

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: CHEMIN DE PRIMEROSE 2 - CH 1007 LAUSANNE - SWITZERLAND
TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66 TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 7 E-MAIL: info@isu.ch

Event 2 (of 6)

For immediate release: October 24, 2009

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating: Rostelecom Cup Day Two

The Rostelecom Cup continued Saturday with the Free Dance, the Ladies, Men's and Pairs Free Skating. The Rostelecom Cup is the second of six events in the 2009/2010 ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating series. The skaters compete for a global prize money of US \$ 180, 000 per individual event of the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating and receive points according to their placements. The top six skaters/couples in each discipline advance to the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Tokyo, Japan, in December.

Men, Free Skating

Evgeni Plushenko of Russia started his comeback with a convincing win at the Rostelecom Cup. Japan's Takahiko Kozuka took the silver medal and Artem Borodulin of Russia captured the bronze.

Overnight leader Plushenko skated last. Dressed in black, he performed to "Tango Amore" by Edvin Marton and oozed confidence from the first seconds of his program. The reigning Olympic Champion reeled off a quadruple-triple toeloop combination, a triple Axel, a triple Axel-double toeloop, a triple loop, Flip, double Axel as well as a triple Lutz and triple Salchow in his dynamic program. The 26-year-old was awarded a level four for the change foot sit spin and the combination spin while the flying sit spin and the footwork sequences were graded a level three. Plushenko picked up 158.40 points (81.15 element score/76.80 program component score) and racked up a total score of 240.65 points to win his first international competition in three and a half years. He had retired from competitive skating following the 2006 Olympic Winter Games. "Today, I just had to show everything and I had to be attentive as I yesterday missed the Lutz. Today, I took each element at a time", Plushenko explained. "I actually have two quads in my program, but today I decided to do just one, because I wanted to skate a clean program for my confidence, for the audience and for the judges."

Skating to a Guitar Concerto by Michael Kamen, Kozuka went for the quadruple toeloop as well, but underrotated and stumbled. The Four Continents bronze medalist recovered to land a triple Axel-triple toe (but the second jump was cheated and downgraded), a triple Lutz-double toe-double loop, another triple Axel as well as three more triples, but he stepped out of a triple flip towards the end of the routine. Like Plushenko, he picked up a level four for two spins and a level three for the footwork and earned 139.63 points (70.43/69.20) which added up to 215.13 points. "Except for the quad, I did everything as planned in my free program. The quad toe worked in practice better than in competition today, but everything else was good", Kozuka commented.

Borodulin delivered a solid performance of his Tango program that included a triple Axel-triple toeloop, a triple Lutz-double toe-double loop as well as four other triples, but he fell on his second triple Axel attempt. He scored a new personal best of 129.48 points (64.98/65.50) and moved up from fourth to third at 201.55 points. He won the first Grand Prix medal of his career. "My short program was great and today I just made one error on one jump, but overall I fought until the very end and skated like I do in practice", a very happy Borodulin said.

Johnny Weir (USA) doubled both planned triple Axels and a loop to slip from third to fourth at 198.55 points. He threw in another triple Axel as his last jump at the end but stumbled out of it. Kevin van der Perren (BEL) landed seven clean triples and moved up from seventh to fifth (189.33 points).

Plushenko got 15 points from his win but is currently not scheduled for another Grand Prix event. Kozuka picked up 13 points while Borodulin received 11. Both will compete again at the NHK Trophy in Japan.

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Pairs, Free Skating

Qing Pang/Jian Tong of China took the gold in the Pairs event with Russia's Yuko Kavaguti/Alexander Smirnov and Keauna McLaughlin/Rockne Brubaker (USA) finishing second and third.

Pang/Tong put out a powerful performance to "Impossible Dream" by Joe Hisaishi that was highlighted by a double Axel-double Axel sequence, a high triple twist, a triple throw loop and Salchow. The 2006 World Champions completed difficult lifts and got a level four for their side by side spin and pair combination spin. The only error came when she doubled the side by side toeloop. The reigning Four Continents Champions received 125.93 points (63.05 element score/62.88 program component score) and totaled 191.33 points. "Today's performance was ok, there some errors, but this is our first competition and so we are still very pleased with what we did today", commented Tong.

Kavaguti/Smirnov skated to "Sentimental Waltz" by Peter Tchaikovski and the cheerful "On the Blue Danube" Waltz by Johann Strauss. They opened with a throw triple Salchow followed by a triple toe-double toe sequence, but Kavaguti put her hand down on the first jump. There was no further error, and the current World bronze medalists produced a triple twist, throw triple loop and double Axel as well as three level-four lifts to score 118.52 points (59.08/59.44). They remained in second place at 180.14 points. "This was like a test for us, it was our first competition and we didn't do everything, which is upsetting. We have a lot to work on and we will work on it. It is a good motivation for us to work harder", Smirnov said. He added that they plan to include the throw quadruple Salchow in their next event.

McLaughlin/Brubaker struggled with some elements – she fell on the triple Salchow and underrotated the double Axel and also missed the throw triple loop, but the U.S. Champions got a level for four for their spins and the spiral sequence and also hit the triple twist. They were ranked fifth in the Free Skating with 99.21 points (49.97/50.24), but held on to third place with 160.55 points. "We had a rough skate", admitted McLaughlin. "I am definitely disappointed in myself. Thankfully my partner was there for me and he was stable and I could count on him."

Vera Bazarova/Yuri Larionov (RUS) came in fourth. They landed a triple twist and showed good spins and spirals, but Bazarova cheated the triple toe and a double Axel. She also two-footed to throw jumps (156.28 points). Nicole Della Monica/Yannick Kocon (ITA) were ranked fifth. They produced a side by side triple Salchow-double toeloop combination as well as a throw triple Salchow, but doubled the throw flip (150.86 points).

Pang/Tong have 15 points and are scheduled to compete at the NHK Trophy next. Kavaguti/Smirnov (13 points) also will compete in Japan, while McLaughlin/Brubaker (11 points) have been selected for Skate America.

Ice Dance, Free Dance

Meryl Davis/Charlie White (USA) cruised to victory in the ice dance event. Italy's Anna Cappellini/Luca Lanotte earned the silver medal and the bronze went to Ekaterina Rubleva/Ivan Shefer of Russia.

Davis/White gave an energetic performance of their "Phantom of the Opera" routine that included a straight line-rotational lift with many changes of position and a straight line lift with him skating backwards on one foot while she balanced on his stretched leg. The reigning Four Continents Champions produced smooth footwork that was graded a level three. The lifts and the combination spin as well as the fast twizzles all received a level four from the Technical Panel. Davis/White collected 101.02 points (49.90 element score/51.12 program component score) for their Free Dance which added up to 201.10 points overall. The gold medal was an extra present for White, who celebrated his 22nd birthday today. "I think in general we were just a little bit more confident with our program at this point. Obviously it's still early in the season and we

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have a long way to go”, Davis told the press. “I think in the last couple of weeks since Oberstdorf (Nebelhorn Trophy) we’ve made some big improvements and we plan on continuing to do so.”

Cappellini/Lanotte chose “Addiction” as their theme to the haunting soundtrack from “Requiem for a Dream”. The Italians completed a level-four combination spin and a straight line lift in a low position with him skating on one foot as well as rotational lift. However, the circular footwork was graded a level two and the diagonal step sequence was a level one. Cappellini/Lanotte scored 83.26 points (41.60/41.66) and took silver with 168.57 points overall. “We are very happy with our work over the summer and today’s performance, but we definitely have to work a lot on our levels”, Lanotte noted. “Our program has a lot of potential, but it is still in an early stage”, Cappellini added.

Rubleva/Shefer gave a soft and fluid performance to the French chanson “Vie d’Amour” that featured a one-armed rotational lift, well synchronized twizzles and a level-three circular step sequence. The Muscovites got a new seasons best of 82.07 points (43.60/38.47) and won their first Grand Prix medal with 163.32 points overall. “We have a lot of positive emotions. Today we did our very best and we won our first medal in the senior Grand Prix”, Shefer commented. “It is harder to skate at home, because we felt a big responsibility, especially since we were the top ranked Russian team”, explained Rubleva. The 2009 World Champions Oksana Domnina/Maxim Shabalin (RUS) had withdrawn prior to the event due to injury.

Vanessa Crone/Paul Poirier came in 4th with a dance that tells the story of “Orpheus and Eurydice”. They scored 157.00 points overall. Anastasia Platonova/Alexander Grachev finished fifth with a romantic performance to “Fantasie in d minor” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (153.22 points).

Davis/White pocketed 15 points and are headed to the NHK Trophy for their next event. Cappellini/Lanotte (13 points) will compete at Skate America. Rubleva/Shefer got 11 points in Moscow and 18 overall after their two events.

Ladies, Free Skating

Miki Ando of Japan claimed the gold in the Ladies competition. Ashley Wagner (USA) surged from fifth to second while Russia’s Alena Leonova moved up from fourth to take the bronze medal.

Ando hit a triple Lutz-double loop combination, a triple loop, Salchow, another triple Lutz, a triple toe-double loop combination and a double Axel in her “Cleopatra” routine. The 2007 World Champion picked up a level four for her flying combination spin and a level three for the other two spins as well as for the straight line step sequence. However, she went down on the back end of the double Axel-triple toeloop combination. The toeloop was downgraded. Ando earned 114.75 points (58.23 element score/57.52 program component score) and pulled up from third to first place. “I’m very happy about my result but not so happy with my skating”, said Ando. “I missed a jump and I didn’t have enough speed again in my long program. But I see what I have to work on for my next competition.”

Wagner turned in a solid performance to “Polovetsian Dances” by Alexander Borodin and landed a triple flip-double toeloop combination, a triple loop, Salchow and triple Lutz, just the second triple flip was cheated and downgraded. The current World Junior bronze medalist scored 108.81 points (54.81/54.00) and took the second Grand Prix medal of her career with 163.97 points. Wagner had won the bronze medal at the Trophée Eric Bompard in 2007. “For this competition, my coach (Priscilla Hill) and I planned to come in skating strong and we would see what happened from there. The short program I wanted to skate clean and get all my levels. I skated clean, but I didn’t get all my levels. I have some work for NHK. I have a jump that I need to clean up. The quality could be a little bit better and also some levels. Other than that I’m very pleased with my program”, Wagner commented.

Leonova earned the first Grand Prix medal of her career with a cheerful performance to “Chicago”. The reigning World Junior Champion fell on her opening triple toeloop that was planned as a triple toe-triple toe combination, but recovered to land a triple Lutz-double toe, a triple Salchow-double toe-double loop and a

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triple flip-double toe combination, but she doubled the loop and two-footed the solo triple flip. The Russian was awarded a level four for the flying combination spin and a level three for the flying sit and the combination spin. Leonova picked up 103.28 points (50.56/52.72) and moved up from spot with 160.06 points. "I'm still in shock and can't believe that I'm here at this press conference, but since I'm here it means I am on the podium", Leonova smiled. "I knew it was possible for me to medal, but I didn't really expect it. Not everything worked out a 100 percent yet, especially the beginning of my program was tough", she continued.

Alissa Czisny (USA) dropped from second to fourth after three triple jumps were downgraded, but once again she excelled in her spins (158.30 points). 2008 World Champion Mao Asada (JPN) fell on her opening triple Axel attempt (downgraded) and popped the second Axel. She moved up from sixth to fifth (150.28 points). Overnight leader Julia Sebestyen (HUN) faded to sixth after stumbling on several jumps (148.50 points).

All three Ladies medalists will compete against each other in two weeks at the NHK Trophy in Japan. Ando now has 15 points, Wagner 13 and Leonova 11.

For full results please refer to www.isu.org. The Rostelecom Cup concludes Sunday with the Exhibition Gala. The ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating continues next week with the Cup of China in Beijing.

For further information please contact:

ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating & Final
Devra Pitt-Getaz, ISU Media Coordinator
+41 21 612 66 66
email: pitt@isu.ch

Rostelecom Cup
Nikolai Dolgoplov, Press Officer
+7 495 921 09 25 (press room)
email: presscenter-sport@yandex.ru