

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: CHEMIN DE PRIMEROSE 2 - CH 1007 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 7 E-MAIL: info@isu.ch

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ISU World Team Trophy in Figure Skating 2015 **Team USA takes the lead**

The fourth edition of the ISU World Team Trophy in Figure Skating opened Thursday with the Short Dance, the Ladies and Men's Short Programs. The six top ranked national teams of the 2014/15 season have qualified for the event. Each team consists of two Men, two Ladies, one Pair and one Ice Dance couple. The Yoyogi National Stadium was filled almost to capacity.

Team USA takes the lead

Team USA took the lead with 48 points ahead of Team Japan and Team Russia. Japan and Russia have 43 points each, but Japan stayed ahead because of the tie-breaker (best result).

Gracie Gold won the Ladies Short Program and netted 12 points for team USA. Skating to the Adagio of Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor, Gold landed a triple Lutz-triple toe, triple loop and double Axel to post a new seasons best of 71.26 points. World Ice Dance silver medalists Madison Chock/Evan Bates picked up 11 points when they came second with their "Don Quixote" Short Dance (72.17 points). U.S. Champion Jason Brown gave a clean performance in the Men's Short Program to finish third (86.48 points) and scored 10 points for his team. Ashley Wagner (4th/9 team points) and Max Aaron (7th/6 team points) competed as well.

"Today was a really great day for team USA. It was a group effort. I thought everyone skated really well and we're really happy. But at the same time we know that the competition is far from over. So we're going to need a lot more of good skating tomorrow and the next day", team captain Bates said.

Team Japan stood in third place after the Ladies Short Program but with Yuzuru Hanyu's win in the Men's Short Program edged ahead of Russia. Hanyu nailed a quad toe and triple Axel as well as level-four spins and footwork in his routine to "Ballade No. 1 in G minor" by Frederic Chopin, but he fell on the back end of his triple Lutz-triple toe combination. The Olympic Champion earned 96.27 points for his performance and 12 team points. Takahito Mura in fourth place (9 team points), Kanako Murakami in fifth (8 team points), World silver medalist Satoko Miyahara as well as ice dancers Cathy Reed/Chris Reed in sixth place (7 team points each) contributed to the result. „Of course each individual team member had some minor mistakes, but we all tried our best and we will continue our effort for tomorrow", team captain Mura told the press. "We only had two weeks since the World Championships in Shanghai, and I can say for myself that I suffered an injury and other teammates are not in top condition, but we prepared in full spirit for this event", he added.

Russia's World Champion Elizaveta Tuktamysheva and World bronze medalist Elena Radionova collected together 21 points by finishing second and third in the Ladies Short Program. Tuktamysheva fell on her triple Axel in her performance to "Bolero", but completed a triple Lutz and triple toe-triple toe combination (70.93 points) while Radionova hit a triple Lutz-triple toe combination (68.77 points). Elena Ilinykh/Ruslan Zhiganshin added 9 points to the team score by placing fourth in the Short Dance. 8 team points came from Sergei Voronov (5th place) and five team points from Maxim Kovtun (8th place in the Men's Short Program) „We are very pleased with this first, long and hard day. I am very happy for my guys, they skated well, but I am also happy for the teams from the USA and Japan. We are ready to fight for two more days in good

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spirits and with fun. We want to keep our positive attitude in spite of minor mishaps and want to enjoy this festival of figure skating”, Smirnov commented.

Team Canada sits in fourth place with 31 points. World Ice Dance bronze medalist Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje won the Short Dance with a season best score, which gave their team 12 points.

Team China currently ranks fifth (27 team points). Han Yan achieved the best result for his team by placing second in the Men’s Short Program.

France sits in sixth place with 21 team points. Ice Dance World Champions Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron were the top scorers for their team. The European Champions ranked third in the Short Dance and earned 10 team points.

The ISU World Team Trophy in Figure Skating 2015 continues Friday with the Pairs Short Program, the Free Dance and Men’s Free Skating. For full entries and results please refer to www.isu.org and <http://www.tv-asahi.co.jp/figure/> .