

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Tokyo (JPN) **Day 2 (Rounds 1 and 2)**

The Grand Prix of Figure Skating, continued in Tokyo Saturday with the Ice Dance and Ladies' first Free Programs followed by the Final/Super Final. The Men's and Pairs competition proceeded with the first Free Skating (Round One).

Ice Dance

Germany's Kati Winkler/Rene Lohse were first to skate and had opted for last season's upbeat "Time goes Millennium" program. They stayed ahead of Four Continents bronze medallists Marie-France Dubreuil/Patrice Lauzon (CAN) who also showed their Free Dance from last year set to the soundtrack of the motion picture "Life is beautiful". Israel's Galit Chait/Sergei Sakhnovski beat Margarita Drobiazko/Povilas Vanagas of Lithuania in the first Free Dance, after Drobiazko slipped in the diagonal step sequence. European Champions, Barbara Fusar Poli/ Maurizio Margaglio (ITA) retained their lead after the Original Dance, producing a strong performance of their "Warrior" program set to the soundtrack of "Braveheart" and to "Lord of the Dance". They collected two perfect 6.0s for presentation, which were the first of the day. European bronze medallists Irina Lobacheva/Ilia Averbukh (RUS) chose their new "Toccata and Fugue" program and finished in a strong second place.

So, the stage was set for the final round. The Germans and the Canadians skated head to head to determine who would finish fifth and sixth. Skating first in the pairing, Dubreuil/Lauzon produced a fine program, but were edged out by Winkler/Lohse. The Germans delighted the crowd with an innovative dance to Gospel music to finish fifth overall. In the next pairing, Drobiazko/Vanagas produced a sizzling Tango and captured the bronze medal, while Chait/Sakhnovski dropped to fourth with their fast paced "Variations on a theme of Paganini" by Andrew Lloyd Webber. "It was a shock", Drobiazko said about the fall earlier today. "My husband (Vanagas) comforted me and helped me to recover" Then, it was time for the Super Final. Fusar Poli/Margaglio skated their passionate and high-speed "Romeo and Juliet" program. The performance scored them another perfect 6.0 and five 5,9s for presentation. Lobacheva/Averbukh performed a well-packaged dance to a modern violin music piece called "Diabolo" that contained strong footwork. The Italians won the head to head duel against the Russian husband and wife team, and were crowned Grand Prix Final Champions for the first time in their career. "I think this was the hardest competition we ever did", Margaglio explained. "This competition and the result do a lot for our confidence heading into Worlds", commented Averbukh.

Ladies

The Ladies also started their competition with the first Free Skating. Three-time World Champion Michelle Kwan (USA) and four-time European Champion Irina Slutskaya met again in the head to head Super Final as they had done last year. Both had shown strong performances in the first Free Program to advance to the Super Final. Kwan was to skate first in the pairing and went for the triple toeloop-triple toeloop as her first element. However, the 20-year-old two-footed the second jump in

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the combination. She doubled the loop, but overcame this shaky start to land four more clean triples. However, Kwan singled the axel in her innovative Free Program to "The Miraculous Mandarin" by Bela Bartok. "It was very tough", Kwan said. "First of all because of the time difference. My second program is brand new, so I have to work on it." Kwan received marks up to 5.8 for technical merit and up to 5.9 for presentation. Slutskaya knew she had to fight for the gold medal. She went for the triple lutz-triple loop combination but fell on the loop. Encouraged by the crowd, the 21-year-old Muscovite got herself back together quickly and reeled off a triple salchow-double loop combination as well as four more triples, a high double axel and excellent spins. This was enough to beat Kwan today. Slutskaya's marks ranged from 5.7 to 5.9 for technical merit and from 5.6 to 5.9 for presentation. "There is nothing you can do, you fall, but you go on", Slutskaya commented. "I've skated in this rink a couple of times, but I never won, so it's great that I won today!"

15-year-old Sarah Hughes beat 1999 World Champion Maria Butyrskaya (RUS) in the first Free Program and produced another strong performance in the final round. The US silver medallist landed a triple salchow-triple loop combination in both programs. "I feel great right now", a radiant Hughes said. "When you have a good day, you can do something like today. Doing both long programs worked out for me actually." Hughes won the bronze, while Butyrskaya had a disappointing performance and had to settle for fourth this time. In the Final for place five and six, 1999 Grand Prix Champion Tatiana Malinina (UZB) stayed ahead of Russia's Elena Sokolova.

Pairs

The Pairs finished Round One with the first Free Skating in a high-level competition. Overnight leaders, Elena Berezhnaya/ Anton Sikharulidze (RUS) opted for their Charlie Chaplin Medley, which they opened with strong side by side triple toeloops. The Russian pair went on to produce a triple throw salchow, a triple twist and innovative connecting moves, illustrated with difficult lifts. In their emotional program, the Russians executed their elements with their typical speed and power however, Berezhnaya two footed the landing of the triple throw loop. "It was the throw as always. The throw is a question of life or death! I am not pleased with myself today. I could have done everything better", Berezhnaya commented. Canada's Jame Sale/ David Pelletier, second after the Short, took the lead today, as they completed an almost flawless program set to Richard Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde". The only mistake occurred at the very beginning of the routine, when Sale doubled the side by side toeloop. They landed a perfect triple throw loop and triple throw Salchow, as well as side by side double Axels. "Last night, we were a bit too calm. So, today we wanted to feel a bit more aggressive. When we got off the ice (after the warm up), we said let's be more aggressive, let's go for it, because we've got nothing to loose here", said Pelletier.

World silver medallists Xue Shen/Hongbo Zhao of China remained in third, although they also skated very well. The team from Harbin nailed a double axel-triple toeloop sequence, another side by side triple toeloop, as well as two spectacular triple throws. "Wow, it felt great!", Zhao exclaimed. "We really attacked today." Poland's Dorota Zagorska/Mariusz Siudek moved up one spot to fourth with a good program. Sarah Abitbol/Stephane Bernadis (FRA) pulled up from sixth to fifth, while reigning World Champions Maria Petrova/Alexei Tikhonov (RUS) dropped to sixth. Sale/Pelletier and Berezhnaya/ Sikhuralidze will meet again in the Super Final on Sunday.

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Men

In an exciting competition, the Men produced their first Free Programs to determine the field for tomorrow's pairings for the Final and Super Final. Overnight leader Alexei Yagudin of Russia skated right before his teammate Evgeni Plushenko. The three-time World Champion opened his "Lawrence of Arabia" program with a high triple axel, followed by a quadruple toeloop-triple toeloop combination. However, Yagudin stepped out of the second jump. He pulled himself together immediately to pull off six more triples and fast step sequences. "I wanted to go for the quad Salchow first, but then I changed my mind and stuck to the old program", said Yagudin fresh off the ice. "My twisted ankle is worse today, but it's not really bothering me." He had to wait and see what would happen. Plushenko, second after the Short, skated last year's Free Program set to Russian Folk music and nailed his trademark quadruple toeloop-triple toeloop-double loop combination. His entertaining routine also featured a triple axel-triple toeloop and fast steps. The performance was only marred by a step out on the triple Salchow. Plushenko took the lead from Yagudin on a 5 to 2 majority verdict. One Judge even awarded him a 6.0 for presentation. Plushenko said: "Tomorrow, I just have to do what I can do. I saved energy today, and I didn't go for the second quadruple toeloop. The mistake happened because I was tired. I hadn't skated this program in a long time." Plushenko and Yagudin will battle it out again tomorrow in the Super Final.

World Junior bronze medallist, Matthew Savoie (USA), held on to third place with a consistent program that contained a triple axel-triple toeloop and a triple flip-triple toeloop combination. Russia's Ilia Klimkin came back from a messy Short Program to pull up to fourth. He put in a clean performance. US Champion Timothy Goebel fell on his quadruple toeloop and stumbled on his triple axel, but landed a quadruple Salchow-double toeloop combination ending up fifth. Stanick Jeannette of France dropped from fourth to sixth after making several errors.

Results

Ladies Final Results

Fi Name	SP	FS	TFP	PI	F1	F2	SF
1. Irina Slutskaya (RUS)	1	1	1.5	1			1
2. Michelle Kwan (USA)	2	2	3.0	2			2
3. Sarah Hughes (USA)	5	3	5.5	3		1	
4. Maria Butyrskaya (RUS)	3	4	5.5	4		2	
5. Tatiana Malinina (UZB)	6	5	8.0	5	1		
6. Elena Sokolova (RUS)	4	6	8.0	6	2		

Ice Dance Final Results

Fi Name	OD	FS	TFP	PI	F1	F2	SF
1. Barbara Fusar-Poli/Maurizio Margaglio (ITA)	1	1	1.4	1			1
2. Irina Lobacheva/Ilia Averbukh (RUS)	2	2	2.8	2			2
3. Margarita Drobiazko/Povilas Vanagas (LTU)	3	3	5.2	3		1	
4. Galit Chait/Sergei Sakhnovksi (ISR)	4	4	4.6	4		2	
5. Kati Winkler/Rene Lohse (GER)	5	5	7.0	5	1		
6. Marie-France Dubreuil/Patrice Lauzon (CAN)	6	6	8.4	6	2		

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Pairs, Combined Results from Round 1

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

Men, Combined Results from Round 1

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

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