAIL: info@isu.ch

For immediate release: 13 December 2003

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final: Day 1

The ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Colorado Springs, USA kicked off Friday with the Original Dance, Ladies, Men's and Pairs Free Programs. The Grand Prix Final features the top six qualifiers from the Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series.

Pairs, Short Program

Reigning World Champions Xue Shen/Hongbo Zhao (CHN) captured the lead in the Short Program with Russians Tatiana Totmianina/Maxim Marinin and Maria Petrova/Alexei Tikhonov finishing second and third.

Shen/Zhao opened their dynamic performance to "Kismet" by Bond with a spectacular triple throw loop followed by a side by side triple toeloop. The two-time World Champions also completed a high double twist, but almost lost their balance on the exit of their lift. "The center of gravity wasn't completely balanced on the exit of the lift. It was too much backwards", Shen explained. "The rest of the performance was ok." Her partner added: "It was very hard to skate because of the altitude. When we finished, I just thought I need oxygen. It's our second time in Colorado Springs, so we know what to expect. We prepared in our practice for it." The Chinese scored 33.84 points for their elements and 32.16 for program components, which added up to a total segment score of 66.00 points.

Totmianina/Marinin put out a solid program to "Variations on a Theme of Paganini" that featured an excellent triple throw loop, a side by side triple toeloop, a one-armed lift and a serpentine step sequence. They earned 33.32 points for their elements and 29.64 points for program components (62.96 segment score). "I think it was the best short program of the year of us. We did everything well tonight", Totmianina commented.

Petrova/Tikhonov had a rough start into their routine when Tikhonov doubled the side by side toeloop and Petrova stepped out of the landing of the throw triple loop, but the World bronze medalists showed perfect unison in the side by side combination spin. Their lift was difficult and included changes of positions for Petrova. The team from St. Petersburg was awarded 56.32 points for this performance (27.16/29.16). "It was terrible because we missed two elements", Tikhonov said. "I did a double toe and Maria missed the triple throw, so for us, it was really bad. Tomorrow night is very important for us and we hope to be better."

Canada's Anabelle Langlois/Patrice Archetto are sitting in fourth. They both had a forward lean on the side by side triple toeloop. Dan Zhang/Hao Zhang (CHN) missed the throw triple loop to finish fifth. Qing Pang/Jian Tong (CHN) made three errors to come in sixth.

Men, Short Program

Evgeni Plushenko of Russia won the Men's Short Program ahead of Canadian Emanuel Sandhu and Michael Weiss (USA). Skating to a Flamenco and Tango, Plushenko fell on his first element, the quadruple toeloop, but he rallied back to complete a triple Axel, triple Lutz, difficult footwork and good spins. The two-time World Champion scored 37.70 points for his elements and 40.55 for program components to clinch the lead with 78.25 points. "I feel like an idiot that I fell", Plushenko admitted. "I'm a hundred percent ready for this competition, and I landed the quad and the triple Axel in the warm up. I don't know what happened (on the quadruple toe)." The 21-year-old is battling a knee injury, but he said that he felt ok.

Sandhu, who came to the final as the second substitute, stumbled on his quadruple toeloop but managed to add a triple toeloop. The landing of the triple Axel was weak, but Sandhu completed a triple Lutz and interesting spins to earn 75.55 points for his expressive Tango routine (40.30 element score/35.25 program component score). "It feels like I am at my first World Championships. I have never done this event before and my hope was to qualify for this event last year and this year so I finally got my chance", Sandhu told the press. "I couldn't have been more ready for the competition."

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: CHEMIN DE PRIMEROSE 2 - CH 1007 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND

TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66

TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 7

E-MAIL: info@isu.ch

Weiss hit a triple flip-triple toeloop combination, triple Axel and a triple Lutz in his program to "Henry V", but the landings of his jumps could have been stronger. The US Champion got 73.33 points (37.88/35.45) for his Short Program and remains in close pursuit.

China's Song Gao fell out of his triple Axel to place fourth. Kevin van der Perren of Belgium nailed a rare triple Lutz-triple loop combination and finished fifth. Jeffrey Buttle of Canada withdrew shortly before the event started, citing illness.

Ladies, Short Program

Japan's Fumie Suguri delivered a very confident Short Program to win the first portion of the Ladies' event. The two-time World bronze medalist landed a triple Lutz-double toeloop combination, a triple flip, double Axel and completed nice spins in her smooth performance to "Paint it Black" by the Rolling Stones. The Japanese received 32.10 points in the element score and 29.92 for program components (62.02 total segment score). "After NHK, I practiced for more details and tonight it was exactly what I have been training for", a happy Suguri said. "This event also will prepare me for Nationals and this experience is one small step in getting me ready."

Defending Grand Prix Champion Sasha Cohen (USA) had to overcome a fall on the triple Lutz early into her routine, but she pulled herself together immediately and hit a triple flip as well as a double Axel. The 19-year-old American impressed the crowd with her flexibility in her spirals and spins and interpreted her Spanish "Malaguena" program very well to score the highest program component score of the Ladies (32.60 points), but her element score was lower at 28.20 points. With 60.80 points, she was second. "Looking at the positives, I was able to refocus really quickly and get my confidence back for the flip. Going into the Lutz, my timing was a little bit off and I'll work on that and get ready for tomorrow night", Cohen commented.

Elena Liashenko of the Ukraine is a close third with 60.54 points. Her elegant performance to "Otonal" by Raoul di Blasio included a triple Lutz-double toeloop combination, a triple flip and a double Axel, but she looked somewhat slow in her spiral sequence. "I didn't want to relax, but remain focused on each element", the 27-year-old said. "I had some problems in practice, it wasn't going too well. But it worked out just fine in competition. I was very concentrated. Maybe I didn't skate with too many emotions, but I was focused."

Yoshie Onda (JPN) is sitting in fourth place with a good performance. Her teammate Shizuka Arakawa hit a triple Lutz-triple toeloop combination but doubled the flip to finish fifth. Julia Sebestyen (HUN) doubled her Lutz in the combination and is currently ranked sixth.

Ice Dancing, Original Dance

The ice dancers concluded today's competition with the Original Dance, the Swing Combo. Tatiana Navka/Roman Kostomarov of Russia danced to the lead with a sensual Blues and funky Rock'n'Roll routine. The European bronze medalists executed a difficult side by side footwork line mostly on one foot and two rotational lifts. They received 22.00 points in the element score and 43.18 points for program components. Their overall segment score was 65.18 points. "It was very hard", Kostomarov commented. "I thought, I couldn't do it, but the music was pushing us. We are very well prepared and in full force, so we skated well. However, we did the last step sequence, the diagonal, really with the last strength we had left."

Tanith Belbin/Benjamin Agosto (USA) danced a technically difficult routine to Jitterbug, Blues and Swing that featured intricate footwork and a dance spin with changes of position. The audience cheered for the couple during the footwork sections and gasped when the skaters came dangerously close to each other during a twizzle series. The Skate America Champions moved into second place with a segment score of 59.81 points (20.30/39.51). "It felt great. The audience really helped us right from the start. A lot of things were stronger than we have competed them all season", Agosto said. "Our goal here was to show our enthusiasm and love for the sport and to show that we are riding a wave of momentum that will hopefully carry us up and up", Belbin continued.

Denkova/Staviski are close behind the Americans with 58.26 points (18.20/40.06). The Blues part of their dance was highlighted by an interesting spin and a lift in a spread eagle position. The Swing part contained a demanding side by side footwork line with twizzles in two directions. "I think it was a good performance, normal for us", Staviski commented. "We changed our side by side footwork to make it more evident that it

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: CHEMIN DE PRIMEROSE 2 - CH 1007 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 7 E-MAIL: info@isu.ch

has a higher level. We wanted to make it more difficult. I think all our elements are difficult, but we just cleaned them up a bit.”

The Ukrainian husband-and-wife team Elena Grushina/Ruslan Goncharov placed fourth by the thinnest of margin with 58.24 points for their OD to Swing and Blues. Isabelle Delobel/Olivier Schoenfelder of France were fifth. The couple only knew this morning that they would be able to compete. Their luggage had been lost on the way to Colorado Springs and Schoenfelder’s skates just arrived this morning. Marie-France Dubreuil/Patrice Lauzon (CAN) are currently in sixth place.

The Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final continues tomorrow (Saturday) with the Free Dance, the Ladies, Men’s and Pairs Free Programs.

New Judging System

The New Judging System has been in operation for the 2003 Grand Prix of Figure Skating series and will also be used for the Grand Prix Final.

The New Judging System, which was developed following a decision of the ISU Congress in June 2002, is a revolutionary step forward in the judging of figure skating. Skaters receive points for each element of their program according to an agreed scale. Points are added or subtracted based on assessment by judges of the quality of execution of each element, according to strict criteria. At the end of the program judges also give five marks for presentational aspects of the performance, such as interpretation of the music. Scores for each of a skater’s programs are added and the highest score wins.

The New Judging System has been broadly welcomed by skaters and officials.

Key advantages of the New Judging System:

- Results fully reflect skaters’ performances and the differences between them;
- Skaters receive credit for every element and aspect of their performance;
- All the numerical scores for each skater from each judge are published, providing complete transparency of information for skaters, the public and the media;
- Skaters can analyze their scores to assess strengths and weaknesses in detail;
- Average point scores are used but the highest and lowest scores awarded for each element are not considered, ensuring that anomalous scores do not affect the result;
- Judging anonymity keeps the focus on the skaters and protects the judges from external pressures; and
- The extensive statistical information enables rigorous assessment of judges.

Full results are directly available on the ISU Internet site on www.isu.org .

For further information please contact:

Grand Prix of Figure Skating & Final
Rowland Jack, ISU Media Coordinator
jack@isu.ch

Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final
Bob Dunlop, USFSA Press Officer
+719 477 21 88 or 21 89

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: CHEMIN DE PRIMEROSE 2 - CH 1007 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 7 E-MAIL: info@isu.ch

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final Colorado Springs, USA

Saturday 12 December 2003

Pairs Short Program

Pl.	Name	Nation	Total Score	SP	FS
1	Xue SHEN / Hongbo ZHAO	CHN	66.00	1	
2	Tatiana TOTMIANINA / Maxim MARININ	RUS	62.96	2	
3	Maria PETROVA / Alexei TIKHONOV	RUS	56.32	3	
4	Anabelle LANGLOIS / Patrice ARCHETTO	CAN	54.86	4	
5	Dan ZHANG / Hao ZHANG	CHN	53.08	5	
6	Qing PANG / Jian TONG	CHN	52.10	6	

Men Short Program

Pl.	Name	Nation	Total Score	SP	FS
1	Evgeni PLUSHENKO	RUS	78.25	1	
2	Emanuel SANDHU	CAN	75.55	2	
3	Michael WEISS	USA	73.33	3	
4	Song GAO	CHN	68.89	4	
5	Kevin VAN DER PERREN	BEL	67.15	5	
WD	Jeffrey BUTTLE	CAN			

Ladies Short Program

Pl.	Name	Nation	Total Score	SP	FS
1	Fumie SUGURI	JPN	62.02	1	
2	Sasha COHEN	USA	60.80	2	
3	Elena LIASHENKO	UKR	60.54	3	
4	Yoshie ONDA	JPN	54.50	4	
5	Shizuka ARAKAWA	JPN	53.34	5	
6	Julia SEBESTYEN	HUN	48.36	6	

Ice Dancing, Original Dance

Pl.	Name	Nation	Total Score	OD	FD
1	Tatiana Navka/ Roman Kostomarov	RUS	65.18	1	
2	Tanith Belbin/ Benjamin Agosto	USA	59.81	2	
3	Albena Denkova/ Maxim Staviski	BUL	58.26	3	
4	Elena Grushina/ Ruslan Goncharov	UKR	58.24	4	
5	Isabelle Delobel/ Olivier Schoenfelder	FRA	54.14	5	
6	Marie-France Dubreuil/ Patrice Lauzon	CAN	53.91	6	