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Top seeds Chen (USA), Tarasova/Morozov (RUS) skate to lead at Skate America

The 2018 world champion [Nathan Chen](#) (USA) and world silver medalists [Evgenia Tarasova/Vladimir Morozov](#) (RUS) took the lead as the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2018/2019 kicked off with the Men's and Pairs Short Programs of Skate America in Everett, Washington (USA) Friday. Skate America is the first of six events in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series.

Tarasova/Morozov (RUS) skate to lead in Pairs Short Program

World silver medalists [Evgenia Tarasova/Vladimir Morozov](#) of Russia skated to the lead in the Pairs Short Program as Skate America opened Friday in Everett (USA). Teammates [Alisa Efimova/Alexander Korovin](#) made it a one-two for Russia in the Pairs Short. German Grand Prix debutants [Minerva-Fabienne Hase/Nolan Seegert](#) surprisingly came third.

Tarasova/Morozov's program to "I Got You" featured a big triple twist and a level-four lift, death spiral and side by side spin. However, Tarasova underrotated and touched down on the triple toeloop and two-footed the throw triple loop. The team from Moscow earned 71.24 points. "We skated the short program with many small mistakes. It was difficult today, but we felt good. We like our program and we need to keep working hard on the short program," Morozov said.

Skating to "Human", Efimova/Korovin produced a triple twist, throw triple loop and two level-four elements, but Efimova struggled with the triple Salchow. The team from St. Petersburg scored 62.38 points, a new season's best. "We enjoyed skating very much, but we had some mistakes," Efimova said. "We started our international season in Germany (at Nebelhorn Trophy), and we felt better here at the Grand Prix event, but we were a bit nervous."

Hase/Seegert delivered a clean program to "Say Something", completing a triple twist, side by side triple toeloop and throw triple Salchow to set a new personal best with 60.04 points. "Our goal coming here was to skate to clean programs and the first (part of the) goal we met. This is the reward, and we want more," Seegert said.

[Ashley Cain/Timothy Leduc](#) (USA) came fourth on 57.72 points, followed by U.S. champions [Alexa Scimeca Knierim/Chris Knierim](#) (57.31 points) and [Annika Hocke/Ruben Blommaert](#) (GER/53.36 points).

World champion Nathan Chen (USA) rules in Men's Short Program

World champion [Nathan Chen](#) (USA) ruled in the Men's Short Program, taking the lead with a little over eight points to spare ahead of Czech Republic's [Michal Brezina](#). [Julian Zhi Jie Yee](#) of Malaysia upset several well-known competitors to place third in his Grand Prix debut.

Chen opened his program to “Caravan” by Duke Ellington with an excellent triple Axel, but then stepped out of an underrotated quad flip. He continued with a triple Lutz-triple toe combination and collected a level four for two spins. The reigning world champion scored 90.58 points. “I think this was a good start to my season for the short program. Definitely, it wasn’t the best in terms of the technical elements, but the performance was pretty good, so a lot to build on,” the 19-year-old Yale student said.

Brezina’s performance to “Who Wants to Live Forever” was highlighted by a quad Salchow-triple toe combination and a triple Axel as well as precise spins, but he singled the flip. The 2013 European silver medalist picked up 82.09 points to edge Yee. “I started in Salt Lake City (as the first competition). It was a bit of a step up for me, except for that beautiful single flip. Other than that, I felt pretty good. It was better than what I’ve been used to from the previous years,” Brezina told the post-event press conference.

Yee, who is the first skater from Malaysia to compete in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating, nailed a quad Salchow, triple Axel and triple flip-triple toe in his program to “To Build a Home”. He posted a personal best of 81.52 points. “For me, I’m lucky to be invited to the Grand Prix for the first time and having the short program of my life in my first Grand Prix is really great. It’s very unexpected, that’s for sure. Hopefully I’ll do just as well in the free,” the 21-year-old said.

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Finalist [Sergei Voronov](#) (RUS) is currently ranked fourth at 78.18 points. 2018 world junior bronze medalist [Matteo Rizzo](#) (ITA) finished fifth (78.09 points) and 2017 World Junior Champion [Vincent Zhou](#) (USA) rounds up the top six (76.38 points).

Skate America continues Saturday with the Pairs and Men’s Free Skating, Ladies Short Program and the Rhythm Dance. Overall, 59 skaters/couples representing 15 ISU members compete at Skate America, the first event of six in the series. The top six qualifiers in each discipline will proceed to the Final in Vancouver (CAN), December 6 to 9, 2018.

For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series please visit: <https://isu.org/GrandPrix> . Follow the discussion on social media by using **#FigureSkating #GPFigure**.