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Osaka, Japan

Team Russia take narrow lead at ISU World Team Trophy 2021

Team Russia took the lead as the ISU World Team Trophy in Figure Skating kicked off on Thursday in Osaka with the Rhythm Dance, Ladies and Men's Short Programs. They topped the day one standings with 49 points, just two points ahead of Team USA (47). Team Japan sit third with 42 points.

Russia got off to a good start with reigning World Champions [Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov](#) winning the Rhythm Dance and 12 points for their team. The 2020 European Champions put out an uplifting performance of their dance to "Singin' in the Rain", picking up level fours and threes for their elements to score 86.66 points.

The 2021 Ladies' World Champion [Anna Shcherbakova](#) and 2021 World silver medalist [Elizaveta Tuktamysheva](#) collected more points by coming first and second in the Short Program. Both skated clean with Shcherbakova (81.07 points/12 team points) landing a triple Lutz-triple loop combination in her program to "O Doux Printemps d'autrefois" and Tuktamysheva hitting a triple Axel in her routine to "Lovely" (80.35/11 team points).

In the Men's Short Program, [Mikhail Kolyada](#) and [Evgeni Semenenko](#) delivered clean performances that featured quadruple jumps. Kolyada placed fifth with 93.42 points (8 team points) while Semenenko came seventh (88.86/6 team points).

"Today was a very good day for the Russian team. All of us did a great job, the girls, the boys, the dancers. I am very happy how it turned out and I hope that in the next days our team shows the same high level of skating and we remain in first place," team captain Tuktamysheva commented. "Hopefully as captain, I will try to pass on some energy to the guys for good performances so that we all can be pleased. I think we all know that the Russian team is very strong and we want to try to prove this one more time and have fun," she added.

Team USA overtook Japan after the Men's Short Program thanks to three-time and reigning World Champion [Nathan Chen](#) claiming first place and teammate [Jason Brown](#) coming third. Skating to music from the "Desperado" soundtrack, Chen nailed a quad flip, triple Axel, quad toe-triple toe to set a seasons best of 109.65 points, earning 12 points for his team. Brown's routine to "Sinnerman" included a triple Axel and triple Lutz-triple toe combination (94.86/10 team points).

In the Ladies, [Bradie Tennell](#) ranked fifth (67.40/8 team points) and [Karen Chen](#) was sixth (62.48/7 team points). The USA had earlier placed third in Rhythm Dance thanks to [Kaitlin Hawayek/Jean-Luc Baker](#)'s upbeat Disco Fever routine (76.79/10 team points).

"I'm super, super proud of my teammates today. World Team Trophy is just such a fun event. I just love the opportunity to be here and skating in front of an audience," team captain Brown said. "You know what was really exciting today, a couple of us had season bests. I'm just looking forward to another great day tomorrow," he continued.

Two-time Olympic Champion [Yuzuru Hanyu](#) secured 11 points for Team Japan by finishing second in the Short Program. Hanyu put out an energetic performance to "Let Me Entertain You", pulling off a quad Salchow, quad toe-triple toe but had to fight for the landing of the triple Axel. The 2021 World bronze medalist netted 107.12 points, a season's best.

However, [Shoma Uno](#) fell on his quad flip and ranked 9th (77.46/4 team points). [Kaori Sakamoto](#) added 10 points to the team score with a season's best Ladies' Short Program to "Bach a la Jazz" that featured a triple flip-triple toeloop combination (77.78 points). [Rika Kihira](#) missed her triple Axel to come fourth (69.74/9 team points). [Misato Komatsubara/Tim Koleto](#) placed fifth in the Rhythm Dance (66.42/8 team points).

"All of us are actually coming back from the Worlds," captain [Ryuichi Kihara](#) explained. "It's truly a consecutive competition and we didn't have a lot of time after getting back home, in addition to the fact that we had to get ourselves isolated, so the preparation was a little bit different from normal. But compared to what we had to go through, I really think that all of the members of Team Japan did really well and that we were able to give courage to the Japanese audience in some way."

The 2019 ISU Grand Prix Final bronze medalist [Kevin Aymoz](#) led Team France to fourth place on 26 points. He ranked fourth in the Men's Short Program with a quad toe-triple toe combination (94.69 points/9 team points).

Italy's top scorers were the 2019 European Ice Dance bronze medalists [Charlene Guignard/Marco Fabbrì](#). They finished second in the Rhythm Dance, putting out a strong performance to "Grease" (82.93 points/11 team points). Team Italy sits in fifth place overall on 25 points.

Team Canada is currently ranked sixth with 23 points. The highest scoring skater was [Roman Sadvosky](#) in sixth place (89.61/7 team points).

The ISU World Team Trophy in Figure Skating continues on Friday with the Pairs Short Program, Free Dance and Men's Free Skating.

Viewers are able to watch the ISU World Team Trophy 2021 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](#). For more details, see the [Where to Watch](#) guide.

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