

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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For immediate release

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series 2014/2015 NHK Trophy, Day One

The ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2014/2015 opened Friday in Osaka, Japan with the Pairs, Ladies and Men's Short Programs. NHK Trophy is the sixth and final event in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating series and thus provides the last opportunity for skaters to qualify for the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Barcelona, Spain in December.

Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford (CAN) skate to lead in the Pairs Short

Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford of Canada skated to the lead in the Pairs Short Program. Russia's Yuko Kavaguti/Alexander Smirnov finished second ahead of Xiaoyu Yu/Yang Jin of China.

Duhamel/Radford's performance to "Un peu plus haut" featured a side by side triple Lutz, a throw triple Lutz, triple twist and four level-four elements. The World bronze medalists scored 72.70 points. "The way we skated today is how we skate every day in practice. This is how we aim to skate at every competition. It feels amazing to skate like that and we're really looking forward to carrying the momentum into the long program", Radford said. "We had a very strong skate at Skate Canada in the short program. I think that this program here was a little bit better. We somehow managed to score I think the exact same score at Skate Canada, so we are very consistent", he added.

Skating to "Meditation" from "Thais", Kavaguti/Smirnov produced a triple twist, throw triple loop and level-four lift, death spiral and spin. However, Kavaguti's triple toe was a little shaky. The 2010 European Champions earned 64.60 points. „We are very pleased with our performance today. It was really nice to skate for a Japanese audience and judging from the warm reception, they also were happy to see us. Tomorrow we want to skate even better than that to make our fans and ourselves happy", Smirnov commented.

Yu/Jin completed a triple toe and triple twist, but Yu stepped out of the landing of the throw triple loop in their routine to "Yulunga Spirit Dance" by Dead Can Dance. The World Junior Champions picked up a seasons best of 60.15 points. "I tried to relax in today's performance in the short program. I made a little mistake in the throw jump and my memory from Cup of China came back to me and I got nervous and wasn't able to skate as I usually to. Tomorrow I hope I will be more relaxed", Yu told the press conference.

Vera Bazarova/Andrei Deputat (RUS) are within striking distance of the podium at 59.62 points. Mari Vartmann/Aaron van Cleave (GER) finished fifth (48.39 points).

Gracie Gold (USA) leads in Ladies Short Program

Gracie Gold (USA) edged out Russia's Alena Leonova by 0.05 points to take a narrow lead in the Ladies Short Program. Kanako Murakami of Japan currently is ranked third.

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Performing to “Piano Concerto in A minor” by Edvard Grieg, Gold nailed a triple Lutz-triple toe combination, triple loop as well as the double Axel and collected a level four for all three spins. The U.S. Champion scored a seasons best of 68.16 points. “I skated a really nice short program today. It was a great improvement over Skate America and my other events this season. I’m actually happy with not just how I skated with solid jumps and spins, but also how I performed to the audience. I had a lot of mistakes at Skate America and I worked hard to fix them”, the 19-year-old noted.

Leonova’s “Charlie Chaplin” program was highlighted by a triple toe-triple toe combination, a triple flip, two level-four spins and level-four footwork. The 2012 World silver medalist posted a new personal best with 68.11 points.”Today I really enjoyed my performance and I wanted to give my emotions to the audience and judges. I am happy with my jumps, I tried to do them on a plus and it worked. I received my personal best score today. I will try to perform my free skating to the maximum tomorrow”, Leonova commented.

Murakami landed a triple flip, double Axel and level-four spins and footwork in her routine set to “Think of Me” from “The Phantom of the Opera”, but she underrotated the triple toe-triple toe combo. The 20-year-old earned a seasons best of 64.38 points. “In today’s short program I didn’t have any big mistakes and I was very happy when I finished my performance. But I still feel I can do better than that. I will be working towards my next competition and continue to make improvements to my short program”, the 2014 Four Continents Champion said.

Satoko Miyahara (JPN) placed fourth at 60.69 points followed by Zijun Li (CHN) with 56.44 points and Chirstina Gao (USA) with 54.86 points.

Takahito Mura (JPN) wins Men’s Short Program

Takahito Mura of Japan won the Men’s Short Program. Jeremy Abbott (USA) finished second and Daisuke Murakami of Japan placed third.

Mura’s program to “Carmen” featured a quad-triple toe combination, a triple Axel and triple Lutz as well as a level-four combination spin. The Four Continents Champion picked up a personal best score with 86.28 points. “After Skate Canada I was still nervous and I didn’t know what my season would be like, what my next performance would be like. In practice here and in the six minutes warm up I was quite tense and I told myself to relax. I felt like I did that, but after the three successful jumps maybe relaxed too much and I made some little mistakes in the steps. Tomorrow I want to perform better than today and hopefully I will be on the podium”, the 23-year-old said.

Abbott produced a triple flip-triple toe combination, a triple Axel and triple Lutz in his program to “Lay Me Down”. One spin merited a level four, the other two spins and the footwork garnered a level three. The three-time U.S. Champion earned 81.51 points. “I was very pleased with my performance today. I love this program and I love performing it. It feels very comfortable, it feels very much part of me. Tomorrow I’m just looking forward to doing a good, solid, strong free skate and hopefully stay in this position”, Abbott shared.

Skating to “Tango de Roxanne”, Murakami pulled off a quad Salchow-double toeloop combination, a triple Axel and triple flip to earn a personal best score with 79.68 points. “I am surprised to be in

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third place, this is something I never imagined”, the 23-year-old told the press. “I am relaxed, there is no Grand Prix Final ticket at stake for me. I’m not shooting at a podium finish, I just want to get a personal best score so I can get two Grand Prix next season” Murakami explained.

Sergei Voronov (RUS) is ranked fourth at 78.93 points while Olympic Champion Yuzuru Hanyu (JPN), who fell on an underrotated quad toe and made an error on his combination, finished fifth (78.01 points). Ivan Righini (ITA) came in sixth (70.27 points).

For full entry lists and results of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2014/15 please refer to www.isu.org/en/single-and-pair-skating-and-ice-dance/series/isu-grand-prix-of-figure-skating. NHK Trophy continues Saturday with the Short Dance, Pairs, Ladies and Men’s Free Skating.

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