

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2014 **Pairs and Men's Short Program**

The ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2014 opened in Saitama, Japan, on Wednesday with the Pairs and Men's Short Programs. 177 skaters/couples from 38 ISU Members have been entered for the Championships. The Saitama Super Arena was sold out and 18,000 spectators followed the events.

Aliona Savchenko/Robin Szolkowy (GER) take lead in Pairs Short Program

Aliona Savchenko/Robin Szolkowy of Germany skated to the lead in the Pairs Short Program followed by Canada's Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford and Ksenia Stolbova/Fedor Klimov of Russia.

Savchenko/Szolkowy's entertaining program to "Pink Panther" was highlighted by a throw triple flip, a triple toe and a reverse lasso lift. The four-time World Champions earned a level four for four elements and scored 79.02 points. "It didn't feel like it was the last short program of our career. It was really hard to stay in the ice rink all day (after practice). To skate like this after not much sleep is okay", Savchenko said. "I wanted to enjoy it, the first three elements were work, the rest was to enjoy. Even before we started I noticed that the people really like us, maybe even love us, and it was fun. It was the right decision to come here and to show it all", Szolkowy added.

Performing to Radford's piece "Tribute", Duhamel/Radford completed a triple twist, side by side triple Lutz and throw triple Lutz. The reigning World bronze medalists picked up 77.01 points, a new personal best. "We are really happy about how we skated today, but we came here to this world championship on a mission to complete a clean long program so we are very focused for tomorrow and today was just a bonus. This year we haven't skated our best in competition, so we came here to do our best and we hope to be rewarded with a place of the podium it doesn't matter if it is third, second or first place. We hope to do a clean long tomorrow and be sitting somewhere here", Duhamel told the post-event press conference.

Olympic silver medalists Stolbova/Klimov produced a triple toe, throw triple flip and three level-four elements in their Flamenco routine to post a new personal best of 76.15 points. "We are happy with our skate, we did good elements and we hope to skate clean tomorrow", Klimov said. "It was kind of difficult to prepare for this championship. We spent a lot of power and emotions in Sochi (at the Olympic Winter Games). But the last two weeks we tried to focus on practice and tried to get into a good condition", he continued.

Wenjing Sui/Cong Han (CHN) came fourth with 72.24 points. Cheng Peng/Hao Zhang (CHN) are currently ranked fifth with 71.68 points and Kirsten Moore-Towers/Dylan Moscovitch (CAN) placed sixth (69.31 points). 23 couples competed in the Pairs Short Program and the top 16 advanced to the Free Skating.

Tatsuki Machida (JPN) wins Men's Short Program

Tatsuki Machida of Japan took the Men's Short Program ahead of Spain's Javier Fernandez and teammate Yuzuru Hanyu (JPN).

Machida shone in his performance to "East of Eden", reeling off a quad-triple toeloop combination, a triple Axel, triple Lutz and level-four footwork. One spin merited a level four while the other two were a level

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three. The 24-year-old scored 98.21 points, surpassing his previous personal best by about seven points. "Apart from my scores I am very proud I could perform the best "East of Eden" ever for the audience. I think I could pay back for the Sochi at least with my short program. There is still the free program, but it was the best short program of the two years. I could hear the audience when I skated my last step sequence. I think this is my chance to get the medal", Machida commented.

Fernandez hit a quadruple Salchow, triple Axel, triple Lutz-triple toe in his jazzy routine to "Satan Takes a Holiday". The European Champion picked up a level four for all three spins and the footwork to score a personal best of 96.42 points. "I really enjoyed my skating today. Of course one skater did better than me but I am still happy with my performance and looking forward to do another good performance like today", Fernandez noted. "After the Olympic Games it was not easy to go back to the rink, but I did my best to go back and train hard, my coaches pushed me hard every day", he added.

Skating to "Parisian Walkways" by Gary Moore, Hanyu fell on an underrotated quad toe but rallied back to produce a triple Axel, triple Lutz-triple toe combination and level-four spins and footwork. The Olympic Champion earned 91.24 points. "Needless to say the toe loop wasn't good. Even though I made a mistake in a first toe loop I calculated the score and tried to recover the points by performing high point elements. Machida did well and it made me feel my performance today was not good enough. Hopefully I'll do a better performance the day after tomorrow", the 19-year-old told the press.

Tomas Verner (CZE) remains close to the podium in fourth place at 98.70 points. Han Yan (CHN) finished fifth (86.70 points) and Takahiko Kozuka (JPN) follows in sixth (85.54 points). Michal Brezina (CZE) pulled ligaments in his right ankle on the take-off of a planned triple flip and withdrew following the Short Program due to this injury.

The ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2014 continue Thursday with the Pairs Free Skating and the Ladies Short Program. For more information, full entry lists and results please see: www.isu.org and www.wfc2014.jp

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