



January 15, 2014

ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2014

Day One

The 2014 ISU European Figure Skating Championships opened in Budapest, Hungary, Wednesday with the Ladies Short Program and the Short Dance. 170 skaters from 33 ISU members have been entered for the Championships. Skaters/couples need to have obtained a minimum total technical score in the Short Program and Free Skating in order to compete at the European Championships. Three reigning European Champions are back to defend their title and most of Europe's top skaters have come to Budapest to face each other one more time before the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi (RUS).

Adelina Sotnikova (RUS) skates to lead in Ladies Short Program

Russia's Adelina Sotnikova skated to the lead in the Ladies Short Program followed by teammate Julia Lipnitskaia and Carolina Kostner of Italy. The top three are separated by less than two points.

Sotnikova's performance to "Habanera" was highlighted by a triple toe-triple toe, a triple flip and two level-four spins. The Russian Champion picked up a personal best of 70.73 points. "It wasn't perfect yet, there were little mistakes, but overall I am pleased with it. I think that the Axel was a bit shaky and that I lost speed in a spin. Now I have to focus on the long program. I got a new seasons best, and this is what I need in this competition. I did it in the short, now I have to do it in the free. My strongest competitors here are Julia Lipnitskaia and Carolina Kostner, they are the ones that are competing for first place", the reigning European silver medalist said.

Skating to "You Don't Give Up on Love", Lipnitskaia nailed a triple Lutz-triple toe combination, a triple flip and impressed with her fast and difficult spins. The 15-year-old earned 69.97 points. "I am happy with my short program today especially since my practices haven't been going well. I was able to pull myself together and did everything as I wanted. The flip could have been a bit easier, it was a bit low, but other than that I am very pleased with this program. It doesn't bother me (to sit in second) after the short program, especially since the leaders are close in points", the ISU Grand Prix Final silver medalist noted.

Kostner landed a triple toe-triple toe combination, triple loop, double Axel and picked up a level four for the footwork and the combination spin in her routine to "Ave Maria" that she debuted in competition. The five-time and defending European Champion scored 68.97 points, a seasons best. "I skated this program as a show number in Oberstdorf, but it was the first time for me to skate it in competition. When the music started, it calmed me down and it just felt like the fog went away. I have been competing this season, but it felt like it was the first time, it was a special feeling", the 26-year-old shared. "After the Cup of Russia, I had a problem with my back, and strong headaches and we decided to withdraw from Nationals and the Universiade. We were thinking of doing something that would cheer me up", she added.

Alena Leonova (RUS) completed a strong showing of the Russian Ladies by finishing fourth with a clean program and 64.09 points. Mae-Berenice Meite (FRA) sits in fourth at 58.64 points and Valentina Marchei (ITA) round up the top six (57.38 points).

Anna Cappellini/Luca Lanotte (ITA) win Short Dance

Anna Cappellini/Luca Lanotte of Italy edged out Russia's Elena Ilinykh/Nikita Katsalapov by 0.04 points to take the lead in the Short Dance. Penny Coomes/Nicholas Buckland of Great Britain are currently standing in third place.

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Cappellini/Lanotte's Quickstep and Foxtrot to "42nd Street" featured level four twizzles, lift and a level four Finnstep pattern. The side by side circular steps and the second part of the Finnstep merited a level three. The 2013 European bronze medalists earned 69.58 points, just below their seasons best. "I've got to be honest it's not the easiest short dance to do and we tried really hard to bring sparkle to the ice. We were really happy with the performance this evening", Lanotte commented. "It's a virtual tie. So much can happen. We make it a point never to think about the points or the places. What we do is focus on the performance not the results. After all it's the performance that brings the points and the results", Cappellini said when asked about the close result.

Dancing to "Bei mir bist du schoen", "Sixteen Tons" and "Sing Sing Sing", Ilinykh/Katsalapov collected a level four for the twizzles, the rotational lift and one Finnstep pattern while the side by side footwork was graded a level two. The reigning European silver medalists posted a new personal best with 69.54 points.

"It was great, it was our best performance of the program. We are always happy to skate here as we love the European Championships and we won our first Junior Grand Prix here in Budapest. We did what we planned to do and it was all much better than in Sochi (at Russian Nationals) from a technical point of view", Ilinykh shared.

Coomes/Buckland picked up a level four for their lift and the second Finnstep pattern as well as a level three for the twizzles and the side by side footwork in their dance set to "I won't dance" and "Swing Set" to score a seasons best with 61.76 points. "We'd worked really hard in training, so today I just put everything out of my mind. We had good support from the crowd. We've still got some technical things to work on but overall we're feeling quite positive. We worked as hard as we could and we said to ourselves we'd do as much today as we could", Coomes said.

The couples ranked third through seventh are separated by less than two points. Victoria Sinitsina/Ruslan Zhiganshin (RUS) came fourth at 60.63 points, just ahead of teammates Ekaterina Riazanova/Ilya Tkachenko (60.35 points) and Julia Zlobina/Alexei Sitnikov (AZE) at 59.82 points. Nelli Zhiganshina/Alexander Gazsi (GER) are in seventh place with 59.79 points.

The ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2014 continue Thursday with the Men's Short Program and the Free Dance. For more information and full results please see: www.isu.org and <http://www.efsc2014.com>.

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