

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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November 29, 2014

For immediate release

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

NHK Trophy continued Saturday in Osaka, Japan with the Short Dance, the Pairs, Ladies and Men's Free Skating. 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.

Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje (CAN) dance to the lead

Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje of Canada danced to a comfortable lead in the Short Dance. Great Britain's Penny Coomes/Nicholas Buckland are currently ranked second, followed closely by Russians Ksenia Monko/Kirill Khaliavin.

Weaver/Poje's Paso Doble to "La Virgen de Macarena" featured level-four twizzles and a level-four rotational lift. The Paso Doble pattern merited a level three while the side by side footwork was a level two. The World silver medalists earned 67.51 points. "It is true the Paso Doble is a more classical dance. Our approach was just to juvenilize the classical nature of the dance, but try to bring the authenticity to it and try to bring a little bit of new flair to it ensuring that the audience finds it exciting and finds the passion within the dance", Poje explained.

Dancing to Paso Doble and Flamenco from "El poeta en el mar", Coomes/Buckland picked up a level four for the second Paso Doble part and the twizzles while the other three elements garnered a level two. The European bronze medalists scored 60.49 points. "Nick and I spent a lot of time spend working with a Flamenco specialist. The dance is something we didn't expect. It wasn't what we thought it is going to be. This style is something very different for us. We really enjoy finding that passion, finding that fire and projecting it to the crowd", Coomes pointed out.

Monko/Khaliavin put out a solid Short Dance to Flamenco and Paso Doble that included two level-four and three level-three elements. The 2011 World Junior Champions collected a seasons best with 59.70 points. "We are glad to skate here and tomorrow we want to show our free dance as good as we can skate. We did a lot of work after Skate Canada on our steps and some elements, so we want to show good skating and a good performance tomorrow", Khaliavin told the press.

World Junior Champions Kaitlyn Hawayek/Jean-Luc Baker (USA) came in fourth with 58.50 points and Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov (RUS) are currently ranked fifth (54.94 points).

Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford (CAN) take Pairs title

Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford of Canada took the Pairs title. Russia's Yuko Kavaguti/Alexander Smirnov claimed the silver medal and the bronze went to Xiaoyu Yu/Yang Jin of China.

Duhamel/Radford's performance to "Neutron Star Collision", "I Belong to You" and "Uprising" by Muse was highlighted by a triple twist, side by side triple Lutz and difficult lifts. However, Duhamel fell on the throw quadruple Salchow and stepped out of the throw triple Lutz. The World

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bronze medalists scored 127.08 points and totaled 199.78 points to win their second Grand Prix gold medal this season. "Today was a more difficult day than yesterday. I think that we expected more of ourselves. We would have liked to land that throw quad (Salchow) and we had some other little stumbles during the program, but we fought our way through and managed still to get a good performance. We know we need to do better if we want to be on the top of the world podium in March", Radford commented.

Kavaguti/Smirnov completed a side by side double Axel, throw triple loop, level-four lifts and a level-four pair combination spin in their program to "Manfred" by Peter Tchaikovski, but Kavaguti missed the second jump in the triple toe-triple toe sequence and the throw quad Salchow. The Skate America Champions earned 119.00 points for the Free Skating which added up to 183.60 points overall. "We have mixed feelings. We are pleased that we made it to the Grand Prix Final, but we are a bit upset that we were not able to cope with the technical side of our program. On the other hand we are happy that we were able to show our free skating that we love so much, the drama, the choreography, to the Japanese fans", Smirnov said.

Skating to "Humility and Love" from the "Creation" soundtrack, Yu/Jin produced a side by side tripkle toe, triple twist, throw triple loop and throw triple flip to collect a personal best score of 121.85 points. The 2014 World Junior Champions were ranked second in the Free Skating but remained in third overall at 182.60 points. "Today I was able to really enjoy skating. After going back home, we'll prepare for the Grand Prix Final and we want to improve upon our performances from here", Yu noted.

The three medal winning teams qualified for the Grand Prix Final, Yu/Jin for the first time.

Vera Bazarova/Andrei Deputat (RUS) finished fourth with 165.70 points followed by Mari Vartmann/Aaron van Cleave (GER) with 145.34 points.

Gracie Gold (USA) skates off with gold

Gracie Gold (USA) skated off with the gold medal, her first in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating. Russia's Alena Leonova earned the silver and Satoko Miyahara of Japan pulled up one spot to collect the bronze medal.

Gold completed four clean triples including a double Axel-triple toeloop combination as well as three level-four spins and level-four footwork in her routine to "Phantasia" and "Phantom of the Opera". However, the U.S. Champion fell on a triple Salchow and doubled a flip. She scored 123.00 points and accumulated 191.16 points overall to take her first gold medal on the senior circuit. "Of course I feel very happy to win my first Grand Prix and senior international, but I know I can do better and improve even upon this performance. Of course this competition gives me confidence. I have acquired a lot of bronze medals over my career so far, so it's nice to have a gold medal in the mix", the 19-year-old said.

Leonova opened her Tango program with a triple toe-triple toe combination and followed up with two more clean triple jumps and level four spins, but she stumbled on a flip and the Lutz. The 2012 World silver medalist received 118.29 points and remained in second place at 186.40 points.

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“Honestly I didn’t quite realize yet what happened as my skating was not very clean, but I am very happy that I stayed in second. My free skating needs work, I am not satisfied with it. I should do much better than that”, the skater from St. Petersburg commented.

Skating to “Miss Saigon”, Miyahara landed five clean triples and collected a level four for all three spins, but she made errors on a Lutz and the loop. The Four Continents silver medalist earned 118.33 points and moved up from fourth with 179.02 points overall. “I have some regrets about today’s performance. I wanted to skate clean without mistakes and that did not happen. But I was able to get on the podium in both my Grand Prix competitions and I am happy with that”, the 16-year-old said

Kanako Murakami (JPN) slipped from third to fourth (173.09 points). Riona Kata (JPN) followed in fifth with 168.38 points and Gabrielle Daleman (CAN) placed sixth (164.74 points).

Daisuke Murakami (JPN) grabs Men’s gold

Little heralded Daisuke Murakami of Japan grabbed the Men’s gold at NHK Trophy. Russia’s Sergei Voronov rose from fourth so take the silver medal and overnight leader Takahito Mura of Japan settled for the bronze.

Murakami reeled off a quadruple Salchow, a quadruple-double Salchow and six triples including two Axels in his flawless routine to “Piano Concerto No. 2” by Sergei Rachmaninov. The 23-year-old also picked up a level four for his spins and a level three for the footwork to achieve a personal best score of 166.39 points. The Japanese skater racked up 246.07 points. “I never thought about this. Two years ago I had to withdraw from this competition (he dislocated his shoulder in the short program). I was not vying for the Grand Prix Final. Being on top of podium is something I never expected. In the free skating, I wasn’t really sure what was going on around me. When I landed the first quad and the second quad I felt like maybe this is going right, it is like in practice”, Murakami explained.

Performing to “This is a Man’s Man’s Man’s World”, “Come Together” and “At Last”, Voronov hit a quad-triple toe combination and followed up with five triples including two Axels plus level-four spins. The only glitch came when he doubled the Lutz. The European silver medalist scored 157.72 points and totaled 236.65 points to move up two spots. “I think that NHK Trophy is always one of the toughest events, there are always strong competitors, especially your three Japanese guys. I think it was one of the most exciting of the events and dramatic. For me, it ended happily. I am just happy that with 27 years I made it to the Final for the first time”, the Rostelecom silver medalist noted.

Mura’s program to “The Phantom of the Opera” featured a quad toe-double toe combination, a triple Axel-double toe as well as three other triples, but he stumbled on the first quad toe (underrotated) as well as on a triple flip attempt and popped an Axel. With 148.16 points, the Four Continents Champion was ranked fourth in the Free Skating and slipped to third at 234.44 points. “As I finished first in the short program, I had to skate last. The tension was something I never imagined. I was very nervous and because of nerves I couldn’t execute everything in my program.

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That shows that I lack something in my capability in this moment and I really sensed what I need to improve”, the 23-year-old said.

Olympic Champion Yuzuru Hanyu (JPN) moved up from fifth to fourth (229.80 points). Voronov, Mura and Hanyu qualified for the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final. Jeremy Abbott (USA) dropped from second to fifth at 229.65 points and Elladj Baldé (CAN) placed sixth.

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 concludes Sunday with the Free Dance and Exhibition Gala.

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