

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships 2016

Day One

The 2016 ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships opened in Taipei, Chinese Taipei, Thursday with the Short Dance, the Ladies and Pairs Short Programs. The ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships return to Taipei for the third time. Taipei has hosted the ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships in 2011 and 2014. A total of 97 skaters from 15 ISU members have been entered for the Championships.

Maia Shibutani/Alex Shibutani (USA) capture Short Dance

Maia Shibutani/Alex Shibutani (USA) edged out Canada's Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje for a narrow lead in the Short Dance. Madison Hubbel/Zachary Donohue (USA) are currently ranked third.

Shibutani/Shibutani put out a characteristic dance to Waltz and March from "Coppelia" by Leon Delibes. The brother-and-sister team earned a level four for all elements to set a new personal best score of 72.86 points for themselves. "That was our strongest performance of the season so far for our short dance. After the national championships we all had a few weeks, but we really put in some focus time to improve various parts of our program. So we're really happy with how it went today", Maia Shibutani said. "We've done Four Continents many times, so we're familiar with the pacing in between the national championships and this competition. We're very excited with the direction our skating is going, every competition we've skated at the performances have gotten better and better, so this was a nice building block going into Worlds", her brother added.

Weaver/Poje's classy Waltz and Polka to music by Johann Strauss was highlighted by a straight line lift and excellent twizzles. The lift, the twizzles and the second Waltz pattern were rated a level four. The 2015 Four Continents Champions scored 72.42 points. "Honestly it went by in the blink of an eye. I was on the ice and then it was over, which I think is a mark of a good performance. Andrew and I felt that we just skated like we do at home. We've been working on to make things better and at higher levels. We still see some threes on the board, but it's all in the right direction", Weaver commented. "We're going to attack full force, 100 percent (in the free dance), and that's the same whether we are in first place or in tenth place. We've learned that lesson there is no defending anything, no matter where you sit", she continued.

Hubbell/Donohue produced four level-four elements in their Waltz and March to "Hallelujah" so achieve a new personal best of 69.36 points. "We're obviously extremely happy to be here and we're just wowed by the whole experience. We skated really strong. I personally felt a lot of pressure to put out another strong performance of this program, but I was able to just let it all go and trust the process. This whole year has been a dream come true and this is just another step in our journey", Hubbell noted.

Madison Chock/Evan Bates (USA) are currently ranked fourth at 67.05 points followed by Piper Gilles/Paul Poirier (CAN) with 63.92 points and Elisabeth Paradis/Francois-Xavier Ouellette (CAN/60.15 points).

Satoko Miyahara (JPN) skates to lead in Ladies Short Program

Satoko Miyahara of Japan skated to the lead in the Ladies Short Program followed by her teammate Kanako Murakami. Mirai Nagasu (USA) came third.

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Skating to “Firedance”, Miyahara landed a triple Lutz-triple toe loop combination, a triple flip, double Axel and picked up a level four for the spins and footwork. The reigning World silver medalist achieved a new personal best score with 72.48 points. “One of my goals was to get more than 70 points in the short program in an official ISU competition, so I made sure that I didn’t get lower levels in spins and footwork. I paid attention to many details like how to use my arms in the step sequence. I went to watch some Flamenco performances. The Grand Prix Final was held in Spain so I went to see the real Flamenco and I tried to learn the true expression of Flamenco”, the Japanese Champion explained.

Murakami’s program to “Tango de Roxanne” featured a triple flip, triple toe-triple toe combination and three level-four spins. The 2014 Four Continents Champion as well posted a new personal best with 68.51 points. “In the beginning of the season I had problems with my Axel, but I’ve been practicing really hard in the past two weeks and I got confidence from that. It has been a while that I was able to show my best in a major competition, so I was just very happy that I could do it today. It is the same rink I competed in two years ago and I was able to revive the feeling I had two years ago”, the 21-year-old told the press.

Nagasu produced a triple flip-triple toe combination, double Axel and strong spins, but she wobbled on the triple loop. The 2011 Four Continents bronze medalist scored 66.06 points, a seasons best. “Internationally, it was the first time I landed a (clean) triple-triple, so that was very exciting. I’m so proud of myself for being able to deliver as well as I did today. I feel that it’s been a couple of years since I’ve been able to challenge myself in this manner, so to deliver this strong performance is a boost to my confidence and I hope to take it into the long program”, the 22-year-old said.

Rika Hongo (JPN) placed fourth (64.27 points), So Youn Park (KOR) is currently ranked fifth (62.49 points) and Zijun Li (CHN) rounds up the top six (60.04).

Wenjing Sui/Cong Han (CHN) win Pairs Short Program

China’s Wenjing Sui/Cong Han won the Pairs Short Program. Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford of Canada are currently ranked second followed by Alexa Scimeca/Chris Knierim (USA).

Sui/Han put out a confident Spanish themed routine that was highlighted by a throw triple flip, triple twist and side by side triple toe loop. The 2015 World silver medalists picked up a new personal best score with 78.51 points. “Today we showed a good level of our skating, however I think we still can do much better than this and hopefully we’ll improve for the next competition. We always just want to show our very best and surpass ourselves and we want to make progress. This is more important to us than the score”, Han noted.

Duhamel/Radford completed a triple twist, throw triple Lutz and three level-four elements in their program to “Your Song” by Elton John, but the side by side triple Lutz was shaky and underrotated. The current World and Four Continents Champions scored 71.90 points. Duhamel had been taken ill before the Short Program. “This morning I woke up and I was feeling sick, but we did the practice and it seemed manageable. I went back to the hotel and I slept all day and then I got sick to my stomach in the afternoon before coming to the rink. I thought I was going to come and try the warm up and before the warm up I was vomiting in the changing room again. I don’t know what it is”, Duhamel said. “It is just unfortunate with the Lutz, getting a downgrade is really strange for us and we lost a lot of points there. Anyway, we made it through and hopefully we’ll feel better for the long”, Radford added.

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Performing to “Nothing Else Matters”, Scimeca/Knierim produced a high triple twist, but he put his hand down on the side by side triple Salchow while she two-footed the throw triple flip. The ISU Grand Prix Finalists earned 67.61 points. “It wasn’t as clean or perfect as we wanted, but all-in-all, we’re happy with it. For what we did, I think it was a pretty good score. We’re getting ready for the long program on Saturday”, Knierim commented.

Xiaoyu Yu/Yang Jin (CHN) stand in fourth place (64.99 points) followed by Lubov Iliushechkina/Dylan Moscovitch (CAN) with 61.97 points and Marissa Castelli/Mervin Tran (USA) with 61.34 points.

The ISU Four Continents Championships 2016 continue Friday with the Free Dance and the Men’s Short Program. For more information, full entry lists and results please see: www.isu.org and the official event website <http://www.fcc2016taipei.com/>, Hashtag: #4CCTaipeiCity

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