

April 11, 2019

Fukuoka, JPN

USA grabs Day One lead at World Team Trophy

Team USA skated to the lead as the sixth edition of the ISU World Team Trophy in Figure Skating kicked off Thursday in Fukuoka, Japan, with the Rhythm Dance and Ladies' and Men's Short Programs. The ISU World Team Trophy is a biennial event that started in 2009. Team USA has won the Team Trophy three times (in 2015, 2013 and 2009) while Team Japan struck gold in 2017 and 2012.

Chen and Zhou help USA grab lead at World Team Trophy

Team USA took the lead over Japan and Russia after the ISU World Team Trophy opened Thursday in Fukuoka. Team USA collected 50 points on Day One while Japan has 48 points and Russia picked up 38 points.

Team USA stood in third heading into the final event, the Men's Short Program, which turned out to be their strongest discipline. Two-time and reigning World Champion [Nathan Chen](#) and 2019 World bronze medalist [Vincent Zhou](#) came first and second respectively to push their team into first place by earning 12 and 11 team points. Chen nailed a triple Axel, quad toe and a triple Lutz-triple toeloop in his performance to "Caravan" (101.95 points).

Zhou's performance included a quad Lutz-triple toe and a quad Salchow (100.51 points, a season's best). 2019 World Ice Dance bronze medalists [Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue](#) scored 10 points for their team by placing third in the Rhythm Dance. [Bradie Tennell](#) and [Mariah Bell](#) were solid in fourth and fifth place in the Ladies' Short Program to earn nine and eight points respectively.

"This is my first time at a team event and what a great way to start," team captain Madison Hubbell said. "Team USA had all very strong performances. We have a team of Olympic (team) members, National Champions, World medalists, all World (team) members. We knew we were strong going in and we wanted to fight together as a team and to show how strong we are."

Japan's ISU Grand Prix Final Champion [Rika Kihira](#) delivered an excellent Short Program to "Clair de Lune" that featured a triple Axel and triple flip-triple toeloop combination. The 2019 Four Continents Champion scored 83.97 points for her performance and 12 points for her team. Japanese Champion [Kaori Sakamoto](#) came third with a flawless performance and a season's best of 76.95 points to add 10 points to the team score. 2019 Four Continents Champion [Shoma Uno](#) finished third in the Men's Short Program after struggling with the landing of his quadruple jumps (92.78 points/10 team points). [Keiji Tanaka](#) came fourth with a season's best of 89.05 points (9 team points). Ice Dancers [Misato Komatsubara/Tim Koleto](#) placed sixth in the Rhythm Dance (7 team points).

"Coming into the team event for the first time, I knew everybody in our team is very talented and there was one great performance after the other," Japan team captain Misato Komatsubara said. "Personally, even though we (she and partner Tim Koleto) gave our best, we still were in last place, but I think it is a stepping stone for tomorrow."

Russia led after the Ladies, but then fell behind Japan and the USA in the Men's Short Program. World Ice Dance silver medalists [Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov](#) gave Russia 11 points by coming second in the Rhythm Dance to Astor Piazzolla's "Verano Porteno". They collected a level four for all elements to set a new season's best score of 84.57 points. 2018 ISU Grand Prix Final bronze medalist [Elizaveta Tuktamysheva](#) landed a triple Axel in her routine to "Assassin's Tango" and added 11 points to the team score by placing second in the Ladies' Short Program (80.54 points). 2019 European Champion [Sofia Samodurova](#) ranked sixth with another clean program, picking up seven points for her team. [Andrei Lazukin](#) came fifth with a solid skate in the Men's Short Program (8 team points) while 2019 European silver medalist [Alexander Samarin](#) missed two jumps to finish in 12th place (1 team point).

"It was a good day for Russia," team captain Katsalapov said. "I am very happy for Lisa Tuktamysheva to come back on to the ice and put out that kind of strong performance and also Andrei Lazukin did a great job. Victoria and I are also pleased with our own performance. Each team member tried to stay in shape for this competition."

Team France finished the day in fourth place on 27 points. 2019 World Ice Dance Champions [Gabiella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron](#) won the Rhythm Dance for France with another great performance of their subtle Tango program (87.31 points/12 team points).

Team Canada stands in fifth place after Day One with 26 points. Multiple World Ice Dance medalists [Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje](#) achieved the best result for their team by ranking fifth in the Rhythm Dance (8 team points).

Team Italy is currently ranked sixth on 24 points. Their highest scoring skaters were European Ice Dance bronze medalists [Charlene Guignard/Marco Fabbri](#), who placed fourth in the Rhythm Dance.

The ISU World Team Trophy in Figure Skating continues Friday with the Pairs Short Program, Free Dance and Men's Free Skating. For more information, full entry lists and results please see the [ISU event website](#) and TV Asahi's [official website](#). Follow the discussion on social media by using the hashtags #figureskating and #WTTFigure.

Figure skating fans can watch the event on the following channels: [NBC Gold](#) in the USA, [TV Asahi](#) in Japan, [Channel One](#) in Russia and [ISU Skating Channel](#) for the rest of the world.