

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2014 **Preview**

The ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2014 will open in Saitama, Japan, on March 26. Saitama hosts the ISU World Figure Skating Championships for the first time, but Japan hosted the Championships five times before: in Tokyo (2007, 1985, 1977), in Nagano (2002) and in Makuhari (1994).

177 skaters/couples from 38 ISU members have been entered for the Championship. Following a decision of the ISU Congress in 2012, no Preliminary Rounds are held. All skaters/couples compete in the Short Program/Short Dance and the top 24 single skaters, top 16 Pairs and 20 Ice Dance couples will proceed to the Free Skating/Free Dance. Participants need to have obtained a minimum total element score in Short Program and Free Skating in order to be eligible for the Championship.

Overview over the top contenders

The Men's competition boasts several top contenders, but only one thing is sure – there will be a new World Champion since three-time World Champion Patrick Chan (CAN) decided not to compete. Newly minted Olympic Champion Yuzuru Hanyu (JPN) is looking for his first World title and this on home turf. The 19-year-old has a World bronze from 2012 on his record. But he will face stiff competition from two-time European Champion Javier Fernandez (ESP). Hanyu has a set a seasons best for himself of 293.25 points at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final. World bronze medalist Fernandez comes with a seasons best of 267.11 points to Saitama. Hanyu and Fernandez need to watch out for Tatsuki Machida (JPN/seasons best 265.38 points). Han Yan (CHN/seasons best 246.20 points), Maxim Kovtun (RUS/seasons best 240.34 points), Peter Liebers (GER/seasons best 239.87 points), Jeremy Abbott (USA/seasons best 237.41 points) and Takahiko Kozuka (JPN/seasons best 236.38) want to get as close as possible to the podium as well.

Olympic bronze medalist Carolina Kostner (ITA) is the top-ranked Lady in Saitama. The 2012 World Champion earned a seasons best of 216.73 points in Sochi at the Olympic Winter Games. Competition should come from European Champion Julia Lipnitskaia (RUS/seasons best 209.72 points), two-time World Champion Mao Asada (JPN/seasons best 207.59 points) and US Champion Gracie Gold (seasons best 205.53 points). Other contenders include Four Continents Champion Kanako Murakami (JPN), ISU Grand Prix Final bronze medallist Ashley Wagner (USA) and 2012 World bronze medallist Akiko Suzuki (JPN).

Four-time World Champions and two-time Olympic bronze medallists Aliona Savchenko/ Robin Szolkowy (GER) headline the Pairs event. Olympic silver medallists Ksenia Stolbova/Fedor Klimov (RUS) want to stop the Germans' quest for a fifth World title. Savchenko/Szolkowy hold a seasons best of 227.03 points from the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final while Stolbova/Klimov scored a seasons best of 218.68 points in Sochi. Reigning Four Continents Champions Wenjing Sui/Cong Han (CHN/seasons best 212.40), 2013 World bronze medallists Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford (CAN/seasons best 199.53) and Kirsten Moore-Towers/Dylan Moscovitch (CAN/seasons best 208.45) have a shot at the podium as well.

The Ice Dance event looks open without Olympic and World Champions Meryl Davis/Charlie White (USA) and Olympic and World silver medallists Tessa Virtue/Scott Moir (CAN). Olympic bronze medallists Elena Ilinykh/Nikita Katsalapov (RUS) picked up a seasons best of 183.48 points in Sochi and are the team to beat.

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The challenge should come from ISU Grand Prix Final bronze medallists Nathalie Pechalat/Fabian Bourzat (FRA/seasons best 177.22 points), 2013 World bronze medallists Ekaterina Bobrova/Dmitri Soloviev (RUS/seasons best 172.92 points), Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje (CAN/seasons best 175.23 points) and reigning European Champions Anna Cappellini/Luca Lanotte (ITA/seasons best 171.61 points).

Prize Money

The ISU awards a global prize money of US\$ 710,000 at the World Championships to skaters/couples placed 1st to 12th. The prize money is awarded to winners and placed skaters/couples as follows:

Men and Ladies

1st place US\$ 45,000
2nd place US\$ 27,000
3rd place US\$ 18,000
4th place US\$ 13,000
5th place US\$ 10,000
6th place US\$ 7,000
7th place US\$ 6,000
8th place US\$ 5,000
9th place US\$ 3,500
10th place US\$ 3,000
11th place US\$ 2,500
12th place US\$ 2,000

Pairs and Dance (per couple)

1st place US\$ 67,500
2nd place US\$ 40,500
3rd place US\$ 27,000
4th place US\$ 19,500
5th place US\$ 15,000
6th place US\$ 10,500
7th place US\$ 9,000
8th place US\$ 7,500
9th place US\$ 5,250
10th place US\$ 4,500
11th place US\$ 3,750
12th place US\$ 3,000

The schedule of the ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2014 is as follows:

Wednesday, March 26: Pairs and Men's Short Program

Thursday, March 27: Pairs Free Skating and Ladies Short Program

Friday, March 28: , Short Dance and Men's Free Skating

Saturday, March 29: Free Dance, Ladies Free Skating

Sunday, March 30: Exhibition Gala

For more information, full entry lists and results please see: www.isu.org and www.wfc2014.jp

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