

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Audi Cup of China 2016 Day One #GPFigure

Audi Cup of China opened in Beijing Friday with the Short Dance, the Ladies, Men's and Pairs Short Programs. Audi Cup of China is the fifth of six events in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series 2016/17. Skaters compete for points to qualify for the Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final and a prize money of US \$ 180,000 per individual event of the Grand Prix.

Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje (CAN) grab lead in Short Dance

Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje of Canada grabbed a narrow lead in the Short Dance. Maia Shibutani/Alex Shibutani (USA) are standing in second place and Alexandra Stepanova/Ivan Bukin of Russia came third.

Dancing to the Blues "The Way You Make Me Feel" by Judith Hill and the Hip Hop "Dangerous" and "Jam" by Michael Jackson, Weaver/Poje collected a level four for the Blues pattern and their curve lift and a level three for the partial step sequence, the twizzles and side by side footwork. The two-time World medalists set a new personal best of 73.78 points. "Cup of Russia was a great start for us as the first competition of the season, but we went home, not far away, to Novogorsk and we worked on strength of our elements and the strength of our program along with the general dance ability, because it's such a fun program to perform. We had a couple of minor mistakes today, still, we're just getting the bugs out. I think that we're building momentum with this program," Weaver said.

Maia and Alex Shibutani completed a level four Blues pattern and level-four twizzles in their Blues and Hip Hop to "That's Life". However, the partial step sequence was rated a level two. The World silver medalists scored 73.23 points, just above their previous seasons best. "We are happy with the performance. We had a few weeks to go over some things at home. I think that the performance today was stronger than what we did in Skate America, so it's always good to be trending upwards," Alex Shibutani noted.

Stepanova/Bukin's dance to Blues and Hip Hop was highlighted by level-four twizzles, lift and Blues pattern. The 2013 World Junior Champions achieved a new personal best with 72.09 points. "For the first time in our lives we got over 70 points, that is a joy and a victory for us. Compared to Skate Canada (their first Grand Prix) I think we skated with more emotions and more freely", Stepanova commented.

Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov (RUS) placed fourth at 70.24 points followed by Natalia Kaliszek/Maksim Spodyrev (POL) in fifth at 60.13 points. Alexandra Paul/Mitchell Islam (CAN) withdrew after the warm up as she sprained the MCL in her right knee in a fall in the morning practice.

Kaetlyn Osmond (CAN) wins Ladies Short Program

Kaetlyn Osmond of Canada won the Ladies Short Program ahead of Russia's Elena Radionova and Japan's Mai Mihara.

Osmond produced a triple flip-triple toe combination, a triple Lutz, double Axel as well as level-four spins and footwork in her Edith Piaf program. The Skate Canada silver medalist earned 72.20 points. "There are a couple of things that I wish I would have done better, but after my skate at

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Skate Canada to come here and do another clean run-through, I'm really happy with it," the two-time Canadian Champion commented.

Radionova's routine to "Porgy and Bess" featured a triple loop, double Axel and excellent spins and steps, but she underrotated the back end of her triple Lutz-triple toe combination. The two-time European Champion scored 70.75 points. "I think I skated better than at the Cup of Russia (Rostelecom Cup). My jumps were cleaner and I had more confidence. The most important thing is now to skate the free program (tomorrow)," the 2015 World bronze medalist said.

Skating to "Rondo Capriccioso" by Camille Saint-Saens, Mihara completed a triple Lutz-triple toe combination, double Axel and triple flip as the last element to pick up a personal best of 68.48 points. "This time I performed better than at Skate America and I am more satisfied with my short program than the last time. In the free skating, I just want to do the same thing as I did today," the 17-year-old Japanese skater told the press.

Elizaveta Tuktamysheva (RUS) is currently ranked fourth with 64.88 points and Ashley Wagner (USA) currently sits in fifth place at 64.36 points. Rika Hongo (JPN) came sixth (63.63 points).

Boyang Jin (CHN) takes Men's Short Program

Boyang Jin of China skated to a strong lead in the Men's Short Program. Israel's Daniel Samohin currently stands in second place, narrowly edging out Patrick Chan of Canada.

Jin hit a quadruple Lutz-triple toeloop combination, a triple Axel and quadruple toeloop. The World bronze medalist collected a level four for two spins and the step sequence and posted a seasons best of 96.17 points. "I think I performed better than I do in training right now. The second jump in the combination was not perfect, but the other jumps were not bad. Skate America didn't go so well for me, so after I came back I worked very hard, because I wanted to do better at the Cup of China", the 2016 Four Continents silver medalist said.

Samohin fell on his opening quadruple toeloop but rallied back to land a somewhat shaky quadruple Salchow-triple toe combination and a good triple Axel. The 2016 World Junior Champion achieved a new seasons best with 83.47 points. "Definitely I've been working hard to be top three or maybe top six. This season started off a little bit rough in the first two competitions that I had, but after that in Skate Canada it definitely got much better and I got top five. I was pretty surprised placing second right now and I'll keep on working harder and hopefully be able to execute a nice long and go from there", the 18-year-old shared.

Chan's program to "Dear Prudence" and "Black Bird" included a quadruple-triple toeloop (with a touch-down on the triple toe) and three level-four spins, but he stumbled on the triple Axel and doubled the Lutz. The three-time World Champion earned 83.41 points. "The opening of the program I was pretty happy with it, and I think I just lost a bit my focus into the triple Lutz. In the short program those little mistakes become very big mistakes. You do lose a lot of points. I call myself lucky today, I was able to stay in the top three, which is a good spot to be in for the free. Tomorrow is a new day, new challenges, new goals, so I'm looking forward to tomorrow."

Sergei Voronov (RUS) finished fourth at 82.93 points followed by Max Aaron (USA) with 81.67 points and Ross Miner (USA) with 76.73 points.

Xiaoyu Yu/Hao Zhang (CHN) claim Pairs Short Program

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Xiaoyu Yu/Hao Zhang of China won the Pairs Short Program. Canada's Liubov Ilyushechkina/Dylan Moscovitch came second and Cheng Peng/Yang Jin of China are currently ranked third.

Performing to "Eternal Flame" and "Fearless", Yu/Zhang completed a triple twist, side by side triple toe loop, throw triple loop and had a level four for five elements that get a level. The Skate Canada silver medalists achieved a new personal best of 72.49 points. "Today we opened the competition in front of our home crowd, which was very exciting and we skated very well. We got all level fours, although we still need to practice a lot to perform the program better. Hopefully we'll perform well tomorrow", Zhang told the post-event press conference.

Ilyushechkina/Moscovitch landed a triple twist, throw triple Lutz and picked up a level four for the lift, death spiral, side by side spin and step sequence. The only error came when he stumbled on the triple toe. The Skate Canada bronze medalists picked up 71.28 points, a new personal best for them. "We felt good about that program. We felt very connected and we were together as a team and we felt comfortable. It was definitely an improvement for us from the last few times out, unfortunately a few little mistakes, but definitely a step up. We're happy about the new seasons best and about breaking into the 70s points range," Moscovitch explained.

Peng/Jin, who are skating together only since spring as Yu/Zhang as the teams had swapped partners, turned in a clean performance to "My Drag", executing a side by side triple toe, throw triple loop and triple twist. The team from Beijing scored 69.93 points. "This is our first international competition and I think we performed like we can do in training. We got good levels and the program was complete. We are very satisfied with our performance today," Jin said.

Xuehan Wang/Lei Wang (CHN) came fourth (66.45 points), ahead of Nicole Della Monica/Matteo Guarise (ITA) with 66.39 points. Yuko Kavaguti/Alexander Smirnov (RUS) follow in sixth place at 62.90 points.

Audi Cup of China continues Saturday with the Free Dance, Ladies, Men's and Pairs Free Skating. A total of 58 skaters/couples from 11 ISU members compete at Audi Cup of China. For full entry lists and results of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2016/17 please refer to <http://www.isu.org/en/single-and-pair-skating-and-ice-dance/series/isu-grand-prix-of-figure-skating>

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