

November 23, 2018

Lausanne, SUI

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 18/19 Internationaux de France, Day One

There were some surprises when the Internationaux de France kicked off in Grenoble Friday with the Short Programs and the Rhythm Dance. While three-time Ice Dance World Champions [Gabiella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron](#) (FRA) won the Rhythm Dance convincingly, other favorites faltered. [Jason Brown](#) (USA), [Mai Mihara](#) (JPN) and [Aleksandra Boikova/Dmitrii Kozlovskii](#) (RUS) are leading after the first day. Skaters are competing for the last available spots for the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final. The Internationaux de France are the sixth and last event of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series 2018/19.

Brown (USA) captures lead in Men's Short Program

[Jason Brown](#) (USA) upset the favorites to skate into the lead in the Men's Short Program. Russia's [Alexander Samarin](#) sits in second while World Champion [Nathan Chen](#) (USA) had to settle for third place on the first day of competition.

Performing to "Love is a Bitch" by Two Feet, Brown completed a triple flip, triple Axel, triple Lutz-triple toe as well as excellent spins and footwork to set a season's best of 96.41 points.

"Today I just tried my best to be as calm, confident and focused as I possibly could be and I did that throughout the whole program," Brown said.

Samarin's routine to "Cold Blood" by Dave Not Dave featured a quadruple Lutz with a three-turn on the landing, a triple Axel and quadruple toe-double toe combination as well as level-four spins and steps. The 2017 World Junior bronze medalist picked up a season's best of 90.86 points.

"I am satisfied with the short program today, but there were some mistakes and there is room for improvement," Samarin said.

"It's still the beginning of the season and we are improving from one competition to the next to reach the top."

Chen opened his program to Duke Ellington's "Caravan" with a triple Axel, but then fell on an underrotated quad flip. The reigning World Champion recovered to land a quad toe-triple toe combination and scored 86.94 points.

"The short program didn't go exactly as well as I wanted it to go. However, I'm glad with what I did technically today and I was very pleased with what I did at (Skate) America," Chen said.

[Romain Ponsart](#) (FRA) came fourth with a clean performance to score 84.97 points. [Deniss Vasiljevs](#) (LAT) finished fifth (82.30 points), followed by [Kevin Aymoz](#) (FRA) on 81.00 points. Two-

time World bronze medalist [Boyang JIN](#) (CHN) sits in seventh after missing his quadruple Lutz (79.41 points).

Papadakis/Cizeron (FRA) don't miss a beat in Rhythm Dance

Three-time World Champions [Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron](#) of France returned to competition in style, taking a strong lead in the Rhythm Dance. Russians [Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov](#) finished second while [Piper Gilles/Paul Poirier](#) of Canada came third.

Skating to "Oblivion" and "Primavera Porteno", Papadakis/Cizeron performed a smooth and characteristic Tango that was highlighted by an original curve lift and excellent twizzles.

The four-time European Champions collected a level four for the twizzles, the lift and the first Tango Romantica sequence to score 84.13 points.

The couple missed the NHK Trophy in Japan earlier this month after Cizeron suffered a back injury in a practice fall, but he says he has recovered.

"We don't find it (the Tango) harder than other short dances that we've done. Tango is a universal language; everybody knows what it is about. It just feels natural to our bodies," Cizeron said.

"We are very happy with our performance today, especially for our first competition. We really love this program," Papadakis added.

Sinitsina/Katsalapov chose "Verano Porteno" by Astor Piazzolla for their Rhythm Dance and interpreted it with passion, picking up a level four for the twizzles and the rotational lift, while the Tango Romantica and the midline step sequence merited a level three.

The Skate Canada silver medalists posted a season's best of 77.91 points.

"We have worked with the best Tango ballroom dancers in the world, Dmitry Vasin and Sagdiana Hamzina, so a big thank you to them," Katsalapov said.

"We have not yet reached our maximum and we'll continue working on the chemistry and the relationship between us and that fire."

Gilles/Poirier delivered an expressive performance to "Angelica's Tango". However, their twizzles, the circular step sequence and the second Tango Romantica sequence garnered only a level two, while the rotational lift was a level four.

The Skate Canada bronze medalists earned 74.25 points.

"We really took our time and enjoyed the performance, because this is a program that both of us truly enjoy. We're really excited to go into tomorrow and skate a great free dance. We're really proud of this artistic program and it's going to be great," Gilles said.

NHK Trophy Champions [Kaitlin Hawayek/Jean-Luc Baker](#) (USA) are currently sitting in fourth on 69.85 points. [Olivia Smart/Adrian Diaz](#) (ESP) placed fifth with 68.16 points, closely followed by NHK Trophy bronze medalists [Rachel Parsons/Michael Parsons](#) (USA) on 68.14 points.

Mihara (JPN) takes narrow lead in Ladies Short Program

[Mai Mihara](#) of Japan edged teammate [Rika Kihira](#) and Russia's [Evgenia Medvedeva](#) to take a slender lead in the Ladies Short Program. The top three Ladies are separated by less than half a point heading into the Free Skating.

Skating to "It's Magic", Mihara produced a triple flip, beautiful double Axel and three level-four spins, but she underrotated the back end of her triple Lutz-triple toeloop combination to earn 67.95 points.

"I'm a little surprised to be sitting here right now. I was lacking a little speed from the beginning. After the NHK Trophy I was practicing my triple-triple (combination) very hard and I put a lot of energy in it. I am disappointed that it didn't happen today, but my motivation goes up and I want to show a clean performance tomorrow," the Japanese skater said.

Kihira landed a triple flip-triple toe and a triple Lutz in her routine to "Clair de Lune". However, the NHK Trophy Champion singled her planned triple Axel. She scored 67.64 points.

"I regret the (popped) triple Axel a lot, but I landed the triple flip-triple toe and the triple Lutz cleanly. Tomorrow in practice I'll check on my triple Axel again. I don't think much about my score, I just want to leave my mistakes behind," the 16-year-old said.

Medvedeva nailed a triple Lutz and double Axel in her sassy program to "Orange Colored Sky", but she struggled with her combination jump, tacking a double toe onto a wobbly triple flip. The two-time World Champion scored 67.55 points.

"The short program was better than at Skate Canada, but I am still disappointed with the performance. But I feel more alive than after the short program at Skate Canada. I'm in third place now and I have the opportunity to fight," the Olympic silver medalist said.

[Marin Honda](#) (JPN) is close to the podium in fourth place on 65.37 points. [Maria Sotskova](#) came fifth with 61.76 points while [Bradie Tennell](#) (USA) is ranked sixth (61.34 points). Grand Prix Helsinki silver medalist [Stanislava Konstantinova](#) (RUS) ruined her chances of making the Grand Prix Final by finishing 10th on 54.91 points after mistakes on two jumping passes.

Boikova/Kozlovskii (RUS) upset favorites in Pairs Short Program

Young Russian pair [Aleksandra Boikova/Dmitrii Kozlovskii](#) produced an upset to win the Pairs Short Program at the Internationaux de France in Grenoble on Friday. [Tae Ok Ryom/Ju Sik Kim](#) of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea were second, while pre-competition favorites [Vanessa James/Morgan Cipres](#) of France placed third.

Performing to "Dark Eyes", Boikova/Kozlovskii landed a side by side triple Salchow, triple twist, throw triple Salchow as well as a level-four spin and step sequence. The 2017 World Junior silver

medalists, who are competing in their first full senior season, posted a season's best of 68.83 points.

"Our performance was good, but I feel myself not in the right place right now, sitting here with these great sportsmen," Kozlovskii said.

His partner Boikova said: "I feel comfortable and I think this is our place, but tomorrow is the free skating and we need to do our job.

"We were a bit sad when we were fourth at Skate Canada, but we were motivated to work even harder. Maybe it was good that we were fourth."

Ryom/Kim put out a solid program to "A Day in the Life" that featured a side by side triple toe, a triple twist and throw triple loop. The 2018 Four Continents bronze medalists earned 67.18 points, a season's best.

"We are very happy to do a clean performance and tomorrow we want to do our best again. We focused (after our first Grand Prix in Helsinki) on each technical element and the overall performance in practice," Ryom said.

World bronze medalists James/Cipres started off well with a level-four triple twist in their routine to "Uninvited" by Alanis Morissette, but James doubled the toeloop and the landing of the throw triple flip was shaky. The French pair scored 65.24 points.

"Obviously that was not the performance we wanted to skate in France for the public and for ourselves, but it is normal that we sometimes make mistakes - we are human beings," Cipres said.

James added: "I don't think this will be our spot tomorrow but if it is, it is because we deserve it. We deserved this spot today."

2018 Four Continents Champions [Tarah Kayne/Danny O'Shea](#) (USA) are sitting in fourth on 63.45 points while [Camille Ruest/Andrew Wolfe](#) (CAN) finished fifth (58.25 points).

Overall, 57 skaters/couples representing 14 ISU members compete at the Internationaux de France - the sixth and final event in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating series. The top six qualifiers in each discipline will proceed to the Final in Vancouver, Canada on December 6 - 9 2018.

The Internationaux de France continues Saturday with the Men's Free Skating, Free Dance, Ladies and Pairs Free Skating. For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series please visit [here](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using **#FigureSkating #GPFigure**.