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Lausanne, SUI

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Rostelecom Cup, Day One

Olympic Champions [Yuzuru Hanyu](#) (JPN) and [Alina Zagitova](#) (RUS) as well as World Pairs silver medalists [Evgenia Tarasova/Vladimir Morozov](#) dominated the first day of competition at Rostelecom Cup in Moscow, Russia on Friday. [Alexandra Stepanova/Ivan Bukin](#) (RUS) won the Rhythm Dance. The Rostelecom Cup is the fifth event of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series 2018/19.

Yuzuru Hanyu (JPN) poised for gold

Two-time Olympic Champion [Yuzuru Hanyu](#) of Japan dominated the Men's Short Program to leave him poised for his second Grand Prix gold medal this season. [Morisi Kvitelashvili](#) of Georgia sits in a surprise second place followed by Sweden's [Alexander Majorov](#) as some medal hopefuls faltered.

Hanyu opened his performance to "Otonal" by Raul di Blasio with a big quadruple Salchow and followed up with a triple Axel, a quad toe-triple toe combination and level-four spins and footwork. His numerous fans at the sold out Megaspport Arena showered the ice with Winnie-the-Pooh toys and other gifts.

The two-time World Champion earned a season's best with 110.53 points and has a comfortable lead heading into the Free Skating on Saturday.

"I am satisfied with my performance. I can't say it was perfect, especially not the quad toe-triple toe. But I am happy I got a level four for each element and the GOE (grade of execution) for the triple Axel and the quad Salchow was really good," Hanyu said.

"There was not enough time in between the competitions (the two Grand Prix events in Helsinki and Moscow) and I needed to control my training in the last week, which was a little hard," he added.

Kvitelashvili's program to "Bloodstream" by Tokio Myers featured a quad Salchow-triple toeloop combination, a triple Axel and quadruple toeloop as well as two level-four spins. The Georgian skater earned 89.94 points, also a season's best.

"I did everything as planned, but there is still room for improvement and I will continue to work to please the audience. I really enjoy skating in this competition, there is a positive atmosphere that leads to good performances," the 23-year-old said.

Skating to "Bang Bang" by Asaf Avidan, Majorov landed a triple Axel, triple Lutz-triple toeloop. He only put his hand down on the quadruple toeloop and scored 82.33 points.

“I made a small mistake on the quad toe, but all elements were a level four, which was good. I will try to fix the mistake in the long program,” Majorov said.

[Kazuki Tomono](#) (JPN), who underrotated the quad Salchow, came fourth on 82.26 points. [Paul Fentz](#) (GER) follows in fifth (78.28 points) and [Alexei Krasnozhon](#) (USA) sits in sixth (75.32 points). Skate Canada silver medalist [Keegan Messing](#) (CAN) fell on his underrotated quadruple toeloop and wobbled on the triple Axel to finish seventh (73.83 points). 2018 World bronze medalist [Mikhail Kolyada](#) (RUS) popped the planned quad toe into a triple and singled the Axel to place a disappointing eighth (69.10 points).

Stepanova/Bukin (RUS) take lead after Rhythm Dance

Russia’s [Alexandra Stepanova/Ivan Bukin](#) took the lead in the Rhythm Dance. [Christina Carreira/Anthony Ponomarenko](#) (USA) are currently ranked second and [Sara Hurtado/Kirill Khaliavin](#) of Spain lie third.

Stepanova/Bukin put out a characteristic dance to the Paso Doble “Malaguena” and the Tango piece “Carmen Story” that was highlighted by fast twizzles and a curve lift. However, Stepanova lost her balance in the first sequence of the Tango Romantica and almost fell.

The two-time European bronze medalists collected a level four for twizzles and the lift while the Tango sequences merited only the base level and a level one. The Helsinki Grand Prix Champions earned 74.49 points.

“Today not everything worked out, which is a shame since it happened here at home (in Moscow). It is just another experience for us. Tomorrow we want to perform better and learn from our mistakes,” Stepanova said.

Her partner added: “It is difficult to analyze right now (the mistake) as it just happened. We will look at it, but not today as we have the free dance tomorrow and are preparing for it.”

Carreira/Ponomarenko’s dance to “Tango Jalousie” and “Yo Soy Maria” featured level-four twizzles, a level-four rotational lift and a level-three diagonal step sequence. The World Junior silver medalists earned 69.01 points.

“We are very happy with how we skated today, although it was not perfect,” Carreira said.

Ponomarenko, whose parents are the 1992 Olympic Ice Dance Champions Marina Klimova and Sergei Ponomarenko, added: “My grandmother once again made the long journey from Ekaterinburg - she travelled 26 hours on a train. I also have a grandmother living in Moscow and my mom is in town as well,”

Performing to “I’ve Seen That Face Before” and “Libertango”, Hurtado/Khaliavin earned a level four for their curve lift and a level three and one for the Tango pattern.

However, Hurtado was shaky on the twizzles, which were graded a level two for her and a level four for her partner. The Spanish duo managed a season’s best with 66.40 points.

“It wasn’t our best performance of this program today. There was a lot of improvement in other parts of the program, but we still need to do it as we do it in practice,” Hurtado said.

[Natalia Kaliszek/Maksym Spodyriev](#) (POL) are within striking distance of the podium on 66.30 points, followed by [Allison Reed/Saulius Ambruelicius](#) (LTU) on 64.54 points and [Sofia Evdokimova/Egor Bazin](#) (RUS/64.05 points).

Tarasova/Morozov shine in Pairs Short Program in Moscow

[Evgenia Tarasova/Vladimir Morozov](#) of Russia gave a stylish performance in the Pairs Short Program to take the lead. Italy’s [Nicole Della Monica/Matteo Guarise](#) came second and young Russians [Daria Pavliuchenko/Denis Khodykin](#) are currently ranked third.

Tarasova/Morozov opened their routine to “I Got You (I Feel Good)” by James Brown with a high triple twist and followed up with a side by side triple toe and a throw triple loop. The 2018 World silver medalists collected a level four for their twist, death spiral, lift and side by side spin to post a new season’s best of 78.47 points.

“We did a good job tonight, all our elements had a good level. Even though it wasn’t our maximum yet, we’re on the right path,” Morozov said.

Della Monica/Guarise turned in a solid performance to “Never Tear Us Apart“, completing a triple Salchow, triple twist, a throw triple loop and level-four lift. The Italian Champions set a new season’s best with 72.32 points.

“We are very happy, we skated clean. We missed some levels here and there, but we’re working on them and hopefully in our next competition we’ll get all level four,” Della Monica said.

Skating to the romantic piece “When Winter Comes”, Pavliuchenko/Khodykin produced a triple twist, triple toeloop and a level-four lift, spin and footwork. She only had to fight for the landing of the throw triple flip. The 2018 World Junior Champions scored 69.38 points.

“We’re pleased with our performance today, but there is always something to improve. We’ll look at that later, now we’ll focus on the free skating,” Khodykin noted.

Skate America silver medalists [Alisa Efimova/Alexander Korovin](#) (RUS) placed fourth on 65.46 points while [Miriam Ziegler/Severin Kiefer](#) (AUT) came fifth (63.75 points). Skate America bronze medalists [Ashley Cain/Timothy LeDuc](#) (USA) made an uncharacteristic error when they missed the take-off for their throw jump and finished in seventh place on 58.79 points.

Flawless Alina Zagitova (RUS) takes Ladies Short Program

Russia’s Olympic Champion [Alina Zagitova](#) skated to a confident lead in the Ladies Short Program, winning the first segment of the competition with 13 points to spare. Her teammate [Sofia Samodurova](#) came second, followed by [Alexia Paganini](#) of Switzerland.

Zagitova delivered in front of an expectant home crowd. Skating to “The Phantom of the Opera”, the Olympic Champion nailed her trademark triple Lutz-triple loop combination, a double Axel, an excellent triple flip and picked up a level four for her three spins and the step sequence. At the end

of her performance, a smile of relief lit up her face. The European Champion set a new season's best with 80.78 points. "Today before the short program I only thought about my program and after the program I was a little bit happy, but tomorrow is still another day," the 16-year-old said. "The scores or my placement are not important for me, for me it is only important to skate clean and to put my heart into it," she added.

Samodurova's Flamenco-themed program to "Nyah" by Hans Zimmer was highlighted by a triple flip-triple toe combination, double Axel and triple loop. The Skate America bronze medalist scored a season's best of 67.40 points and kept herself in the running for another podium spot and possibly the Grand Prix Final. "This is the best score I ever had and one of the biggest events I've competed in. Compared to Skate America, I felt more confident today and I felt that I am able to give a strong performance", the ISU Junior Grand Prix Finalist shared.

Skating to the Tango "Yo Soy Maria", Paganini hit a triple Lutz-triple toeloop combination, a triple loop and double Axel to earn 63.43 points, another season's best score. "I am really happy with my performance, this is the best I've skated ever. I have been working hard on making sure all my programs are consistent and clean and on getting all my levels up. I am a little surprised to be in third, but I was working hard and I was doing clean programs in practice every day," the Swiss Champion said.

[Elizabet Tursynbaeva](#) (KAZ) finished fourth after some wobbles in her Short Program (61.73 points). [Yuna Shiraiwa](#) (JPN) came fifth on 60.35 points while [Eunsoo Lim](#) (KOR) is ranked sixth (57.76 points). Skate Canada silver medalist [Mako Yamashita](#) (JPN) missed two jumps and finished ninth (51.00 points).

Overall, 56 skaters/couples representing 18 ISU members compete at Rostelecom Cup November 16-18, the fifth of six events in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating series. The top 6 qualifiers in each discipline will proceed to the Final in Vancouver (CAN), December 6 to 9, 2018.

The Rostelecom Cup continues Saturday with Men's Free Skating, Free Dance, Pairs and Ladies Free Skating. For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series please visit [here](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using **#FigureSkating** **#GPFigure**.