

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2017

Free Dance

The ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2017 continued in Helsinki, Finland, on Saturday with the Free Dance.

Tessa Virtue/Scott Moir (CAN) take third World title after two-year break

Canada's Tessa Virtue/Scott Moir (CAN) returned in style on the World Championship stage to take their third World title with a new highest total score. Two-time World Champions Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron won the Free Dance with a new record score, but remained in second to earn the silver medal while Maia Shibutani/Alex Shibutani (USA) pulled up from fourth to clinch the bronze.

Virtue/Moir opened their dance to "Pilgrims On A Long Journey" and "Latch" with a spectacular stationary lift that drew +3 GOES from all nine judges and followed up with fast twizzles. The crowd gasped when Moir suddenly stumbled at the end of the circular step sequence, but the 2010 Olympic Champions recovered instantly and continued strongly with a rotational lift, spin and diagonal footwork that were rated a level four as was the straight line lift. The 2014 Olympic silver medalists picked up 116.19 points and were ranked second in the Free Dance but overall held on to first place at 198.62 points, edging their French rivals by 2.58 points. The Canadians improved on their previous record score set at the Grand Prix Final in December. "To hear World Champions after our names is a really special thing particularly in 2017. When we set out on this comeback we weren't really sure what to expect results-wise and it's really satisfying to get that affirmation that all of our hard work has paid off. This is a great start and we're looking forward to building on it", Virtue said. "I was actually less nervous than I was yesterday. We were really excited today. This program we've been training really hard and it's been really strong for us and we wanted to go out and enjoy it. There were a couple of little bobbles so it was a little bit harder than usual but we still love that program", added Moir.

Papadakis/Cizeron dance to "Stillness", "Oddudua" and "Happiness Does Not Wait" included beautiful lifts, twizzles and intricate yet effortless looking footwork. The three-time European Champions seemed to float over the ice and drew the audience in the sold out Hartwall Arena into their performance. Like Virtue/Moir, the French collected a level four for their lifts, spin, twizzles and the diagonal step sequence, but earned a little bit more +3 GOEs. They scored 119.15 points, surpassing their own record score of 118.17 set a year ago at the World Championships. Overall their score added up to 196.04 points. "This was one of the best free dances of our career and we got our best score ever, I believe it is a world record. We are very proud. This is a nice personal victory for us", Cizeron shared. "Yesterday we were disappointed with our short dance, but today we woke up and we told ourselves that it is all about the free dance. We forgot about it (short dance) and we just wanted to go out and perform our free dance and enjoy the competition. We feel we have progressed and today it was an amazing performance and experience", Papadakis said.

Shibutani/Shibutani produced a strong performance of their program "Evolution" as well, completing five level-four elements. The brother-and-sister-team lost one point for an extended lift and was fourth in the Free Dance with 110.30 points, but overall moved up to third at 198.62 points. "We are very proud of our skating this entire week. This has been such a strong season for us", Maia Shibutani commented. "This whole season has been a transformative year for us. We have taken steps to grow in a number of ways, it was about us skating together and to make sure what we

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did the programs justice. The result this week is definitely encouraging and energizing”, her brother added.

The standings shuffled quite a bit. Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje (CAN) moved up from sixth with a dance to “Concierto de Aranjuez” (184.81 points), less than a point off the podium. Ekaterina Bobrova/Dmitri Soloviev (RUS) were third in the Free Dance and pulled up from eighth to fifth at 184.06 points. Anna Cappellini/Luca Lanotte (ITA) finished sixth (183.73 points) while Madison Chock/Evan Bates (USA) slipped from fourth to seventh after he made an error on the twizzles (182.04 points). Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue (USA) plummeted from third to ninth after he fell on the twizzles (177.70 points).

The ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2017 conclude Sunday with the Exhibition Gala. For more information and full results please see: www.isu.org and the official event website <http://www.helsinki2017.com/> #WorldFigure and #helsinki2017

The ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2018 will be held in Milan, Italy.