

February 9, 2019

Anaheim, USA

## **Rika Kihira (JPN) takes Four Continents Ladies Crown**

### **ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships 2019**

#### **Day Two**

[Rika Kihira](#) (JPN) continued her golden streak and claimed the first title of the ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships 2019 in Anaheim on Friday. Earlier, [Kirsten Moore-Towers/Michael Marinaro](#) (CAN) won the Pairs Short Program while [Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue](#) (USA) danced to the lead in the Rhythm Dance.

#### **Moore-Towers/Marinaro (CAN) grab narrow lead in Pairs Short Program**

Canadian Champions [Kirsten Moore-Towers/Michael Marinaro](#) edged Olympic silver medalists [Wenjing Sui/Cong Han](#) of China for a narrow lead in the Pairs Short Program. [Cheng Peng/Yang Jin](#), also from China, came third.

Skating to “The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face”, Moore-Towers/Marinaro turned in a strong performance, highlighted by a triple twist, side by side triple toeloop and throw triple loop. The Canadian Champions collected a level four for the death spiral, side by side spin and their lift and set a new personal best with 74.66 points. “We were pleased with our skate today,” Moore-Towers said. “We’ve had mistakes in our short so far this season so we were hoping today to come out and to deliver a clean performance with the levels that we’ve practiced at home and to keep it calm between us and I think we succeeded in that today.”

Sui/Han produced a throw triple flip, triple twist and received a level four for four elements in their performance to “No One Like You”. However, Sui fell on the side by side triple toeloop. The Olympic silver medalists, who have not yet competed internationally this season as she recovered from injury, earned 74.19 points. “The fall hurt a lot. This is our first competition, so I think we were a little too excited,” Sui said. “I think we didn’t adjust our condition too well because in our practice we were normally able to skate clean in the short program. The mistake today was pretty unexpected, and I hope that we could adjust better toward tomorrow’s competition. We just want to skate the best we could and see where it takes us.”

Peng/Jin’s performance to “Ophelia” by The Lumineers featured a triple twist, side by side triple toe and a level-four step sequence and lift, but Peng went down on the throw triple loop. The ISU Grand Prix Final silver medalists scored 69.48 points. “Today we missed the throw and death spiral level and spin level, we lost so many points,” Jin told the post-event press conference. “We noticed the rink is a little smaller, so maybe tomorrow we’ll try to skate a little slower. We hope that we will do our best tomorrow.”

U.S. Champions [Ashley Cain/Timothy Leduc](#) are currently ranked fourth on 67.49 points with a solid performance, followed by defending Four Continents Champions [Tarah Kayne/Danny O’Shea](#) (USA) in fifth on 66.34 points. [Evelyn Walsh/Trennt Michaud](#) (CAN) placed sixth with 61.91 points.

### Hubbell/Donohue (USA) capture Rhythm Dance in Anaheim

World silver medalists [Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue](#) (USA) captured the Rhythm Dance. Teammates [Madison Chock/Evan Bates](#) (USA) and Canada's 2018 World bronze medalists [Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje](#) follow closely in second and third place respectively.

Dancing to "Alevare", "Tangata" and "Yo Soy Maria", Hubbell/Donohue completed level-four twizzles and a level-four curve lift. However, the midline step sequence and the first Tango Romantica pattern merited only a level two. Nevertheless, the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final Champions managed a season's best of 81.95 points. "There were some mixed feelings today, at moments it felt very on, I felt very excited to perform but there were also some shaky moments," Hubbell commented. "It is a testimony to our training to be able to put out a strong performance one week after nationals, to not necessarily do our best but be able to do enough for today. Overall we're pleased with the work we've put in before coming to this event and looking forward to the rest of the competition," she added.

Chock/Bates' dance to the Flamenco "Dinner" and "Assassin's Tango" by John Powell featured intricate steps and an exciting rotational lift. The two-time World medalists picked up a level four for the lift, the twizzles, circular step sequence and the first Tango Romantica sequence. The U.S. silver medalists, who only returned to competition in January as Chock recovered from ankle surgery, scored 81.17 points. "Our coaches have done a very good job of preparing us," she said. "We've never done such an intense competition schedule, especially coming back after ten months off (due to her injury), but we feel more prepared than ever. We're very comfortable with our programs and we have a lot of fun every time we skate them." Bates said: "We've done a lot of work to prepare for three competitions in a short period of time, this being the third, and I feel like we're building each time we compete. This Rhythm Dance is the best of the year so far."

Weaver/Poje turned in a passionate performance to "Libertango", producing a level-four Tango sequence and straight line lift while the twizzles were rated a level four for Weaver and a level three for Poje. The second Tango sequence garnered a level three as well. The Canadian Champions set a season's best score of 80.56 points. "We are both excited to return to competitive skating, we love this tango very much," Weaver said. "We did some things well and some not so perfectly but we are happy with what we put up and it's a stepping stone to Worlds (in March)." The Canadians had sat out the Grand Prix series last fall in order to perform in a tour.

[Piper Gilles/Paul Poirier](#) (CAN) placed fourth on 78.05 points, while defending Four Continents Champions [Kaitlin Hawayek/Jean-Luc Baker](#) (USA) came fifth at 74.42 points.

[Laurence Fournier Beaudry/Nikolaj Sorensen](#), who used to represent Denmark, debuted for Canada in international competition, and are currently sixth with 73.30 points.

### Rika Kihira (JPN) skates off with gold as standings shuffle

[Rika Kihira](#) of Japan skated off with the gold in an eventful Ladies' Free Skating at the ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships 2019 in Anaheim (USA) with the standings turning upside down. Kazakhstan's [Elizabet Tursynbaeva](#) pulled up from sixth to claim the silver and [Mai Mihara](#) of Japan surged from eighth to snatch the bronze medal.

Kihira opened her performance to "Beautiful Storm" with a triple Axel and followed up with a double Axel-triple toe, triple Lutz-triple toe, four more triples as well as level-four spins and footwork. In her senior debut, the ISU Grand Prix Final Champion scored 153.14 points and racked up 221.99

points to move up from fifth to first place and win her first ISU Championship title at either junior or senior level.

“As for the triple Axel, I decided in the warm up whether I would do one or two. I had not enough practice at the main rink and I decided to play it safe in the program and did only one triple Axel,” Kihira shared. “In the practice rink this morning I tried as many triple Axels as possible. In the six minutes’ warm-up (I) felt I need to focus, concentrate and just do it. The most important thing I learned from this competition is – no matter what happens never give up, keep going.”

Tursynbaeva went for a quadruple Salchow, but fell. Unfazed, she went on to reel off seven clean triples and difficult spins in her Tango routine. The Kazakh skater was ranked third in the Free Skating with a season’s best of 139.37 points and totaled 207.46 points. Tursynbaeva is the first female figure skater from Kazakhstan to win an ISU Championship medal. “This is unexpected for me. I didn’t think I would be on the podium today,” the 18-year-old said. “After the short, being sixth, I had nothing to lose so we decided I had to try it (the quad Salchow). I still have work to do on it but it wasn’t bad for a first time in competition: I rotated it but didn’t land it. I’m happy I attempted it and will keep trying until I land it.”

Skating to “The Mission” by Ennio Morricone, Mihara hit six clean triple jumps and only underrotated a triple toe to place second in the Free Skating on 141.97 points. She scored 207.12 points overall. “After my mistakes on the jumps in the short, I got confused. I wanted to show a good performance to the audience,” Mihara commented. “I could not sleep well last night. But a competition is just a competition. I must show my best performance every time, so I switched to a positive mindset after the practice,” she added.

Defending champion [Kaori Sakamoto](#) (JPN) singled an Axel and slipped from second to fourth at 206.79 points. Overnight leader [Bradie Tennell](#) (USA) underrotated four jumps to drop to fifth (202.07 points). [Mariah Bell](#) (USA), who stood in third place after the Short Program, fell on a triple loop and finished sixth (193.94 points).

[Brooklee Han](#) (AUS) withdrew after the morning practice after aggravating an injury to her left foot.

The ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships 2019 continue Saturday with the Pairs and Men’s Free Skating. Click on the highlighted text for [entry lists](#), [full results](#) and the [official event website](#). Follow the discussion on social media using [#4ContsFigure](#) and [#FigureSkating](#).

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