

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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For immediate release

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series 2013/2014 Skate Canada International, Day One

Skate Canada International opened Friday in Saint John, NB, Friday with the Pairs, Ladies, Men's Short Programs and the Short Dance. Skate Canada is the second of six events in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series.

Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford capture Pairs Short Program

World bronze medalists Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford of Canada edged out Italy's Stefania Bertone/Ondrej Hotarek and Wenjing Sui/Cong Han of China for a narrow lead in the Pairs Short Program.

Duhamel/Radford completed a triple twist and three level-four elements in their program to "Tribute", a piece composed by Radford himself. However, Duhamel stepped out of the side by side triple Lutz and touched down on the throw triple Lutz. The Canadians scored 69.57 points. "We are really pleased with our debut of the season. We haven't competed internationally yet this year. Obviously it could have gone a little bit better, but that was in the range of the scores that we were looking for at this time of the year. We're really excited to see our program build and the scores build as we head towards the Olympics", Duhamel noted.

Bertone/Hotarek's routine to "The Mask" featured a side by side triple toe, a triple twist and throw triple loop. The European bronze medalists picked up 69.38 points, improving their personal best by 5.10 points. "For us, it was already the second Grand Prix, we already experienced the first one, the little shaky one. So the second performance usually like for us today works fine, so we are really happy about that", Hotarek said. "We had a little distraction this week, because my partner didn't have his skates until last night. I'm really happy that we pulled it together and the performance today was strong", Bertone added.

Performing to "La Strada", Sui/Han produced a throw triple flip, triple toes and a level-four triple twist. The three-time World Junior Champions earned 69.02 points. "This is our first time this year to join the competition and I think we did really well in this short program. We changed coaches, now it's Hongbo (Zhao) and Yao Bin, and we are learning more about skating, many things. It made us grow up", Han explained.

Mari Vartmann/Aaron van Cleave (GER) are sitting in fourth at 55.08 points, followed by World Junior Champions Haven Denney/Brandon Frazier (USA, 55.01 points) and Paige Lawrence/Rudi Swiegers (CAN, 52.94 points).

Gracie Gold (USA) leads Ladies after Short Program

Gracie Gold (USA) skated to the lead in the Ladies Short Program. Julia Lipnitskaia of Russia came second and Japan's Akiko Suzuki placed third.

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Gold's performance to "Three Preludes" by George Gershwin was highlighted by a triple Lutz-triple toe combination, a triple loop and two level-four spins. The 18-year-old scored 69.45 points, a new personal best. "It was amazing. I was able to skate a clean performance. It's just like I train and we've been working so hard this year. So I'm glad that I was able to go out and skate like I train and like I'm able to."

Lipnitskaia opened her routine set to "You Don't Give Up On Love" with a triple Lutz-triple toe and followed up with a double Axel and triple flip. The 15-year-old earned level fours for her spins and footwork to post a new personal best of 66.89 points. "Today I am pretty pleased with my performance, because there was a certain nervousness. I am pleased with how I completed my elements and with my scores", the Muscovite noted.

Suzuki underrotated the back end of her triple toe-triple toe combination but hit a triple flip, double Axel and two level-four spins in her program to "Hymne à l'amour". The 2012 World bronze medalist collected 65.76 points. "It wasn't my best performance, but it was not bad for my first Grand Prix event of the season. I realized I made little mistakes on the jumps and spin and that was reflected in the mark. But the overall skating wasn't bad at all", the 28-year-old commented.

Christina Gao (USA) is ranked fourth with 62.82 points. Kaetlyn Osmond (CAN) came fifth (60.32 points) ahead of teammate Amelie Lacoste (59.13 points).

Tessa Virtue/Scott Moir (CAN) take Short Dance

Olympic Champions Tessa Virtue/Scott Moir of Canada claimed the Short Dance followed by their teammates Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje. Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue (USA) are currently standing in third place.

Virtue/Moir's dance set to songs by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong included a level-four side by side step sequence and level-four rotational lift, but the twizzles garnered a level two only. The current World silver medalists earned a level three and four for their Finnstep pattern. They scored 73.15 points. "Tessa and I were very happy with our attack today. In the program, we felt like we carried the character from beginning to end. A couple of glitches in there, but we really wanted to come out and skate strong in our own country and we are looking forward to skating tomorrow", Moir commented.

Dancing to Quickstep and Foxtrot from the musical "42nd Street", Weaver/Poje produced precise footwork and twizzles. Their twizzles, Finnstep sequences and curve lift all merited a level four. The Canadians collected 70.35 points. "We skated just like in practice, if not better. To start the season out like that is very important and provides a building block for the rest of the season. Above all we had fun, and the main point of this program is to entertain", Weaver told the press.

Hubbell/Donohue got a level four for three elements in their dance to Quickstep, Foxtrot and Charleston. However, he fell in the last pose. The Americans earned 60.92 points. "Today wasn't the best day for us, we made a few mistakes", Hubbell admitted. "But we do feel strong and we'll be able to skate better tomorrow. We're happy to be in third."

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Ekaterina Riazanova/Ilia Tkachenko (RUS) are within striking distance of the podium with 59.79 points. Nelli Zhiganshina/Alexander Gazsi (GER) are sitting in fifth (55.91 points) followed by World Junior Champions Alexandra Stepanova/Ivan Bukin (RUS, 55.63 points).

Patrick Chan (CAN) wins Men's Short Program

Reigning World Champion Patrick Chan of Canada won the Men's Short Program. Japan's Nobunari Oda and Yuzuru Hanyu follow in second and third.

Chan downgraded his opening quad-triple toe combination to a shaky triple-triple toe combination but rallied back to nail a triple Axel, triple Lutz and level-four spins and footwork. The 22-year-old scored 88.10 points for his program to an Elegy by Sergei Rachmaninov. "I really wanted to go in this event as preparation for the Olympic Games. I had different goals in mind, I didn't have technical goals. I wanted to go out and be excited to be there as opposed to dreading competing. I had a great six-minutes warm up, unfortunately I didn't bring that into the first element of my short program. I think I hesitated a little bit into the quad. Right after the triple-triple I regathered myself and got back into the rhythms of things", the Canadian Champion shared.

Skating to "Cotton Club", Oda produced a triple Axel, triple Lutz-triple toe combination and fast spins, but fell on his opening quadruple toeloop. The Japanese skater picked up 80.82 points. "I feel lucky to be sitting here today. I made a mistake on my quad, and I didn't achieve the levels I was aiming for in my spins and steps. I want to skate better tomorrow", the 26-year-old said.

Hanyu held on to a wobbly quad toe in his "Parisian Walkways" Blues routine and hit a triple Axel and level-four spins and footwork. However, he singled the Lutz (in combination with triple toe). The 18-year-old earned 80.40 points. "For today's performance I had a lot of regrets. But this is just the Short Program. I believe that figure skating is the total of the two different programs and we still have to skate tomorrow", the 2012 World bronze medalist told the press.

Jeremy Abbott (USA) finished fourth at 74.58 points. Takahito Mura (JPN) placed fifth with 73.08 points while Elladj Balde (CAN) came in sixth (72.35 points).

For full results of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2013/14 please refer to www.isu.org.

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