

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2016

Men Short Program

Javier Fernandez (ESP) leads Men after Short Program

Javier Fernandez of Spain skated to a strong lead in the Men's Short Program. Russia's Maxim Kovtun came second and Michal Brezina of the Czech Republic placed third.

Fernandez stepped out of the back end of his opening quad toe-triple toe combination but then hit a quad Salchow, triple Axel and earned a level four for his spins and footwork in his "Malaguena" routine. The three-time European Champion posted a new personal best of 102.54 points. "We wanted to pass the 100 point mark at international competitions; there are other skaters like Yuzuru (Hanyu) and Patrick (Chan) that have programs with over 100 points so felt ready to take some risks. After the Grand Prix in Barcelona last month, we increased the level of difficulty of my programs (by including two quads)", the reigning World Champion said.

Kovtun pulled off a quadruple Salchow-triple toeloop combination and quadruple toeloop in his program to "I Can't Dance" by Genesis, but crashed on the triple Axel. The defending European silver medalist picked up a level four for his spins and scored 88.09 points, a new seasons best. "I felt fine before I skated, I was prepared and was not nervous. I have had issues with my triple Axel at lots of other competitions this season and we spent a lot of time after Russian Nationals working on it. But it is difficult for me", the Russian Champion shared.

Brezina's rhythmic performance to "The Way You Look Tonight" featured a triple Axel, triple flip-triple toe combination as well as level-four spins and footwork, but he fell on the quadruple Salchow. The 2013 European bronze medalist earned 84.30 points. "If I'm honest, I expected a slightly higher score, but I did have the mistake on the Salchow. At least I didn't pop the Salchow, that's the main goal", the Czech Champion pointed out.

Alexei Bychenko (ISR) remained within striking distance of the podium at 84.09 points in fourth after a strong program that included a quadruple toeloop. Daniel Samohin (ISR) is not far behind in fifth at 82.73 points and landed two quadruple jumps. Ivan Righini (ITA) rounds up the top six and stayed in medal contention with 82.23 points.

The ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2016 continue Thursday with the Short Dance and the Men's Free Skating. For more information, full entry lists and results please see: www.isu.org and the official event website www.ecbratislava.com . #ECBratislava