

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: 18 February 2001

Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Tokyo (JPN) **Day 3 (Round 2)**

The Grand Prix of Figure Skating, concluded in Tokyo on Sunday with the head to head Final and Super Final (Round 2) for Pairs and Men.

Pairs

Today's competition opened with the Pairs event. Canada's Jamie Sale/David Pelletier met Elena Berezhnaya/Anton Sikharulidze of Russia in the head to head Super Final. The Russians drew to skate first and chose to perform to "Waltz Sentimentale" by Peter Tchaikovski. They hit solid side by side triple toeloops right at the beginning of the romantic program. The European Champions continued with a triple twist, but then Berezhnaya singled the side by side double Axel. The triple throw Salchow was huge, but she touched down on the throw triple loop. The program also contained difficult lifts and fluid spirals. The Judges awarded the team marks up to 5.8 for technical merit and up to 5.9 for presentation. Berezhnaya/Sikhuralide waited in the Kiss & Cry to watch how their competitors would do. Sale/Pelletier had opted for their famous "Love Story" program. Sale fell on the opening side by side triple toeloop, but recovered immediately. The pair interwove all of the remaining difficult elements into their touching performance. They produced a triple twist, an excellent triple throw Salchow and triple throw loop as well as a side by side double Axel-double toeloop sequence. The Canadians received 5.9s across the board for presentation and thus defended their lead to take the gold at Final for the first time in their career. "We were really enjoying it", Sale said about their performance. "We've not competed with it (this program) since last year's Worlds, but it felt really fine. It was easy getting back into it again." The Russian couple was disappointed with their performance. "There were mistakes", Berezhnaya admitted. "I'm very tired. Sometimes we loose, sometimes we win. This is sport."

In the Final for third and fourth place, Four Continents silver medallists Xue Shen/Hongbo Zhao (CHN) competed against Poland's Dorota Zagorska/Mariusz Siudek. In spite of fighting injury, the Chinese team delivered another strong performance to capture the bronze medal. Shen/Zhao nailed all their elements, including spectacular triple throws. "We are feeling that we improve from one competition to the next", said Zhao. "I injured my right foot in the first practice here, when landing a triple toeloop. We even considered withdrawing. But then we thought that it had been tough to qualify for the Final, and we decided to skate." Both he and his partner skated in pain, since Shen twisted her ankle at the Four Continents last week. Zagorska/Siudek produced a fine program, but she doubled the side by side triple toeloop and stepped out of the landing. Later, she singled the side by side Axel. The Polish team finished fourth. The French World bronze medallists Sarah Abitbol/Stephane Bernadis beat reigning World Champions Maria Petrova/Alexei Tikhonov of Russia in the head to head final for fifth and sixth place.

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Men

In the first Final, Stanick Jeannette (FRA) and US Champion Timothy Goebel competed for place five and six. Goebel came out on top, in spite of two falls on a quad Salchow and quad toeloop. In the next head to head, Matthew Savoie (USA) and Russia's Ilya Klimkin skated for the bronze medal. Klimkin delighted the audience with an entertaining program called "Petrushka", playing a puppet. He tripled his two quadruple toeloop attempts, but he landed a high triple Axel, six more triples and showed innovative spins. However, Savoie edged him out with a well balanced program that included a triple flip-triple toeloop combination, two triple Axels and fast, well centred spins. "I'm happy and surprised", he commented on winning the bronze. "I didn't skate as well as I would have liked to, but to place so high is good for me."

In the final duel, Evgeni Plushenko of Russia, who had won the first round, confronted his teammate Alexei Yagudin, and both skaters showed what they could really do. Plushenko skated first. The European Champion reeled off a quadruple-triple toeloop combination, immediately followed by his trademark quadruple toeloop-triple toeloop-double loop combination and a high triple Axel. The 18-year-old also produced a triple Salchow, triple lutz, triple flip and triple loop as well as fast steps in his dazzling routine set to movie soundtracks. The Judges awarded Plushenko marks from 5.8 to 5.9 for technical merit and for presentation. When Yagudin stepped onto the ice, he saw the marks of his competitor and knew that he had to give all he had. The three-time World Champion opened his "Gladiator" program with a powerful quadruple toeloop-triple toeloop, but then he stumbled on the second quadruple toeloop. Although Yagudin pushed through his program, nailing a triple Axel-triple toeloop combination and five more triples, his mistake cost him dearly. Yagudin finished with an impressive diagonal step sequence and a spin combination. The Russian received 5.8s and 5.9s for technical merit and presentation, but only two Judges had him first. Thus, Plushenko won the Grand Prix Final for a second year in a row. "It's a great pleasure to have won this competition. I did everything today", Plushenko told the media. "I'm really happy that I pushed through my free program", Yagudin said. "It's always hard to skate after him (Plushenko) when he skated clean. But this is life. We have one more month to get ready for Worlds. We'll see."

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Results

Pairs, Final Results

Fi Name	SP	FS	TFP	PI	F1	F2	SF
1. Jamie Sale/David Pelletier (CAN)	2	1	2.0	1			1
2. Elena Berezhnaya/Anton Sikharulidze (RUS)	1	2	2.5	2			2
3. Xue Shen/Hongbo Zhao (CHN)	3	3	4.5	3		1	
4. Dorota Zagorska/Mariusz Siudek (POL)	5	4	6.5	4		2	
5. Sarah Abitbol/Stephane Bernadis (FRA)	6	5	8.0	5	1		
6. Maria Petrova/Alexei Tikhonov (RUS)	4	6	8.0	6	2		

Men Final Results

Fi Name	SP	FS	TFP	PI	F1	F2	SF
1. Evgeni Plushenko (RUS)	2	1	2.0	1			1
2. Alexei Yagudin (RUS)	1	2	2.5	2			2
3. Matthew Savoie (USA)	3	3	4.5	3		1	
4. Ilia Klimkin (RUS)	6	4	7.0	4		2	
5. Timothy Goebel (USA)	5	5	7.5	5	1		
6. Stanick Jeannette (FRA)	4	6	8.0	6	2		

For further information please contact:

Grand Prix of Figure Skating & Final
Aline Bussat ingweresen, ISU Media Coordinator
+41 21 612 66 66/ +81 3 54 53 50 55

Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final
Hiroshi Kobayashi, Press Officer
+81 3 54 53 50 55