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Lausanne, SUI

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2018/19

Skate Canada International, Day One

There were some upsets and surprises as Skate Canada International opened with the Short Programs and the Rhythm Dance Friday in Laval, QC. While favorites [Vanessa James/Morgan Cipres](#) (FRA) and [Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue](#) (USA) lead in the Pairs and Ice Dance categories, [Elizaveta Tuktamysheva](#) (RUS) and [Keegan Messing](#) (CAN) won the Ladies and Men's Short Programs over more heralded competitors. Skate Canada International is the second of six events in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series.

James/Cipres (FRA) skate to lead in Pairs Short Program

World bronze medalists [Vanessa James/Morgan Cipres](#) of France skated to the lead in the Pairs Short Program. China's [Cheng Peng/Yang Jin](#) sit in second place, followed by Canadians [Kirsten Moore-Towers/Michael Marinaro](#).

Skating to "Uninvited" by Alanis Morissette, James/Cipres produced a triple twist, side by side triple toeloop and throw triple Lutz as well as level-four footwork and a level four side by side spin. The French scored 74.51 points. "It was not the best, but we're happy about the fight we made today," Cipres said. "We are very proud of our World medal, we had a really good fight, but this year is a whole different year," James added. "Everyone has been working hard. There are new rules and regulations, and everyone is trying to be a little bit more innovative. I don't count anyone out of the game at any competition."

Peng/Jin's upbeat routine to "Ophelia" featured a triple toeloop, triple twist and throw triple loop and earned them a season's best 72.00 points. "It is our second time at Skate Canada and we feel better this time. When we came here yesterday (to practice) we missed our jumps, but it was better today," Jin said.

Moore-Towers/Marinaro completed a triple twist, side by side triple toeloop and throw triple loop in their program to "The First Time I Ever Saw Your Face" by Leona Lewis to pick up 71.26 points in another season's best. "Our main goal for this competition was to not take ourselves out of the game in the first part of the competition. We are generally a stronger long program team and we wanted to be able to start strongly as well," Moore-Towers said. "It's our first time at Skate Canada since 2015 and the energy is amazing."

The 2017 World Junior silver medalists [Aleksandra Boikova/Dmitrii Kozlovskii](#) (RUS) finished fourth on 64.57 points ahead of the 2017 World Junior Champions [Ekaterina Alexandrovskaya/Harley Windsor](#) (AUS), who had 60.77 points.

Messing (CAN) upsets Uno (JPN) in Men's Short Program

To the delight of the home crowd, Canada's [Keegan Messing](#) took the Men's Short Program. World and Olympic silver medalist [Shoma Uno](#) of Japan had to settle for second place on the first day, edging out emerging Korean skater [Junhwan Cha](#).

Messing delivered a strong performance to the jazzy "You've Got a Friend In Me", nailing a quadruple-triple toeloop combination, a triple Axel, triple loop as well as fast, well-centered spins. The relief on his face was obvious when the program ended and the crowd at Bell Place rose to give him a standing ovation. The Canadian silver medalist set a season's best with 95.05 points.

"The program felt very comfortable out there. It started off with me watching [Nam \(Nguyen, CAN\)](#) put down a clean program and he got a standing ovation. It made me feel like I had more energy to go out and put out a solid performance for myself. Everything really felt it came together and I'm excited to go into the long (program)," he told the post-event press conference. "This is my third or fourth Grand Prix event and I finally broke through to the top three. I'm feeling very confident with myself, especially after the Olympic and World season last year."

Uno opened his program to a guitar version of "Stairway to Heaven" with a quadruple flip, but he stumbled on the back end of his quad toe-triple toe combination and fell on the triple Axel. The Olympic silver medalist scored 88.87 points. "Disappointment and regret, those are the emotions about my performance," the Japanese champion said. "It is not about me taking a high risk, I just can't do triples," Uno said when asked about including two quadruple jumps in his program.

Performing to "Cinderella" by Sergei Prokofiev, Cha hit a quad Salchow, triple Lutz-triple loop combination and a triple Axel to pick up 88.86 points. "Today my program felt very comfortable and I really tried my best. I think it was a good performance today," the teenager said. "Before the short program, I thought I (would) try my best and do what I did in practice. I got a really (good) result today and I'm happy with that."

The 2017 Skate Canada bronze medalist [Alexander Samarin](#) (RUS) is not far behind in fourth on 88.06 points. [Daniel Samohin](#) (ISR) ranks fifth with 84.90 points followed by [Alexander Majorov](#) (SWE) on 84.64 points. The 2018 Four Continents bronze medalist [Jason Brown](#) (USA) fell on his triple Axel and underrotated also the triple Lutz to finish 11th (76.46 points).

Hubbell/Donohue (USA) top Rhythm Dance

World silver medalists [Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue](#) (USA) came out on top in the Rhythm Dance. Russia's [Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov](#) placed second in the first segment of the competition and [Olivia Smart/ Adrian Diaz](#) of Spain came third.

Hubbell/Donohue put out a characteristic Tango performance to "Alevare" and "Tangata del Alba" by Astor Piazzolla, highlighted by well synchronized twizzles, a curve lift and smooth step sequences. However, the first Tango Romantica sequences garnered a level one. The U.S. Champions, who train in nearby Montreal, posted a season's best with 80.49 points.

"Zach and I were very excited to compete here in Laval. We had a lot of friends and family in the audience, so we had a lot of support. We wanted to give a stronger performance than last week in

Skate America and we feel like we were able to do that, and we stayed in the moment and enjoyed being here in this beautiful arena,” Hubbell said.

Sinitsina/Katsalapov’s elegant dance to “Verano Porteno” featured level-three Tango sequences and they picked up a level three and four for the twizzles, while the midline step sequence and the rotational lift were graded a level two. The Muscovites scored 74.66 points.

“Not everything was smooth tonight, there were some small mistakes, but we improved our Tango from our previous competition in Bratislava. We are not super happy, but we are not upset. It was a good, working performance, with full power and excellent commitment and we hope to skate well tomorrow,” Katsalapov said.

Dancing to “A Evaristo Carriego”, Smart/Diaz produced level-four twizzles and a level-four straight-line lift to earn 72.35 points. “Me and Adrian are very pleased with how we performed our Rhythm Dance today. We were very centered in ourselves and we did what we do in training every day,” Smart said. “We know we have a lot to work technical-wise, we know it’s step by step a work in progress throughout the season.”

[Marie-Jade Lauriault/Romain Le Gac](#) (FRA) came fourth on 68.90 points with an entertaining Tango and Foxtrot from the “Chicago” soundtrack. [Shiyue Wang/Xinyu Liu](#) (CHN) sit in fifth (66.96 points), while [Piper Gilles/Paul Poirier](#) (CAN) finished sixth after she slipped in the Tango Romantica (66.95 points).

Tuktamysheva (RUS) hits triple Axel for lead in Ladies Short Program

The 2015 World Champion [Elizaveta Tuktamysheva](#) of Russia skated to a confident lead in the Ladies Short Program. Japan’s [Wakaba Higuchi](#) was second and [Mako Yamashita](#) third.

Performing to “Assassin’s Tango”, Tuktamysheva killed it in her program, hitting a triple Axel, triple toeloop-triple toeloop and a triple Lutz. The 2015 World Champion collected 74.22 points, a season’s best. “I feel great. I skated a clean short program with the triple Axel for the first time (this season). I am so happy that I did everything what I want,” the 2015 European Champion said. “Not a long time ago, I remembered how I came to Skate Canada for my first Grand Prix and everything seemed so easy. I didn’t think it was such a serious event, I just enjoyed competing at the senior level. I had a lot of ups and downs since, and now I want to put all that experience I have into my programs. I hope I will be able to skate well tomorrow.”

Higuchi completed a double Axel, triple Lutz-triple toe and level four spins in her upbeat routine to “Energia” by Sofi Tukker, but she underrotated the triple flip. The 2018 World silver medalist scored 66.51 points. “I am happy to perform better than in practice and that I didn’t pop any jumps. That was good for me,” the 17-year-old said. “Compared to my last competition, in my practice I tried to improve each element, to do better jumps and to spin faster.”

Yamashita’s performance to “Una voce poco fa” from “The Barber of Seville” included a triple Lutz-triple toeloop combination, a triple flip and double Axel. The 2018 World Junior bronze medalist earned 66.30 points, which was, as for the top two skaters, a new season’s best. “I was able to have fun when skating today and I did not make any big mistakes,” the 15-year-old said.

[Starr Andrews](#) (USA) improved on her performance from Skate America from last week to come fourth on 64.77 points. [Mariah Bell](#) (USA) ranked fifth (63.35 points) and [Elizabet Tursynbaeva](#) (KAZ) placed sixth (61.19 points). Two-time World Champion [Evgenia Medvedeva](#) (RUS) stands in seventh place as she missed her triple flip and had no combination (60.83 points).

Skate Canada International continues on Saturday with the Pairs and Men's Free Skating, Free Dance and the Ladies Free Skating. For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series please visit: <https://isu.org/GrandPrix>. Follow the discussion on social media by using **#FigureSkating #GPFigure**.