

Press release

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ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series 2017/18: NHK Trophy Day 2

Top favorites World Champion [Evgenia Medvedeva](#) (RUS) and World Pairs Champions [Wenjing Sui/Cong Han](#) (CHN) struck gold as the competition at the NHK Trophy continued on Saturday in Osaka (JPN). [Sergei Voronov](#) (RUS) topped the podium in the Men's event, winning his first Grand Prix title. Earlier, Olympic Champions [Tessa Virtue/Scott Moir](#) (CAN) easily took the lead in the Short Dance.

The NHK Trophy is the fourth of six events of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating series 2017/18. A total of 59 skaters/couples from 16 ISU members are competing in Osaka.

Virtue/Moir (CAN) set the pace in Short Dance at NHK Trophy

The 2010 Olympic champions [Tessa Virtue/Scott Moir](#) (CAN) dominated in the Short Dance. [Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue](#) (USA) edged out Italy's 2014 world champions [Anna Cappellini/Luca Lanotte](#) by less than a point for second place.

Virtue/Moir put out a fast-paced and characteristic dance to the samba 'Sympathy for the Devil', rhumba 'Hotel California' and cha-cha 'Oye Como Va', executing intricate footwork and a rotational lift with ease. However, Virtue wobbled at the end of the twizzles sequence.

The 2014 Olympic silver medalists earned a level four for the side by side footwork, rhumba pattern and step sequence, as well as for the rotational lift, and a level three for the twizzles, helping them to a score of 80.92 points.

"We had a quick week turnaround from Skate Canada to here, so we had to be strategic about the improvements we wanted to make in each program," Virtue said. "It certainly was a step forward in a lot of the elements and we are pleased with the attack that we had and with our technical proficiency."

Hubbell/Donohue's samba and rhumba was highlighted by excellent twizzles, a curve lift and level-four rhumba pattern. The Skate Canada bronze medalists posted a new season's best with 76.31 points.

"Zach and I also competed at Skate Canada," Hubbell said. "As we finished that event and set our sights on NHK, we really wanted to take it as another opportunity to practise the long travel that we sometimes have. It took us a few days of practice to find our legs. It was a good test run. We were a bit nervous, we made some mistakes in practice, but we were really able to stay together during this afternoon's performance and show the consistency of skating another strong short dance."

Dancing to cha-cha and samba, Cappellini/Lanotte produced three level-four elements and two level-three elements to also score a season's best with 75.87 points.



INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS AVENUE JUSTE-OLIVIER 17 - CH 1006 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND
PHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 FAX (+41) 21 612 66 7 E-MAIL media@isu.ch

“It’s always fun to come to Japan and Latin is a fun music to skate to,” Cappellini said. “We realize that we lost technically a little bit and we’ll try to make up for it and improve our score. We had a little hiccup at the beginning of the season with me getting 15 stitches in the hand, which slowed us down a bit, but we believe we can catch up.”

[Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov](#) (RUS) are ranked fourth on 72.49 points. [Penny Coomes/Nicholas Buckland](#) (GBR) finished fifth (65.64 points) ahead of [Laurence Fournier Beaudry/Nikolaj Sorensen](#) (DEN), who have 63.34 points.

Sui/Han (CHN) post record Free Skating score en route to gold

World Pairs Champions [Wenjing Sui/Cong Han](#) of China stormed to gold and set a record Free Skating score in the Pairs event at the NHK Trophy. Russia’s Olympic silver medalists [Ksenia Stolbova/Fedor Klimov](#) claimed the silver medal, and the bronze went to [Kristina Astakhova/Alexei Rogonov](#), also of Russia.

Sui/Han reeled off a quad twist, side by side triple toe-double toe, triple Salchow, throw triple flip and Salchow in their spectacular performance to Puccini’s ‘Turandot’ and collected a level four for their lifts, pair spin and death spiral.

The reigning Four Continents champions scored 155.10 points, surpassing the previous highest score of 154.66 points set by Tatiana Volosozhar/Maxim Trankov four years ago at Skate America and earned 234.53 points in total.

“Today we skated in a relaxed way and we performed as we can do in training and showed what we have worked hard for,” Sui said. “However, there is still room for improvement and we are looking forward to doing better next time.” Han added: “I didn’t even realize that we have a new record score. Maybe it will sink in later that we have achieved something big like that.”

Stolbova/Klimov put out a sharp performance to ‘Carmen’ that was highlighted by a throw triple flip, a throw triple Salchow at the end as well as a side by side triple Salchow and difficult lifts.

The 2014 world silver medalists went for a rare triple toe-triple toe combination but stepped out of the landing of the second jump. The multiple European medalists achieved a new season’s best with 147.69 points and accumulated 222.74 overall.

“We skated a lot better than in our previous competitions in both short and free skating, so we are very pleased with that,” Klimov said. “We are also happy that we go to the Grand Prix Final. We missed the Grand Prix last season, so it is important for us to return to the final.”

Performing to ‘La La Land’, Astakhova/Rogonov completed a triple toe-double toe-double toe combination, triple twist, throw triple flip and loop. However, she doubled the side by side Salchow.

The couple from Moscow posted a new personal best with 133.17 points for a total of 203.64 to take their second bronze medal on the Grand Prix circuit this season.

“Everything today was at a high level and we are pleased with our performance,” Rogonov said. “Obviously, there are some problems with the jetlag and Kristina is a bit sick, but we are glad that almost everything worked out and we did our job today.”

Sui/Han advance with two gold medals to the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final and Stolbova/Klimov most likely will qualify with two silver medals.

[Julianne Séguin/ Charlie Bilodeau](#) (CAN) pulled up from fifth to fourth place on 194.37 points, overtaking [Alexa Scimeca Knierim/Chris Knierim](#) (USA), who dropped to sixth on 192.51 points.

Medvedeva (RUS) takes second Grand Prix gold at NHK Trophy

World Champion [Evgenia Medvedeva](#) of Russia overcame a fall to win her second Grand Prix gold medal of the season at the NHK Trophy Saturday in Osaka. In a repeat of the Rostelecom Cup result, five-time European Champion [Carolina Kostner](#) of Italy claimed the silver medal behind Medvedeva. Russia’s [Polina Tsurskaya](#) earned the bronze in her debut at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating.

Medvedeva had to overcome a shaky start to her dramatic program to ‘Anna Karenina’ when she fell on her opening triple flip and stepped out of the landing of the triple Lutz. However, the two-time World Champion pulled herself together to produce a triple flip-triple toeloop and triple Salchow-triple toeloop combination as well as a triple loop, two double Axels and level-four spins and footwork.

The Russian Champion scored 144.40 points for an overall total of 224.39.

“I am not satisfied with my free skating but I am glad that I did my triple flip-triple toe combination in the second half of my program,” she said. “That was the best part of my program today. My main goal is always trying to do my best, not only for the result, but first of all for my soul.”

Kostner’s elegant and fluid performance to ‘Afternoon of a Faun’ by Claude Debussy featured a triple flip-double toe combination as well as three more triple jumps and exquisite spins and footwork.

However, the 2012 world champion doubled a toeloop and fell on a triple Salchow. She was ranked third in the Free Skating on 137.67 points, but held on to overall second place on 212.24 points.

“It is amazing to skate in Japan where you feel this love for our sport,” she said. “It is always a great motivation and inspiration.

“As for my performance, I made two mistakes today, actually on easier elements, which is too bad. But mistakes happen and show you where some work is needed.”

Tsurskaya laid down a clean program to ‘Nocturne in F Minor Op. 55’ by Chopin and ‘Song for the Little Sparrow’, reeling off seven clean triples, including a triple Lutz-triple toe combination and difficult spins and steps.

The 2016 Youth Olympic Games Champion set a new personal best in the Free Skating with 140.15 points and was second in that segment of the event. Overall, she remained in third place at 210.19 points.

“My performance was very good for today but we will continue to work,” the 16-year-old said. “I will go back home and prepare for my second Grand Prix Skate America. We want to fix the issues I had and I hope to skate better and get more points.”

Medvedeva secured her spot in the Grand Prix Final with two gold medals from Moscow and Osaka. Kostner most likely will advance as well with her two silver medals. Tsurskaya will compete again in two weeks at Bridgestone Skate America.

[Mirai Nagasu](#) (USA) under-rotated her triple Axel but landed six clean triples to move up one spot to fourth place (194.46 points). The 2015 world silver medalist [Satoko Miyahara](#) (JPN) finished fifth in her comeback after missing the World Championships in March due to injury (191.80 points). [Alena Leonova](#) (RUS) completed the top six on 190.95 points.

Russia’s Voronov leads veteran charge to podium in Osaka

[Sergei Voronov](#) of Russia might have been the oldest man in the competition but he was the strongest and claimed the first Grand Prix gold medal of his long career. USA’s [Adam Rippon](#) pulled up from fourth to earn the silver and Israel’s [Alexei Bychenko](#) took home the bronze. Voronov, 30, Rippon, who turned 28 today and Bychenko, 29, completed a podium of experienced competitors.

Voronov put out an emotional and powerful performance to ‘Sarabande Suite’, nailing a quad-triple toe, two big triple Axels as well as three more triple jumps and solid spins and footwork. The only glitch came when he two-footed his second quad toe. The crowd rose to give the Muscovite a standing ovation and his face lit up with a big smile. The two-time European medalist set a new personal best with 181.06 points in the Free Skating and racked up 271.12 points overall.

“Right now, I just feel tiredness,” Voronov said. “Without any doubts, I am happy to have won this competition. There were some questions today in practice, and it was not easy, but when I stepped on to the ice, thanks to the support of the crowd, I was able to pull myself together and skate almost without any mistake.”

Rippon under-rotated his opening quad Lutz in his ‘Bird Program’ to ‘Arrival of the Birds’ and ‘O’, then went on to hit eight triple jumps including two Axels. His spins and footwork all merited a level four. The American picked up a season’s best of 177.04 points and accumulated 261.99 points overall.

“First, this competition means a lot to me, because 10 months ago I was lying in bed, wearing a cast, with a broken foot. From that moment to this moment, it feels great to have skated so well tonight in my first Grand Prix of the season in the Olympic year,” Rippon said. “Second, I think it is really cool that the three oldest guys in the competition are on the podium. I’d also like to point out that I am the youngest one.”

Skating to the opera ‘Pagliacci’, Bychenko completed a quad toe and four clean triples, but stepped out of the back end of his quad toe-triple toe combo and a triple Axel. He still managed a season’s best of 166.55 points for 252.07 overall and claimed the second Grand Prix medal of his career.

“It was not my best today, I made a few big mistakes, like popping a jump, and I almost fell on another jump,” he said. “But I started the season late and for my second competition it was not so bad. It was a good experience and we know what we have to work on.”

Voronov and Rippon will meet again in two weeks at Bridgestone Skate America, the last event of the series where they can fight for a spot in the Grand Prix Final. Bychenko will travel directly to Grenoble for his second Grand Prix Internationaux de France.

[Jason Brown](#) (USA) fell on both his triple Axels and slipped from third to fourth on 245.95 points. [Keegan Messing](#) (CAN) came fifth with 235.80 points and Deniss Vasiljevs (LAT) ranked sixth (234.80 points).

Olympic champion [Yuzuru Hanyu](#) (JPN) had dropped out on Friday before the Short Program due to injury.

The NHK Trophy concludes on Sunday with the Free Dance and the Exhibition Gala. The ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating series consists of six events and culminates in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Nagoya, Japan, in December. The top six skaters/couples in each discipline qualify for the Final. The global prize money for the Grand Prix is US \$ 272,000.

Full entry lists and results of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2017/18 are available [here](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using **#GPFigure #FigureSkating**.

For further information please contact:

Selina Vanier
ISU Communications Coordinator
media@isu.ch
Tel: +41 21 612 66 66