

March 26, 2022

Montpellier, France

ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2022 Day Three

Kaori Sakamoto skated off with gold as the ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2022 continued in Montpellier (FRA) Friday with the Rhythm Dance and the Ladies Free Skating. Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron (FRA) lead in the Rhythm Dance.

Kaori Sakamoto (JPN) strikes gold in Montpellier

Kaori Sakamoto of Japan skated to a confident victory winning with almost 20 points to spare. Belgium's Loena Hendrickx earned a historic silver medal for Belgium while newcomer Alysa Liu (USA) claimed the bronze in her World Championship debut.

Sakamoto skated last and put out an excellent performance, reeling off a seven triple jumps including a triple flip-triple toeloop combination, a double Axel-triple toe-double toe as well as level-four spins and footwork in her program to "No More Fight Left In Me". The Olympic bronze medalist maintained high speed throughout the performance and set a new personal best with 155.77 points. She accumulated 236.09 points to win the first World title for a Japanese lady in eight years. Mao Asada had won in 2014.

"I feel that this medal has a very precious meaning to me," Sakamoto said. "It was the hardest month I have ever had, but this experience is something that only those who have competed in the Olympics and the World Championships can make, so it was a great experience to have it this time. I am very happy that I was able to overcome this challenge, because I don't think there is anything tougher than this in the future. It was the last time I performed this program in this season, so I felt it was a really good end to the season, and I was so happy to finally perform so well in the World Championships, I was so excited," she continued.

Hendrickx turned in another exciting performance to Oriental music that was highlighted by four clean triple jumps, difficult steps and spins. The ISU Grand Prix Premio d'Italia bronze medalist scored 142.70 points which added up to 217.70 points overall. Belgium never had won a World medal in Single Skating before and the last World medal for the country was the Pair Skating gold in 1948.

"I'm speechless am super happy and all my hard work paid off to stand here with the silver medal is unbelievable and I'm so proud I can do it for myself and also for Belgium," Hendrickx shared. "I had a really hard time going into these worlds, I had a lot of pain (due to a groin injury) but I wanted to show one last time that I can do it to finish my season strong and I'm just so happy with the result. I didn't want any pressure on me because I know I couldn't train how I wanted, I was already happy to be here and of course I wanted to show my best because otherwise I wouldn't come because I know that there was something in me that said you can do it and I'm so proud of myself that I didn't give up and I did what I came for."

Liu went for a triple Axel in her routine to Petr Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in D, but it was underrotated. The 2020 World Junior bronze medalist went on to complete six clean triples and collected a level four for her spins. She netted 139.28 points and totaled 211.19 points. Liu is the first U.S. woman to win a World medal since Ashley Wagner earned silver in 2016.

"I'm still in shock. I think I did really good. I'm really proud of myself. I didn't think I could do better than Olympics and I was like 'it's going to be hard to do it again at Worlds so soon after' but I'm so happy. I took a week off after the Olympics and trained really hard for the little time I had and it paid off," the 16-year-old said.

U.S. Champion Mariah Bell landed five good triples, but slipped from third to fourth place (208.66 points).

2020 Youth Olympic Games Champion [Young You](#) (KOR) finished fifth at 204.91 points. [Anastasiia Gubanova](#) (GEO) pulled up from 14th place to sixth on 196.61 points.

Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron (FRA) take Rhythm Dance with new record score

Olympic Champions [Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron](#) of France won Rhythm Dance setting a new record score en route. [Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue](#) (USA) came second ahead of their teammates [Madison Chock/Evan Bates](#). All three couples achieved a personal best score.

Papadakis/Cizeron delivered once more an outstanding performance of their entertaining “Whacking” style Rhythm Dance to “Made To Love” and “U Move, I Move” by John Legend. The four-time World Champions picked up a level four for the twizzles, Blues pattern and stationary lift while the Pattern Dance Step Sequence was rated a level three for her and a level four for him. The French Champions earned 92.73 points and got a perfect 10.00 for the component Interpretation/Timing.

“I think in this program we’ve worked on many details since the very beginning,” Cizeron said. “We have learned Whacking from A to Z and we wanted to incorporate it as much as possible. It came as a surprise that Whacking and skating go very well together,” he continued.

“We were hoping for the kind of performance we did today. We couldn’t wait to come here and to skate for our audience. It was a beautiful moment, it carried us through until the end. All the training we’ve had since the Olympic Games and this little magic thing, the audience, helped us to have a good performance that was even better technically than at the Olympic Games,” Papadakis shared.

Hubbell/Donohue’s performance to Janet Jackson’s “Nasty”, “Rope Burn” and “Rhythm Nation” featured a level-four stationary lift, twizzles and Blues pattern. The Olympic bronze medalists scored 89.72 points.

“Zach and I were very pleased - it’s an arena with a lot of energy and it was really fun to perform,” Hubbell noted. “We had the goal of staying focused but really letting the moment sink in a little bit more than at the Olympics... really living the joy of it and especially for myself at the very end - I had quite a fun moment, I was really just celebrating,” she added. “I think being that this (Free Dance) will be our last competitive performance we’re just staying in the moment because we want to take everything in. We’re going to enjoy every second and make the most of it,” Donohue said.

Dancing to “MyBoi”, “Therefore I Am” and “Bad Guy”, Chock/Bates produced intricate footwork and a curve lift to net 87.51 points. The two-time ISU Four Continents Champions collected a level four for the curve lift and the twizzles.

“We had a ton of fun out there performing. We really performed every second of this program and the crowd was so enthusiastic, so it made it even more fun and easier to let loose and just the program shine. It feels great to have sent this program off with a wonderful performance,” Chock commented. “We want to be on the podium at Worlds, and it’s definitely a big goal of ours and we want to close this season with a really strong performance, and you know these days we don’t always have an audience,” Bates observed.

Two-time ISU European bronze medalists [Charlene Guignard/Marco Fabbri](#) (ITA) placed fourth with an upbeat Michael Jackson medley on 84.22 points. 2021 ISU World bronze medalists [Piper Gilles/Paul Poirier](#) (CAN) came fourth with their dance to songs by Elton John (80.79), followed by [Olivia Smart/Adrian Diaz](#) (ESP).

Event Schedule

The schedule of the ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2022 is as follows:

Saturday, March 26: Men's Free Skating, Ice Dance/Free Dance
Sunday, March 27: Exhibition Gala

* Following the IOC recommendation, in order to protect the integrity of ice skating competitions and for the safety of all the participants of international ice skating competitions, the ISU Council based on Article 17.1.q) i) of the ISU Constitution, agreed that with immediate effect and until further notice, no Skaters belonging to the ISU Members in Russia (Russian Skating Union and the Figure Skating Federation of Russia) and Belarus (Skating Union of Belarus) shall be invited or allowed to participate in international ice skating Competitions including ISU Championships and other ISU Events (Full [Statement](#) to be read on ISU website).

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