

March 18, 2019

Saitama, Japan

Olympic and World Champions hit the ice in Japan for the ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2019

Olympic and World Champions will take the ice for the [ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2019 in Saitama, Japan](#), starting Wednesday this week. The ISU World Figure Skating Championships will be held in Saitama for the second time since 2014.

167 Skaters from 43 ISU Members have been entered for the Championships: 35 Men, 40 Ladies, 19 Pairs and 27 Ice Dance couples. Skaters / Couples need to have obtained a minimum total technical score in Short Program and Free Skating in order to compete at the ISU World Figure Skating Championships. The event features 2018 Olympic Champions [Alina Zagitova](#) (RUS) and [Yuzuru Hanyu](#) (JPN), 2018 World Champions [Nathan Chen](#) (USA) and [Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron](#) (FRA) as well as reigning Olympic and World medalists.

Overview of the top contenders

The Men's event shapes up as an exciting battle between the World's leading skaters. Two-time Olympic Champion [Yuzuru Hanyu](#) (JPN) is looking at a third World title on home ice. The Japanese star had to sit out the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final and National Championships earlier this season as he recovered from an ankle injury. Nevertheless, Hanyu tops the season's best list with 297.12 points. He has to expect tough competition coming from defending World Champion [Nathan Chen](#) (USA) and Olympic and World silver medalist [Shoma Uno](#) (JPN). Uno is currently ranked number one in the World and recently won the ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships, setting a season's best of 289.12 points. Chen struck gold at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final and comes with a season's best of 282.42 points to Japan. Several other Men are eying the podium as well. Two-time World bronze medalist [Boyang Jin](#) (CHN) has returned to form and took silver at the ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships 2019 (seasons best 274.37 points). 2018 World bronze medalist [Mikhail Kolyada](#) (RUS/seasons best 274.37) hopes to improve on his fifth place from Europeans and 2019 Four Continents bronze medalist [Vincent Zhou](#) (USA/seasons best 272.22) has gained momentum this season. Others to watch include 2019 European silver medalist [Alexander Samarin](#) (RUS), [Keegan Messing](#) (CAN), [Junhwan Cha](#) (KOR) and [Jason Brown](#) (USA).

In the Ladies competition, Olympic Champion [Alina Zagitova](#) (RUS) is up against Japan's rising star [Rika Kihira](#) and Olympic silver medalist [Evgenia Medvedeva](#) (RUS) among others. Zagitova has the highest seasons best score with 238.43 points, but came second to Kihira at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final and was second at the ISU European Figure Skating Championships. Kihira broke through in her debut at the senior level, claiming gold at the Final and the ISU Four Continents Championships (seasons best 233.12 points). Medvedeva struggled earlier this season, but is on the comeback trail (seasons best 204.89 points). 2018 World bronze medalist [Satoko Miyahara](#) (JPN/seasons best 219.71 points) is challenging for another medal on home ice. 2019 Four Continents silver medalist [Elizabet Tursynbaeva](#) (KAZ/seasons best 207.46) has added the quadruple Salchow to her repertoire. Other contenders include 2019 European Champion [Sofia Samodurova](#) (RUS) who will debut at the ISU World Figure Skating Championships, Japanese Champion [Kaori Sakamoto](#) and [Bradie Tennell](#) (USA).

The Pairs event promises to be exciting with 2019 European Champions [Vanessa James/Morgan Cipres](#) (FRA), 2018 Olympic silver medalists [Wenjing Sui/Cong Han](#) (CHN) and 2018 World silver medalists [Evgenia Tarasova/Vladimir Morozov](#) (RUS) headlining the field. Reigning World bronze medalists James/Cipres have won each event they entered this season including the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final and lead the seasons best standings with 225.66 points. Tarasova/ Morozov want to catch up to their French rivals (seasons best 220.25 points). Sui/Han had not competed in the first half of the season, but proved they are back by taking gold at the ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships last month (seasons best 211.11 points). ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final silver medalists [Cheng Peng/Yang Jin](#) (CHN/seasons best 216.19), [Natalia Zabiako/Alexander Enbert](#) (RUS/seasons best 211.11) and 2019 Four Continents silver medalists Kirsten Moore-Towers/Michael Marinaro (CAN/seasons best 211.05) are challenging for the podium as well. Others to watch include [Nicole Della Monica/Matteo Guarise](#) (ITA), 2019 European bronze medalists [Aleksandra Boikova/Dmitri Kozlovskii](#) (RUS) and U.S. Champions [Ashley Cain/Timothy LeDuc](#).

Three-time and reigning World Champions [Gabriella Papadakis/ Guillaume Cizeron](#) (FRA) lead the Ice Dancers. The French have set a seasons best of 217.98 points when they won their fifth consecutive European title in January. 2018 World silver medalists [Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue](#) (USA) lead the group of challengers. They struck gold at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final achieving a seasons best of 205.35 points, but then came only fourth at the ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships last month. After missing the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating series, two-time World medalists [Madison Chock/Evan Bates](#) (USA) came back strong to take the Four Continents title last month (seasons best 207.42 points) ahead of 2018 World bronze medalists [Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje](#) (CAN/seasons best 203.93 points). Other contenders are 2019 Four Continents bronze medalists [Piper Gilles/Paul Poirier](#) (CAN), 2019 European silver medalists [Alexandra Stepanova/Ivan Bukin](#) (RUS), 2019 European bronze medalists [Charlene Guignard/Marco Fabbri](#) (ITA) and ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final silver medalists [Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov](#) (RUS).

Please note that for the seasonal best total scores only the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating competitions (senior and junior) and ISU Challenger Series events have been taken into consideration, not other international competitions or National Championships.

Prize Money

The ISU awards a global prize money of US\$ 886,000 at the ISU World Figure Skating Championships to Skaters / Couples placed 1st to 6th. The prize money is awarded to winners and placed Skaters /Couples as follows:

Men and Ladies	Pairs and Dance (per couple)
1st place US\$ 64,000	1st place US\$ 90,000
2nd place US\$ 47,000	2nd place US\$ 65,500
3rd place US\$ 33,000	3rd place US\$ 45,000
4th place US\$ 19,000	4th place US\$ 26,000
5th place US\$ 11,000	5th place US\$ 16,000
6th place US\$ 8,000	6th place US\$ 10,000

The schedule of the ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2019 is as follows:

Wednesday, March 20: Pairs & Ladies Short Program
Thursday, March 21: Pairs Free Skating, Men Short Program

Friday, March 22: Rhythm Dance, Ladies Free Skating
Saturday, March 23: Free Dance, Men Free Skating
Sunday, March 24: Exhibition Gala

For more information, full entry lists and results please see the [ISU event website](#) and [official event website](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using the hashtag #WorldFigure.

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