

November 22, 2019

Sapporo, Japan

## **ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2019/20 NHK Trophy, Day 1**

Hot favorites [Yuzuru Hanyu](#) (JPN), [Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron](#) (FRA) and [Wenjing Sui/Cong Han](#) (CHN) took the lead as NHK Trophy opened with the Rhythm Dance and the Short Programs Friday in Sapporo (JPN). Newcomer [Alena Kostornaia](#) topped the Ladies' Short Program.

### **Papadakis/Cizeron (FRA) pass 90-point mark in Rhythm Dance at NHK Trophy**

Four-time ISU World Ice Dance Champions [Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron](#) of France danced to a confident lead in the Rhythm Dance, setting a new highest score en route. Russia's [Alexandra Stepanova/Ivan Bukin](#) are currently ranked second followed by [Charlene Guignard/Marco Fabbri](#) of Italy.

Papadakis/Cizeron's upbeat interpretation of 'Fame' in bold pink and mint candy colored outfits featured intricate footwork and a stationary lift. The Olympic silver medalists earned a level four for the Finnstep Pattern Dance, the Pattern Dance type step sequence, the twizzles and the lift while the midline step sequence merited a level three. The French Champions posted a new personal best of 90.03 points, becoming the first Ice Dance couple to break 90 points.

"Every year the Pattern Dance is quite challenging. Last year the Tango was really, really hard, and it was long, too. This year the Finnstep is much shorter, but it's hard, too.

"Actually this year it's the first time that we're doing a Pattern Dance that we have done in the past, we did it I think five or six years ago in our first senior year. So it's fun to reinvent it and see how to make it different and better," Papadakis said.

"It was a challenge for us to work on that Rhythm Dance, because it is completely out of our comfort zone and it's really different from what we've been doing before," Cizeron added.

Dancing to 'Sparkling Diamonds' and 'Your Song' from 'Moulin Rouge', Stepanova/Bukin produced a level-four Finnstep Pattern, curve lift and level-four twizzles to pick up 84.07 points, which is a personal best score.

"Overall the performance was good, we're very happy that we showed a better version of our RD than at our first Grand Prix," Stepanova told the post-event press conference.

"We lost some time at the beginning of the season and our first Grand Prix was a bit tense and we were able to work more globally on the Rhythm Dance in between the first and the second Grand Prix.

“It is quite a tough dance with many small steps and you have to hold each edge and there is still something left to work on,” she continued.

Guignard/Fabbri delivered a lively and brand-new dance to 'Grease', completing a level-four stationary lift, Finnstep Pattern and twizzles.

The 2019 European bronze medalists achieved a new personal best with 82.13 points as well. The ISU Grand Prix Final bronze medalists had dumped their previous Rhythm Dance to music from 'Cirque du Soleil' and came with a new one to Japan.

“We're satisfied with our performance today considering that it was a new Rhythm Dance for us. We decided to change it after the first Grand Prix. So we didn't have a lot of time to do run-throughs. We skated quite clean program. Many things have to be improved, of course,” Fabbri shared.

Skate Canada bronze medalists [Lilah Fear/Lewis Gibson](#) (GBR) came fourth on 76.09 points. [Christina Carreira/ Anthony Ponomarenko](#) (RUS) are currently sitting in fifth place (75.25 points) and [Shiyue Wang/Xinyu Liu](#) (CHN) placed sixth (74.73 points).

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating [Standings Ice Dance](#).

### **Sui/Han (CHN) sparkle in Pairs Short Program in Sapporo**

Olympic silver medalists [Wenjing Sui/Cong Han](#) of China sparkled in the Pairs Short Program and seem poised for gold with a 10-point lead over Canadians [Kirsten Moore-Towers/Michael Marinaro](#). Russia's [Anastasia Mishina/Aleksandr Galliamov](#) are not far behind the Canadians in third place.

Performing to 'Blues Deluxe', Sui/Han landed a side-by-side triple toeloop, triple twist, throw triple flip and collected a level four for the twist, the step sequence, the death spiral and reverse lasso lift. However, the side-by-side change foot spin garnered only a level two. The two-time World Champions scored a personal best of 81.27 points.

“With the performance at this competition we are quite satisfied. However, we still saw that there was a problem with one element (side-by-side spin), so this is something we want to improve. As for tomorrow, we just want to give our very best performance,” Han commented.

Moore-Towers/Marinaro's program to 'Love On the Brain' was highlighted by a throw triple loop, side by side triple toeloop and an Axel Lasso lift. However, Marinaro wobbled on the side-by-side spin that was rated a level one. The Skate Canada silver medalists scored 71.21 points.

“Today we thought that we had definitely a few elements that we improved from our first Grand Prix in Canada, but a few small elements that we lost a lot of levels on. So we left some points on the table there. We'll be in spin jail when we get home,” Moore-Towers said.

Mishina/Galliamov completed a triple twist, throw triple flip as well as four more level-four elements. However, Galliamov stepped out of the side by side triple Salchow. The 2019 World Junior Champions earned 69.00 points.

"I would rate the performance more positive than negative, but there were some unexpected mistakes that we don't do in practice. When we get home after the competition, we'll analyze and work on them," Galliamov noted.

[Alisa Efimova/Alexander Korovin](#) (RUS) finished fourth on 64.94 points while [Alexa Scimeca Knierim/Chris Knierim](#) (USA) came fifth (63.63 points).

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating [Standings Pairs](#).

### **Kostornaia (RUS) beats Kihira (JPN) in battle of triple Axels**

Russia's [Alena Kostornaia](#) fought off the challenge of [Rika Kihira](#) of Japan in an exciting battle of triple Axels in the Ladies' Short Program and posted a new highest score for the discipline. [Karen Chen](#) (USA) took a surprise third place after the first segment of the competition.

Skating to 'Departure' and 'November' by Max Richter, Kostornaia nailed a beautiful triple Axel and followed up with a triple Lutz and triple flip-triple toeloop combination. Her exquisite spins and footwork merited a level four. The ISU Junior Grand Prix Final Champion's score of 85.04 points was not only a personal best but is also a new highest score in the Ladies' Short Program.

"I'm very happy that I was able to do everything as planned," the Internationaux de France Champion said.

"The triple Axel is an opportunity to get more points in the short program as quads are forbidden. But it's also a risk, because if it doesn't work you get less points than for a good double Axel."

Kihira landed a very good triple Axel as well in her program to 'Breakfast in Baghdad' plus a triple flip-triple toe combination and a somewhat shaky triple loop. The 2019 Four Continents Champion collected all level fours for her spins and footwork to score 79.89 points.

"In today's program I was able to land all jumps, and I was able to gain high points, so I think it was a good step towards tomorrow's free program.

"I believe today's triple Axel was a one of the best ones I've done even compared to my practices here," Kihira noted, adding that she might include a quadruple Salchow in the Free Skating.

Chen's routine to 'You Say' by Lauren Daigle featured a triple Lutz-double toeloop combination, double Axel and triple loop as well as strong spins and steps. The 2017 US Champion achieved a personal best of 67.21 points.

"I put out a really solid performance. Definitely the first jump (combination) hasn't gone the way I hoped it would, but I'm really happy with my scores and really looking forward to compete tomorrow," Chen said.

Olympic Champion [Alina Zagitova](#) (RUS) finished fourth after failing to complete a legitimate jump combination (66.84 points). [Mako Yamashita](#) (JPN) placed fifth on 65.70 points and [Eunsoo Lim](#) (KOR) rounds out the top six with 65.28 points.

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating [Standings Ladies](#).

## Home-crowd hero Hanyu (JPN) leaps into 18-point lead after Short Program

Two-time Olympic Champion [Yuzuru Hanyu](#) of Japan topped the Men's Short Program leads over France's [Kevin Aymoz](#) with almost 18 points to spare. [Sergei Voronov](#) of Russia is currently sitting in third place.

Hanyu once more dazzled in the Short Program, hitting a quadruple Salchow, a triple Axel and quadruple toeloop-triple toeloop combination in his expressive routine to 'Otonal' by Raul di Blasio. The two-time World Champion picked up a level four for his spins and footwork to score 109.34 points for a confident lead.

"For today, for myself I was able to get a passing grade. It wasn't my best performance, but at least I can use today's performance as a baseline to continue training hard and to make sure that I can put out an even better short program in the next competition.

"Tomorrow will be a different day, I have a different program so I want to have a different level of concentration, and more than anything else it is important to me to stay on top form and skate strongly until the very end," Hanyu shared.

"I was really trying to feel the music, no matter how nervous I am, I can always tell myself that the music itself will never change. I tried very hard to put my emotions into the music and have a very positive image about my skating," he continued.

Aymoz stepped out of his opening quadruple toeloop but recovered to land a triple Axel and triple Lutz-triple toeloop combination and showed off in the step sequence in his program to 'The Question of U' by Prince. The Internationaux de France bronze medalist earned 91.47 points.

"I'm really glad to be in Japan for this competition and tonight I had a lot of fun to skate my short program, even with the mistakes. It was really cool to skate. For tomorrow I just want to do my best and do a clean program," Aymoz commented.

Voronov's program to 'Somebody to Love' by Queen was highlighted by a quadruple-triple toeloop combination, triple Lutz and a triple Axel. The ISU Grand Prix Finalist achieved a season's best with 88.63 points.

The day is over and for me it ended in a positive way. I am satisfied with my performance. Tomorrow will be a new day, new thoughts, new emotion," Voronov noted. "Overall I really enjoy coming to this competition, the NHK Trophy, because if I continue to compete I'll get to see almost all Japan," he added.

[Roman Sadovsky](#) (CAN) finished fourth on 78.51 points edging Rostelecom Cup bronze medalist [Makar Ignatov](#) (RUS), who scored 78.47 points. [Koshiro Shimada](#) (JPN) came sixth (75.98 points). Skate America silver medalist [Jason Brown](#) (USA) ranks eighth after missing two jumps and most likely lost his chance to qualify for the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final (73.73 points).

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating [Standings Men](#).

NHK Trophy continues Saturday with the Free Dance, Pairs, Ladies and Men's Free Skating.

Overall, 58 skaters/couples representing 11 ISU members compete at NHK Trophy November 22-24. The top 6 qualifiers of the Grand Prix series in each discipline will proceed to the Final in Turin (ITA), December 5 to 8, 2019. Full [entry lists, results, the General Announcement](#) of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series are available on [isu.org](http://isu.org).

### **Where to watch and follow the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2019**

Viewers will be able to watch the Series either via their national broadcaster / channel and for countries where there are no broadcasters, the ISU will offer a live stream on the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#) as of season 2019/20. You will find the full list in the [Where to watch news here](#).

Subscribe to the [ISU Newsletter](#) to receive the latest information and the “Where to Watch” news and you can also subscribe to the [Skating ISU YouTube Channel](#) to receive notifications when live streams start or new videos are published.

Highlights, clips, interviews, behind the scenes:

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### **ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2019/20**

[Skate America - Las Vegas \(USA\) – October 18 – 20](#)

[Skate Canada International – Kelowna \(CAN\) – October 25 – 27](#)

[Internationaux de France – Grenoble \(FRA\) – Novembre 1 – 3](#)

[SHISEIDO cup of China – Chongqing \(CHN\) – November 8 – 10](#)

[Rostelecom Cup – Moscow \(RUS\) – November 15 – 17](#)

[NHK Trophy – Sapporo \(JPN\) – November 22 – 24](#)

[ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final \(Senior & Junior\) – Torino \(ITA\) – December 5 – 8](#)

[The ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series](#) started in 1995 (previously known as the ISU Champions Series) and consists of six international senior invitational events and the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final. The skaters are seeded and invited to the six Grand Prix of Figure Skating events based on the results of the previous ISU World Figure Skating Championships. Competitors collect points in their ISU Grand Prix events towards the qualification for the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final. Only the top six Skaters / Couples in each discipline can qualify for the Final.