

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Day 4

Lausanne, 15 February 2003

ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships Beijing (CHN) 12-16 February

The competition of the 2003 Four Continents Championships in Beijing, China, concluded Saturday with the Mens Free Program.

Men, Free Program

The Men were the last to compete in Beijing. Overnight leader Chengjiang Li (CHN) was first to skate in the final group. The 2001 Four Continents Champion nailed a quadruple-triple toeloop combination right out of the gate, but then he stumbled on his quadruple Salchow. Li recovered to land a triple Axel, triple Lutz, triple Salchow, triple loop and a triple Axel-double toeloop combination, but some of his landings were wobbly. Overall Li looked a bit tentative in his "Star Wars" program and his spins were slower than usual. The 23-year old received marks ranging from 5.5 to 5.8 for technical merit and from 5.0 to 5.9 for presentation. His compatriot Min Zhang was up next. Zhang opened his performance to a selection of soundtracks by Michael Kamen with a triple Axel-triple toeloop combination and a quadruple Salchow, but then he popped his second planned quad, a toeloop. Zhang rallied back to complete a quadruple-double toeloop combination, a triple Lutz and a triple flip, but he doubled the loop. Zhang's marks were as high as 5.9 for technical merit and as high as 5.8 for presentation. He pulled ahead of Li and took the lead at this time.

Last to skate was Takeshi Honda of Japan, who was ranked second in the Short Program. Honda looked composed when he took the ice. Skating to "Riverdance", the World bronze medalist reeled off a quadruple-triple toeloop combination, followed by a stunning quadruple Salchow. Honda then stepped out of his triple Axel, but he didn't let that mistake affect him, and hit a quadruple toeloop as well as a triple flip and two more triples before entertaining the crowd with his tap-dance like footwork. When he had finished, the athlete let out a shout of triumph and pumped his fist. "This was the best I've ever skated in my life so far", he said minutes later to the press. The 21-year-old raised his arms and waved as the marks came up. The performance had earned him marks from 5.7 to 6.0 for both technical merit and presentation. Honda received two 6.0s for technical merit and three for presentation.

"I landed three quads in one program for the first time", Honda told the media. "It was a long wait, 45 minutes after the warm up. I don't usually like to skate last. Today... it was like in a dream. I received 6.0s for the first time. Since yesterday, I had a bad stomach ache, and I was in pain this morning in practice. But I focused and wasn't nervous. I didn't feel it all during my program, I totally forgot about it."

Four years ago, Honda had won the inaugural Four Continents Championships in Halifax, Canada. He recaptured the title after finishing second the past two years. Min Zhang moved up from third to claim the silver. He was a bronze medalist in 2000. Li added a bronze medal to his collection and now has a full set of medals from Four Continents after winning in 2001 and taking the silver twice (1999 and 2000).

Zhang said: "I had a good performance today, but I made a few mistakes. I still want to continue to improve my skating and my performances. Technically, I believe I have enough difficult elements in my program."

Li was a bit disappointed. "Being in the lead after the Short Program and having performed so well in the Short, I felt some pressure. It was an average performance today. I'm especially disappointed about the mistake on the quad Salchow. I really wanted to put out a better program."

Defending champion Jeffrey Buttle (CAN) made several errors and finished fourth.

Host country China was the most successful ISU member at these fifth Four Continent Championships, claiming all three medals in the pairs event and the silver and bronze in the Men's competition. The Japanese team swept the Ladies' podium and took the gold in the Men's event. The USA captured the silver and bronze medal in the Ice Dancing event while Canada took the Ice Dancing gold.

The 2003 Four Continents Championships will conclude tomorrow with the Exhibition Gala.

Results are attached. Full results are also available from www.isu.org

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2003 Four Continents Championships Men Result					
FPL.	Name	Nat.	Points	SP	FS
1	Takeshi HONDA	JPN	2.0	2	1
2	Min ZHANG	CHN	3.5	3	2
3	Chengjiang LI	CHN	3.5	1	3
4	Jeffrey BUTTLE	CAN	7.5	5	5
5	Emanuel SANDHU	CAN	8.0	8	4
6	Ryan JAHNKE	USA	9.0	6	6
7	Yunfei LI	CHN	11.0	4	9
8	Scott SMITH	USA	12.5	9	8
9	Fedor ANDREEV	CAN	13.0	12	7
10	Evan LYSACEK	USA	15.5	11	10
11	Kensuke NAKANIWA	JPN	15.5	7	12
12	Kyu-Hyun LEE	KOR	18.0	14	11
13	Daisuke TAKAHASHI	JPN	18.0	10	13
14	Bradley SANTER	AUS	20.5	13	14
15	Stuart BECKINGHAM	AUS	22.5	15	15
16	Ricky COCKERILL	NZL	24.0	16	16
17	Sean CARLOW	AUS	26.5	19	17
18	Manuel SEGURA	MEX	27.0	18	18
19	Tristan THODE	NZL	27.5	17	19
20	Adrian ALVARADO	MEX	30.5	21	20
21	Humberto CONTRERAS	MEX	31.0	20	21