

November 10, 2018

Lausanne, SUI

NHK Trophy, Day Two

Japan's [Shoma Uno](#) and [Rika Kihira](#) struck gold for the host country as NHK Trophy continued in Hiroshima (JPN) on Saturday. [Natalia Zabiako/Alexander Enbert](#) of Russia took the Pairs gold while Ice Dancers [Tiffani Zagorski/Jonathan Guerreiro](#) of Russia are leading after the Rhythm Dance. NHK Trophy is the fourth of six events in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series 2018/19.

Tiffani Zagorski/Jonathan Guerreiro (RUS) capture Rhythm Dance

[Tiffani Zagorski/Jonathan Guerreiro](#) of Russia captured the Rhythm Dance with almost five points to spare. [Kaitlin Hawayek/Jean-Luc Baker](#) (USA) are sitting in second place, closely followed by teammates [Rachel Parsons/Michael Parsons](#).

Zagorski/Guerreiro put out a strong Tango to "Besame Mucho", collecting a level four for the twizzles, the lift and the first sequence of the Tango Romantica pattern dance. The Skate America bronze medalists set a season's best with 75.49 points, despite feeling the effects of their journey to Japan. "We definitely feel a little bit the jet lag kicking in, so hopefully tomorrow we'll feel a little better," Guerreiro said. "I think it was quite a good performance nevertheless."

His partner Zagorski added: "We just want to do the same tomorrow - show a nice performance and perform better than at our last Grand Prix and show everyone our improvements."

Hawayek/Baker's Tango to "Vuelvo al Sur" and "A los Amigos" was highlighted by difficult twizzles and a curve lift. However, the Tango Romantica merited only a level one and base level as the 2018 Four Continents Champions earned 70.71 points. "We're both thrilled with the performance that we put out today. It's been a long road and we're really happy to be here right now," Baker, who suffered a concussion in August, said. "We have a lot of levels to improve and we're really looking into that for France (Grand Prix in Grenoble, 23-25 November)."

The Parsons siblings produced a sophisticated dance to "Vuelvo al Sur" and "Tango Cha". The 2017 World Junior Champions picked up a level four for the curve lift and the twizzles, while the Tango Romantica pattern was rated a level three and two.

"For our first skate at our first Grand Prix in Japan we're really happy with what we did. We left some points on the ice, but in terms of feeling we're definitely progressing this season," Michael Parsons said.

[Shiyue Wang/Xinyu Liu](#) (CHN) lie in fourth place on 66.27 points, followed by the 2018 Four Continents silver medalists from Canada [Carolane Soucisse/Shane Firus](#) (66.01 points).

Natalia Zabiako/Alexander Enbert (RUS) cruise to Pairs gold

Russia's [Natalia Zabiako/Alexander Enbert](#) cruised to the gold in the Pairs Free Skating, taking their second consecutive victory on the circuit. [Cheng Peng/Yang Jin](#) of China earned the silver medal and the bronze went to [Alexa Scimeca Knierim/Chris Knierim](#) (USA). The gold and silver medalists have assured themselves of a spot in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final.

Zabiako/Enbert's performance to "Toi et Moi" by Igor Krutoi featured a triple twist, triple toe double toe-double loop combination, throw triple flip and loop plus difficult lifts. Only the side-by-side triple Salchow was somewhat wobbly. The European bronze medalists achieved a season's best with 140.66 points, to give them a total of 214.14.

"It was almost a 100 percent performance for today, also emotionally. So we have only positive emotions right now," Zabiako said.

Her partner, Enbert, added: "It is always hard to make the Grand Prix Final, it's a battle and it is nice to see the result of our work. It's always interesting to skate there and we hope to skate as well or even better there (in the Final)."

Skating to "La Vie en Rose", Peng/Jin produced a triple toe-double toe combination, triple twist, throw triple loop and Salchow. The Skate Canada silver medalists collected a level four for four elements and scored a season's best 136.58 points, for a total score of 207.24.

"We are pleased with our performance today, we did what we do in training," Peng said.

"Compared to Skate Canada there was some progress. We got our personal best score. Technically we didn't have many problems, only the last lift wasn't perfect," Jin added.

Scimeca Knierim/Knierim's routine to "Wicked Game" included excellent throws as well as difficult lifts, but they struggled with the side-by-side jumps. The US Champions nevertheless also managed a season's best, 125.74, to accumulate 190.49 points and move up from fourth to third place.

"We're very happy with our performance today. We put out a much stronger skate than we did two weeks ago at Skate America, so we're on the right track," Knierim said.

"Even in the short program, we were happy with the improvements that we made over Skate America. All in all we've lots of work left to do, there's always something we can improve on, but we're happy with where we are now."

[Kirsten Moore-Towers/Michael Marinaro](#) (CAN) slipped from third to fourth after errors on the side-by-side jumps and the throw triple loop, finishing with a total of 189.66 points. The 2018 Four Continents Champions [Tarah Kayne/Danny O'Shea](#) (USA) remained in fifth place with 164.16 points.

Rika Kihira (JPN) hits two triple Axels, soars to Ladies gold

Japan's [Rika Kihira](#) soared to gold, making it one-two for the host country with [Satoko Miyahara](#) taking the silver. Overnight leader [Elizaveta Tuktamysheva](#) of Russia claimed the bronze in what was a high-level competition.

Kihira, who stood in fifth place following the Short Program after a fall on the triple Axel, came back strong in her Free Skating to "Beautiful Storm" by Jennifer Thomas. This time she nailed the triple Axel twice - in combination with a triple toe and as a solo jump. The 16-year-old jumping phenomenon then reeled off five more triples and collected all level fours for her spins and footwork to compile a score of 154.72 points, and a total of 224.31.

"Yesterday there were some concerns about my triple Axel, but in the morning practice I checked on my Axel and this was reflected in my performance," Kihira said. "After the short program I wasn't sure if I could come back and be here today. The mistake (in the Short Program) motivated me today, but I didn't imagine I could get such a high score."

Miyahara turned in an elegant performance to "Invierno Porteno" that included a triple Lutz-triple toe combination as well as five more triples, but she underrotated a double Axel and a double loop. The 2018 World bronze medalist scored 143.39, giving her 219.47 points overall.

"Today in the free skating I was a little tense," Miyahara, 20, admitted. "The performance was not that bad, but I need to work harder. Each competition paves the way for the next competition."

Tuktamysheva opened her upbeat routine to "You Don't Love Me", "Petite Fleur" and "Cat Groove" with a somewhat shaky triple Axel and went on to reel off a triple Lutz-triple toe combination and four more triples. The 2015 World Champion posted a season's best of 142.85 points and was ranked third in the Free Skating. She slipped from first to third, with 219.02 points in total.

"I am satisfied with my free skating today, I skated better than at Skate Canada and this is actually the highest score I ever had in my career," the 21-year-old from St. Petersburg said. "I am glad that I am making progress and I hope I won't stop here."

Miyahara has qualified for the Grand Prix Final with gold and silver and Tuktamysheva should have her spot as well with gold and bronze from her two events. Kihira will compete again in two weeks in France at the sixth and last event.

[Mai Mihara](#) (JPN) completed a strong showing of the Japanese Ladies on home ice with another strong performance, although she dropped from third to fourth on 204.20 points. [Mariah Bell](#) (USA) pulled up from seventh to fifth place on 198.96 points while [Eunsoo Lim](#) (KOR) slipped from fourth to sixth on 196.31 points after falling on a triple Salchow.

Shoma Uno (JPN) takes Men's gold

Olympic silver medalist [Shoma Uno](#) of Japan skated to the gold medal at NHK Trophy with 22 points to spare on Saturday and qualified for the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final. Russia's [Sergei Voronov](#) claimed the silver medal and Italian [Matteo Rizzo](#) took the bronze.

Performing to "Moonlight Sonata" by Ludwig van Beethoven, Uno landed a quadruple flip and quadruple toeloop as well as two triple Axels. However, the two-time World silver medalist underrotated the quad Salchow and stumbled on the second quad toe and on a triple Salchow.

Despite those mishaps, the Japanese Champion scored 183.96 points to rack up 276.45 overall and take the title. "I am happy to have won the NHK Trophy and to have secured my ticket to the Grand Prix Final. However, there were mistakes in both the short and free program," Uno said.

"The first half (of the Free Skating) I thought was going well, but the second quad toe and the (triple) Salchow were meant to be combinations (but) I didn't do (them) and so I had only one combination and I regret that. But I didn't lose it emotionally and was aggressive."

Voronov opened his program to "Way Down We Go" with a quad toe and followed up with five clean triples including two Axels. The 31-year-old skater earned 162.91 points to retain his second place from Friday with 254.28 overall. With a bronze and now a silver medal from his two Grand Prix events so far this season, he will have to wait and see if this will get him into the Final.

"I am grateful that I got to skate last and again after Shoma Uno." Voronov said. "It was hard today, when I went out I saw the ice covered in red [flags and towels in support of Uno], but I managed to do quite well skating last twice and twice after the host, so to say."

Rizzo fell on his opening quadruple toeloop attempt in his Rolling Stones program, but recovered to hit six triples. However, he also underrotated the second triple Axel. The Italian Champion nevertheless picked up 147.71 points and with a total of 224.71 pulled up one spot to earn the first ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating medal for an Italian man.

"Of course this is very important for me and for my future. I wasn't expecting that at the beginning of the season," the 20-year-old said. "I was just happy to have (been assigned to) two Grands Prix, and at Skate America me and my team were very happy with fourth place already. The result is amazing, but I am not happy with my performance, because I can do better than that."

The 2017 World Junior Champion [Vincent Zhou](#) (USA) came fourth on 223.42 points, while Russia's [Dmitri Aliev](#) dropped from third after day 1 to fifth after popping some jumps. [Sota Yamamoto](#) (JPN) finished in sixth place with 213.40 points.

Overall, 58 skaters/couples representing 13 ISU members compete in NHK Trophy November 9-11, the fourth event 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 6-9, 2018.

NHK Trophy concludes Sunday with the Free Dance and the Exhibition Gala. For full entry lists and further information regarding the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series please visit [here](#).

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