

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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

January 20, 2003

2003 European Figure Skating Championships Malmö, Sweden

Day 1

The 2003 European Championships in Malmö, Sweden, started Monday with the Ladies' Qualifying Rounds and the Pairs Short Program. The Championships are held for the sixth time in Sweden. Sweden hosted the Event in 1985 in Gothenburg for the last time.

Ladies Qualifying Round B

The Ladies opened the competition of the 2003 European Figure Skating Championships with the Qualifying Rounds.

Viktoria Volchkova of Russia won Group B that skated first today with Elina Kettunen (FIN) and Elena Liashenko (UKR) finishing second and third. Volchkova landed a triple toeloop, triple Lutz-double toeloop combination, a triple flip and a second triple Lutz in her lyrical routine to "Air" and "Four Seasons". But the four-time European bronze medallist struggled with her edge jumps, stepping out of the Salchow and falling on the loop. The skater, who recovered from pneumonia only recently seemed to lack energy in the middle, but finished on a high note. Volchkova's marks ranged from 5.1 to 5.6 for technical merit and from 5.2 to 5.7 for presentation. "It was a bit hard after my illness, of course", the Russian explained. "I was off the ice for three weeks. I wasn't sure if I was ready for this competition. I do all my elements in practice, but I didn't know how I would hold up in the program."

Kettunen (FIN) doubled her opening Lutz, but landed a triple one successfully later into her program as well as two more triples and a double Axel. The marks went up to 5.4 for technical merit and up to 5.6 for presentation. "I doubled some jumps, so I'm not so satisfied", Kettunen commented. "The beginning of the season was hard for me. I had to change my coach, because she moved to another city, and I couldn't go with her. I also had to go to another ice rink. But I do think that I'm ready for these European Championships."

Liashenko showed improved choreography and nice spins in her routine set to a selection of Tangos. She landed a triple Salchow, triple toeloop and a triple Lutz-double toeloop combination, but she fell on her first Lutz, stumbled on her triple loop and two-footed the flip. The judges awarded her marks up to 5.3 for both technical merit and presentation. "I fell on my first triple Lutz. It was very high and maybe even a bit over rotated. But it was a good jump and I shouldn't have missed it. Then I two-footed the triple flip....", the 1995 European bronze medallist explained. "It is hard to hold it together when you fall on the first jump. I don't know what went wrong today."

Ladies Qualifying Round A

Russia's Elena Sokolova upset teammate and reigning World Champion Irina Slutskaya to win the second qualifying group. Carolina Kostner of Italy finished a strong third.

Sokolova put out a sparkling performance to "Notre Dame de Paris". The newly crowned Russian Champion, who is competing in her first European Championships, nailed a triple Lutz-triple toeloop combination and all her remaining five triple jumps as well as a high double Axel. She skated with power and emotion to earn marks ranging from 5.5 to 5.8 for both technical merit and presentation. "I hope that this was just the beginning!" a delighted Sokolova told the press. "I feel very comfortable now. I enjoy skating so much, everyday I

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come to the rink, I'm enjoying it. My coach and my new choreographer made the difference for me (she went back to her old coach Viktor Kudriavtsev after three years)."

Slutskaya opened her program to "La Traviata" with a triple loop and produced three other triples as well as strong spins. However, she doubled her first Lutz and stepped out of the second. The four-time European Champion received marks as high as 5.7 for technical merit and as high as 5.9 for presentation. "This is a very tough season for me and I want it to end", the athlete sighed. "I had no vacation, I did the tour (in the USA), then I was sick... (with bronchitis). I started to skate very late, in October only, and usually I do everything by the time of October. I think this was the best I've skated my free program so far. It's a big victory for me."

Kostner surprised many with her strong outing. The 15-year-old Italian is one of the youngest competitors of the event and competes in her first Europeans. She seemed unfazed, went out there and hit two triple-triple combinations (Lutz-toe and flip-toe) as well as a triple loop and Salchow. Her only mistake came when she put her hand down on her first triple Salchow (in combination with double Axel). Kostner was awarded marks up to 5.7 for technical merit and up to 5.5 for presentation. "I'm so surprised, I can't believe I skated so well", the Italian said. "A short while ago I couldn't even imagine to compete here at the Europeans with skaters I watched on television."

Pairs Short Program

Russia's Maria Petrova/Alexei Tikhonov took a first step towards recapturing the title they had won in 1999 and 2000 by finishing first in the Short Program. Skating to "Blues under the Rain" the team put out a strong performance that featured a side by side triple toeloop, a high throw triple Salchow and a difficult one-armed lift with an original exit. There was only one glitch, when Tikhonov slipped in the spiral sequence, but he recovered instantly. The 2000 World Champions earned marks ranging from 5.3 to 5.8 for required elements and from 5.4 to 5.8 for presentation.

"It was my mistake, because I wanted to do it perfectly." Tikhonov commented on the wobble. "I wanted to put in more expression and didn't pay enough attention to the technique."

His partner added: "We are very pleased with everything else. We really want to show to everyone that we can skate well."

Defending champions Tatiana Totmianina/Maxim Marinin of Russia are currently standing in second place, ahead of last year's silver medalists, Sarah Abitbol/Stephane Bernadis (FRA). Totmianina/Marinin started strongly into their program to a selection of music from the "Peer Gynt suite" and completed a pair combination spin and a high throw triple loop, but then Marinin stumbled out of the side by side triple toeloop. The marks ranged from 5.4 to 5.6 for technical merit and from 5.6 to 5.8 for presentation. "I'm not happy with my performance, I had the same problem with the toeloop as usual", Marinin said. "I can't get it out of my mind. The rest of the skating was ok. When you start so early and make a mistake in the short program you leave too much space for the other competitors."

Abitbol/Bernadis had to overcome a shaky start when Abitbol doubled the toeloop, but the couple went on to land a high double twist and a triple throw loop. Only their side by side spin was a little off at the end. "I felt really good", Abitbol told the press. "At first I was a little bit scared in the warm-up because we had a break from skating for six months (due to her achilles tendon rupture right before the Olympics). But I'm satisfied with my skating I look forward to the free skating. I will do my best."

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Russia's Julia Obertas/Alexei Sokolov came in third. Obertas missed the side by side triple toeloop, but the rest of the performance was good. Two-time European silver medalists Dorota Zagorska/Mariusz Siudek (POL) finished fourth in the first part of the event. They made mistakes on the side by side triple toeloop and on the side by side spin.

The 2003 European Championships will continue tomorrow with the Compulsory Dance and the Ladies' Short Program.

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

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2003 European Figure Skating Championships

Ladies

FPI.	Name	Nat.	Points	QB	QA	SP	FS
1	Elena SOKOLOVA	RUS	0.4		1		
1	Viktoria VOLCHKOVA	RUS	0.4	1			
3	Elina KETTUNEN	FIN	0.8	2			
3	Irina SLUTSKAYA	RUS	0.8		2		
5	Carolina KOSTNER	ITA	1.2		3		
5	Elena LIASHENKO	UKR	1.2	3			
7	Anne Sophie CALVEZ	FRA	1.6	4			
7	Julia SEBESTYEN	HUN	1.6		4		
9	Alisa DREI	FIN	2.0		5		
9	Diana POTH	HUN	2.0	5			
11	Zuzana BABIAKOVA	SVK	2.4	6			
11	Galina MANIACHENKO	UKR	2.4		6		
13	Susanna POYKIO	FIN	2.8		7		
13	Olga VASSILJEVA	EST	2.8	7			
15	Idora HEGEL	CRO	3.2	8			
15	Lucie KRAUSOVA	CZE	3.2		8		
17	Vanessa GIUNCHI	ITA	3.6		9		
17	Daria TIMOSHENKO	AZE	3.6	9			
19	Mojca KOPAC	SLO	4.0		10		
19	Jenna McCORKELL	GBR	4.0	10			
21	Annette DYTRT	GER	4.4		11		
21	Julia LAUTOWA	AUT	4.4	11			
23	Kimena BROG MEIER	SUI	4.8		12		
23	Sabina WOJTALA	POL	4.8	12			
25	Sara FALOTICO	BEL	5.2		13		
25	Tugba KARADEMIR	TUR	5.2	13			
27	Asa PERSSON	SWE	5.6	14			
27	Hristina VASSILEVA	BUL	5.6		14		
29	Roxana LUCA	ROM	6.0	15			
29	Karen VENHUIZEN	NED	6.0		15		
31	Anna BERNAUER	LUX	6.4	16			
31	Gintare VOSTRECOVAITE	LTU	6.4		16		
33	Georgina PAPAVASILIOU	GRE	6.8		17		
33	Aleksandra PETUSHKO	LAT	6.8	17			

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Pairs

FPI.	Name	Nat.	Points	SP	FS
1	Maria PETROVA / Alexei TIKHONOV	RUS	0.5	1	
2	Tatiana TOTMIANINA / Maxim MARININ	RUS	1.0	2	
3	Sarah ABITBOL / Stephane BERNADIS	FRA	1.5	3	
4	Julia OBERTAS / Alexei SOKOLOV	RUS	2.0	4	
5	Dorota ZAGORSKA / Mariusz SIUDEK	POL	2.5	5	
6	Katerina BERANKOVA / Otto DLABOLA	CZE	3.0	6	
7	Eva-Maria FITZE / Rico REX	GER	3.5	7	
8	Tatiana VOLOSOZHAR / Petro KHARCHENKO	UKR	4.0	8	
9	Nicole NOENNIG / Matthias BLEYER	GER	4.5	9	
10	Tatiana CHUVAEVA / Dmitri PALAMARCHUK	UKR	5.0	10	
11	Maria GUERASSIMENKO / Vladimir FUTAS	SVK	5.5	11	
12	Diana RENNIG / Aleksei SAKS	EST	6.0	12	
13	Olga BOGUSLAVSKA / Andrei BROVENKO	LAT	6.5	13	