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Vancouver, Canada

Newcome Rika, Ice Dancers Hubbell / Donohue and Pairs James / Cipres all win gold at ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final

Newcomer Rika Kihira (JPN) storms to Ladies gold

Newcomer [Rika Kihira](#) of Japan stormed to the gold medal in the Ladies event at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Vancouver (CAN) on Saturday. Olympic Champion [Alina Zagitova](#) of Russia settled for second place this time and Russia's [Elizaveta Tuktamysheva](#) continued her successful comeback this season by taking the bronze medal.

Kihira crashed on her opening triple Axel attempt, but recovered instantly to nail a triple Axel-double toe, triple Lutz-triple toe as well as four more triple jumps and two level-four spins. The 16-year-old achieved a new season's best with 150.61 points and racked up 233.12 points overall to take the Grand Prix Final crown in her debut at the senior level-event. "Right after I made a mistake on my first triple Axel, I knew I had to jump all the other ones after properly as this is the Grand Prix Final and I have no other choice but to land successfully. I told myself after the mistake that this is a challenge I need to overcome," Kihira noted. "Looking back on this season, I was able to get a great result at NHK. I realized that if I were to do two clean programs with no mistakes (here), the podium would be available for me. I'm really satisfied, and the key to good results is having consistent performances," she continued.

Performing to "Carmen", Zagitova hit a triple Lutz-triple loop combination as well as six more triples, but reduced her triple Lutz-triple toe to a triple-single. The Olympic Champion collected a level four for her spins and footwork to score 148.60 points. She remained in second place on 226.53 points overall. "Obviously, you always want to be first, but this is not going to happen every time," the European Champion pointed out. "I am not too happy about my performance, because my goal is to skate clean. I also felt that I was tense. But I am glad that I was able to skate the rest of the program clean (after the mistake on the Lutz-toe combination)," she added.

Tuktamysheva had a wobbly landing on her opening triple Axel in her routine to "You Don't Love Me" and "Petite Fleur". Unfazed, the 2015 World Champion went on to reel off seven triples and difficult spins. She set a new season's best for herself with 144.67 points and accumulated 215.32 points overall. "Today's skate was much better than the short program. I am happy that we increased the program's difficulty level and that I was able to keep up with those changes and skate it at a good level right away," the 2015 European Champion told the press. "My Axel showed me that I am in good form because it turned out to be very strong and high but because of that it was a bit harder coming out of it. The rest of the program, however, went very smoothly and I was able to implement the changes in the program. I will now be more confident at the Russian Nationals."

[Kaori Sakamoto](#) (JPN) finished fourth on 211.68 points followed by [Sofia Samodurova](#) (RUS/204.33 points). World bronze medalist [Satoko Miyahara](#) (JPN) remained in sixth place on 201.31 points.

Hubbell / Donohue strike Ice Dance gold

[Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue](#) (USA) struck gold as the Ice Dance event concluded at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final Saturday in Vancouver (CAN). [Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov](#) of Russia overtook Italians [Charlene Guignard/Marco Fabbri](#) to secure the silver medal. The Italians earned the bronze.

Hubbell/Donohue gave a passionate performance to “Romeo and Juliet”, earning a level four for their lifts and twizzles and a level three for the step sequences. The World silver medalists achieved a new season’s best score with 124.82 points and accumulated 205.35 points overall to win their first medal at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final. “Going into this event, Zach and I had a goal to put 100 percent into our performance and not be afraid of losing some technical levels and that’s what we did in both programs,” Hubbell said. “We lost some technical levels but the performance carried us to achieve our first title. We are incredibly grateful to each other for that commitment.”

Sinitsina/Katsalapov’s lyrical dance to Bach’s “Air” featured smooth step sequences and innovative lifts. The twizzles and lifts merited a level four while the serpentine step sequence and her part of the one foot step sequence garnered a level three. The Skate Canada silver medalists were awarded a season’s best score of 124.04 points and moved up from third to second place on 201.37 points overall. “You have no idea how amazing it feels when you have been preparing all day and walking into it, and performing in front of the audience for those four minutes and in the last ten seconds, feeling that emotional high from the performance. It is great when you have had a clean skate, and you simply try to give everything you’ve got to get to the end and wait for the scores,” Katsalapov said. “That was our season’s best, as our coach as told us, and we believe that we had a strong start of the season, so we’re looking forward to continuing that trend,” he added.

Guignard/Fabbri produced four level-four elements in their entertaining performance to “La La Land”. The Skate America silver medalists scored 120.31 points, a season’s best, and slipped to third on 198.65 points overall. “We’re feeling great, we just wanted, as we said yesterday, to perform our best, and I think that we succeeded, so we’re very, very happy. It wasn’t easy to skate last today, even it’s a small group, just because of the pressure on ourselves, not because of the results of others,” Fabbri explained.

[Alexandra Stepanova/Ivan Bukin](#) (RUS) turned in an excellent performance as well, but remained in fourth at 196.72 points. [Tiffani Zagorski/Jonathan Guerreiro](#) (RUS) placed fifth (184.37 points) followed by [Kaitlin Hawayek/Jean-Luc Baker](#) (USA) on 184.04 points.

Vanessa James/Morgan Cipres (FRA) soar to Pairs victory in Vancouver

[Vanessa James/Morgan Cipres](#) of France soared to victory in the Pairs event as competition wrapped up at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Vancouver (CAN) on Saturday. China’s [Cheng Peng/Yang Jin](#) claimed the silver medal and Russians [Evgenia Tarasova/Vladimir Morozov](#) settled for the bronze. It was the first Grand Prix Final medal for the French and the Chinese teams.

James/Cipres turned in a mesmerizing performance to “Wicked Game” and “The Last Feeling”, reeling off a triple twist, triple toe-double toe-double toe combination, triple Salchow, a throw triple flip and throw triple Salchow as well as spectacular lifts. The World bronze medalists improved their season’s best with a score of 148.37 points and racked up 219.88 points overall. “I could not

be happier than I am today. I feel like we've only been doing comebacks lately. It feels good. The score could be amazing and the experience could be amazing, but we really need to work on the short program. I'm very proud that after such a disappointment yesterday, that we could bring it strong home," James said.

Skating to "La Vie en Rose", Peng/Jin produced a triple toe-double toe combination, excellent throws as well as level-four lifts and a level-four pair combination spin. However, they risked only a double Salchow instead of a triple. The Chinese team set a season's best for themselves with 141.21 points and totaled 216.90 points. I am pretty satisfied with our performance today. One week before the competition I twisted my right foot and we couldn't do systematic practice. So I was worrying about my overall performance," Peng shared.

Tarasova/Morozov started well into their program to "The Winter" by Balmorhea, completing a level-four triple twist and side by side triple Salchow, but then Morozov wobbled on the toeloop-combination and Tarasova stumbled out of the throw triple flip. The World silver medalists recovered to land a throw triple loop. The European Champions scored 140.16 points in the Free Skating and remained in third place at 214.20 points overall. "Not everything worked as planned, there were mistakes, also yesterday. Overall this competition was not so bad for us, and we will work to fix the mistakes and focus on the next competition," Tarasova noted.

[Natalia Zabiiako/Alexander Enbert](#) (RUS) slipped from second to fourth after she almost fell on the triple Salchow and they missed a lift (125.89 points). [Nicole Della Monica/Matteo Guarise](#) (ITA) finished fifth (187.63 points) and [Daria Pavliuchenko/Denis Khodykin](#) (RUS) came sixth on 186.81 points.

Full entry lists and results of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series are available [here](#). Follow the conversation with #JGPFigure and #GPFigure.