

January 23, 2019

Minsk, Belarus

## **ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019 Day One**

The ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019 opened Wednesday in Minsk, Belarus with the Ladies and Pairs Short Programs. Minsk hosts the ISU European Figure Skating Championships for the first time, but has hosted the ISU World Junior Figure Skating Championships 2012 as well as ISU Junior Grand Prix of Figure Skating events.

145 Skaters from 34 ISU Members have been entered for this 112<sup>th</sup> edition of the European Championships: 37 Men, 36 Ladies, 11 Pair Skating couples and 25 Ice Dance couples.

Skaters /Couples need to have obtained a minimum total technical score in Short Program and Free Skating in order to compete at the European Championships. All four reigning European Champions are back and hope to defend their title.

### **Alina Zagitova (RUS) tops Ladies Short Program**

[Alina Zagitova](#) of Russia took the lead in the Ladies Short Program as the ISU European Figure Skating Championships opened Wednesday in Minsk (BLR). Teammate [Sofia Samodurova](#) sits in second and Switzerland's [Alexia Paganini](#) follows in third.

Zagitova opened her performance to "The Phantom of the Opera" with a triple Lutz-triple loop combination, but underrotated the loop. The Olympic Champion went on to produce a double Axel, triple flip and level-four spins and footwork to score 75.00 points. "I was very focused and I held back my emotions and I will do that until the free skating. There were a few small errors. I need to be confident in myself," the European Champion noted. "I'm like – if something doesn't go so well, I'll start the new year fresh and I leave everything that was bad behind in the old year. That's what I did. I only take the good things with me," she went on referring to finishing fifth at Russian Nationals last month.

Samodurova's routine to the Flamenco "Nyah" featured a triple flip-triple toeloop combination, triple loop, double Axel as well as difficult spins and steps. The ISU Grand Prix Finalist set a new personal best with 72.88 points. "Today I showed everything I've been working for in my training. It is a little unexpected for me to come third in the short program in my debut at Europeans," the 16-year-old said. "I never think about placements, so I'll just remain focused on myself for the free skating," she added.

Skating to "Yo Soy Maria" by Astor Piazzolla, Paganini completed a triple Lutz-triple toeloop combination, triple loop and double Axel, but lost a few points on her combination spin. The Swiss Champion posted a new personal best with 65.64 points. "There's definitely little things, like in the transitions and spins. I know they could have been faster," Paganini said. "I'll probably try to distract myself for a little bit tomorrow, because I think if I stay focused all the time I might be a little tired mentally by the time the long comes around," the 17-year-old continued.

[Viveca Lindfors](#) (FIN) is just 0.03 points behind in fourth place on 65.61 points with a solid performance, but she wobbled on the triple flip. [Nicole Rajicova](#) (SVK) is currently ranked fifth on 64.08 points while [Laurine Lecavelier](#) (FRA) came sixth on 63.29 points.

### **Vanessa James/Morgan Cipres (FRA) grab lead in Pairs Short Program**

France's [Vanessa James/Morgan Cipres](#) grabbed a lead of almost three points over defending European Champions [Evgenia Tarasova/Vladimir Morozov](#) of Russia as the ISU European Figure Skating Championships continued Wednesday with the Pairs Short Program in Minsk (BLR). Italians [Nicole Della Monica/Matteo Guarise](#) are sitting in third heading into the Free Skating on Thursday.

Skating to "Uninvited" by Alanis Morissette, James/Cipres produced a triple twist, side by side triple toeloop and throw triple flip as well as a level-four lift. However, the side by side spin, the death spiral and the footwork were rated a level three. The ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final Champions picked up a personal best score of 76.55 points. "We've had a few errors in our short program in the middle of the season so we had to go back and rethink what was missing and what to make better. We needed speed going from the twist to the toeloop and from the flip, and today was the first time we found it. We weren't sure how it was going to be seeing as we hadn't performed it in competition but we are very proud and happy to have made these changes," James told the post-event press conference.

Tarasova/Morozov opened their routine to "Piano Concerto No. 2" by Sergei Rachmaninov with a big triple twist, but then Tarasova landed forward on the triple toe that was downgraded. The World silver medalists recovered to land a throw triple loop, level-four spin, lift and step sequence to score 73.90 points. "My mistake (on the triple toeloop) hasn't anything to do with our preparation – our training was good and we wanted to skate well and clean but I made this mistake. It was a bad mistake and after that we couldn't really show the full set of emotions that we would have felt with a clean skate," Tarasova commented. "Returning to last year's short program was a shared choice and the reason for it was we felt the program was more powerful to skate – we really liked it more compared to the one from the start of this season, so that's why we made the choice," she added.

Della Monica/Guarise hit a side by side triple Salchow, triple twist and throw triple loop in their performance to "Never Tear Us Apart". The ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Finalists earned 73.70 points, which is a new personal best. "We are very happy about our performance today. We were ready - we *are* ready for this competition, and we did what we were ready to from our practice at home - nothing special and nothing more. Tomorrow will be the same, we feel very confident because we have been practicing a lot," Della Monica said.

[Aleksandra Boikova/Dmitri Kozlovskii](#) (RUS) placed fourth with strong performance to "Dark Eyes" and with a personal best of 72.58 points. 2018 World Junior Champions [Daria Pavliuchenko/Denis Khodykin](#) (RUS) are sitting in fifth after she touched down with both hands on the throw triple flip (65.89 points). [Minerva Fabienne Hase/Nolan Seegert](#) (GER) came sixth on 60.08 points.

The competition continues Thursday with the Men's Short Program and Pairs Free Skating. For more information, full entry lists and results please see: [www.isu.org](http://www.isu.org) and the [official event website](#). Follow the discussion on social media using #EuroFigure and #FigureSkating.

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