1. http://www.goldenskate.com/2015/12/yuzuru-hanyu-4/

**Hanyu wants performances that stay in hearts**

The past few weeks have been very “meaningful” and “satisfying” for Japan’s Yuzuru Hanyu, who has won nearly every competition this season. Thus far, he has broken a total of ten world records.

During the last week of November, the current Olympic champion demolished the world records of both the short and long programs with two close-to-perfect performances at 2015 NHK Trophy. Two weeks later, he not only replicated the success, but further improved the quality of execution at the 2015-16 ISU Grand Prix Final (GPF) in Barcelona, Spain. As a result, he again bettered the world record scores and brought home his third consecutive GPF gold medal.

Looking at the extraterrestrial scores he has recently produced, it is hard to believe that only a month ago the three-time GPF winner finished only sixth in short program segment at Skate Canada due to two invalid jumping passes which had no credit at all. However, that humble experience turned into the catalyst for the greater performances afterwards.

“I knew that after Skate Canada we had to make a change,” said coach Brian Orser. “My change was a little bit more conservative, and his change was more ambitious.”

The ambitious change was to upgrade the solo quadruple jump from a quad toe to a quad Salchow, and then upgrade the first jump of the combination from a triple Lutz to a quad toe.

“By doing this, we can avoid what happened at Skate Canada,” Orser explained.

“I just told Brian that ‘I would do it,” recalled Hanyu. “I thought by the time of Pyeongchang Olympics, you cannot win without a short program that consists of two quads with difficult entries and exits—plus excellent footwork, spins and presentation. As the reigning Olympic champion, I want to be absolutely dominant.”

Despite the fact that it was the first time for Hanyu to do a quad toe–triple toe combination in competition, as well as the first time he put a quad Salchow in the short, Hanyu has been extremely consistent with both—hardly missing any in either competitions or in official practices.

The three-time Japanese national champion revealed the reason.

“A few years ago, when I was skating to “Étude in D-sharp minor” (by Alexander Scriabin), I had practiced the quad toe-triple toe from a counter entry. Moreover, I have been practicing this combination during my free skate’s run-through, so it is not a new trick for me.”

As for the quad Salchow, which used to be his nemesis jump, his efforts in the past three years spent on the jump have not been wasted.

“I believe in what I have done,” said the 2014 World champion. “I have been finding the way to bring the result from training into actual competition. Now I can take the challenge.”

The change was not only on the jumping passes, but on almost every element and transition.

“I feel like it became a completely different program,” said the 21-year-old. “All the transitions, as well as some detailed presentation, were changed. I had been really pushing myself in training like never before during the past month.”

After training hard for a month, Yuzuru was surprised at how good the new program improved. However, after the new record score of 110.95 points achieved with this renewed short program in Barcelona, the skater felt extra pressure heading into the free skate despite a huge advantage.

“The pressure of delivering another clean performance became even stronger, because after the short, I realized that now it is not about winning,” he said. “I felt I was chased by my own world record and I must break it.”

The skater from Sendai, Japan, started his free skate under the anxiety coming from his world record, as well as his teammate Javier Fernandez’s performance (201.43 points). However, Hanyu beautifully cleared one element after another, earning many level fours and positive grades of execution (GOE) along the way. He earned 219.48 for the long and 330.43 overall to blow away the competition, as well as achieving two new historical records.

“I suddenly felt released,” he recalled. “I was really nervous because after what I produced at NHK Trophy, I felt obliged to do it again. I realized all I could do was to do the best I could do at that moment, so I re-focused on doing my program. The supportive audience really helped me too.”

The “release” was also connected to the fact that the young champion did not have his best skates in the last Olympics.

“I definitely felt like this is ‘revenge’ to what happened in Sochi,” explained the Hanyu. “I think I was able to clear the regrets I left in Sochi, but I also believe there will be another time that I will feel regrettable again. I will bring these regrets with me on my way to the next Olympics.”

Hanyu once made a comment (after NHK Trophy) that he wanted to be an “absolute majesty” in men’s figure skating. In his mind, that means that he should not be influenced by external factors and nerves.

“It is true that I want to always be number one and I want to always give performances that I am satisfied with, but I must not let the pressure have the upper hand of me.”

The multiple world record holder also made it clear that what he tries to achieve in skating is not just about the scores.

“It is a sport that people tend to pay great attention to the scores and get really excited when a world record is refreshed,” Hanyu acknowledged, “but I think the most important thing is how you can push your limits and bring out the best performance you can.”

“People may think my scores are wonderful, but I feel more motivated when I hear people say they like my performance and they want to watch it again,” he continued. “In order to impress and move the audience, I want to continue to train hard, to make sure my jumps are consistent and the overall program is a complete package. I want to give the kind of performances that stay in their hearts.”

Moving forward in the Olympic cycle, Hanyu aims to defend his title in 2018 and plans to up the ante.

“I see the future of figure skating in Boyang Jin, who can do multiple quads with high quality and deliver wonderful performances,” Hanyu pointed out. “I don’t know how many quads will be necessary when we look into Pyeongchang, but I want to work on more difficult and higher quality quads.”

For example, the skater wanted to add the quad loop he had been practicing for at least two years into his program this season, however, the landing is not yet ideal or consistent.

“I need to pay attention to my physical condition too,” Hanyu pointed out. “The extremely hard training after Skate Canada and what I achieved at the NHK Trophy made me realize that the body is everything.”

While Hanyu plans to increase the level of his layout difficulty, he doesn’t feel that now is that time for that.

“In order to always be able to perform the best I can, despite I may face negative factors like pressure, if my body is on the positive side, I can manage to deliver,” he said. “Therefore, for now, the first thing I should do is to take care of my body and make sure I have control of my physical condition.”

The three-time Japanese champion will be in Sapporo, Japan, this week defending his national title. The skater admits that based on past experience, his “peaking” tends to calm down a bit during nationals, but as usual, he will give the best performances he can.

1. http://www.skatetoday.com/2015/02/08/europeans-russian-ladies-sweep-podium/

**EUROPEANS: RUSSIAN LADIES SWEEP PODIUM**

**Elizaveta Tuktamysheva** skated her seven clean triples in and out of the haunting Middle Eastern sounds of “Batwannis Beek + “Sandstorm”.  She guided the audience on a magic carpet ride through intricate choreography like a weaver of fine threads. The audience exploded with appreciation as she took her final pose.

**(On her range of emotion)** “We have worked with that a lot throughout the season. I want to show different emotions so it doesn’t get boring for the judges or spectators’” she laughed.

**(On three Russian ladies on the podium)** “It is amazing!  We have already discussed it amongst ourselves, and we are all very pleased and hope to repeat it at World Championships,” said the gold medalist.

**(On the future of her triple Axel)**“It’s a very complicated jump emotionally, mentally, and physically. Since the start of the year it has become more consistent. I just need to keep practicing it under competitive conditions to make it ready for competition, and then I can include it in my program.”

Rachmaninov Piano Concertosplayed in the background as**Elena Radionova**circled the ice gathering technical points with one element after the other. Her opening difficult combinations – 2Lz+3T – 3Lo+2T – 3Lo+1Lo+3S – earned 30.70 points. She completed seven clean triples and the three spins were Level4.

“Today I was very happy with my performance. It was my debut at European Championships.  It was very successful; I skated ideally in both programs so I’m happy with everything,” smiled the sixteen-year old.

(**On her choice of music for the SP**) “We watched a video where Jennifer Lopez was dancing with a Spanish dancer called Cortes, so we got the idea to do a Spanish dance to Jennifer Lopez. This is the first year we can skate to music with lyrics, and I thought it was a good idea. I liked it right away. It’s original and fun to skate to.”

**Anna Pogorilaya’s**bright red costume signaled the**Firebird Ballet Suite**music to begin as she opened the program with a 3Lz+3T and 3Lo+1Lo+3S that earned 21.30 points.  She completed another combination – 3Lo+2T, but struggled with the solo triple Flip and Lutz.

**(On her performance)**“The beginning was good, but then maybe I was tired and didn’t pull myself together enough, but I had mixed success.”

(**On matching her music to her skating style**) “I don’t know whether I have found my style yet. When you hear music, you know immediately the right one for you. When I heard the “Mermaids” music (FP 2013-14) I loved it straight away. When my coach said it was from ***Pirates of the Caribbean***I loved it even more.”

**Joshi Helgesson**used ***Snow White and the Huntsmen***for her free program skated before an enthusiastic home country audience. Her opening 3Lz+2T and 3T were done with ease and perfection. Unfortunately, she struggled with the ensuing jump passes, while completing only three clean triples. Her four spins were Level4.

“It feels unbelievable; I could never expect to skate like this. I think I could hear all my friends screaming while I was skating,” smiled Helegesson.

**Viktoria Helgesson,**the older of the Swedish skating sisters, chose the***Sunset Boulevard***soundtrack for her free program**.**The spins and step sequence were Level4. The only clean triples were an opening 3Lo+2A+SEQ and a solo 3Lo. She had a fall on the 3T.

“I’m really happy with how it went. Just my leg ‘died’ after my fall, and it was a bit hard to breathe. That’s why I had some problems in the end,” said the older sister.

1. http://www.goldenskate.com/2015/12/ekaterina-borisova-and-dmitry-sopot/

**Borisova and Sopot: ‘We did not expect so much’**

Russia’s Ekaterina Borisova and Dmitry Sopot, who are making their Junior Grand Prix (JGP) debut this season, easily captured the pairs title at the 2015-16 ISU Junior Grand Prix of Final of Figure Skating in Barcelona, Spain, this Saturday.

“We’re thrilled, I have no words,” said Borisova. “We’ve worked a lot and this is the result!”

The team, who is coached by Pavel Sliusarenko and Valentina Tiukova, took bronze at JGP Latvia and gold at JGP Poland earlier this season.

In Barcelona, the skaters from Perm, Russia, delivered a solid short program to Ninija by Maxime Rodriguez which featured a triple twist, side by side double Axels, and throw triple Salchow. Their lift and their pair combination spin merited a level four, and they set a new personal best of 60.29 points with teammates Amina Atakhanova and Ilia Spiridonov trailing close behind.

“This is exactly what we hoped for and what we aimed for,” said Sopot, 17. “Katia has had some problems with her jumps, but this was the best skate we have had.”

The team also gave a strong performance to music from the *Lawrence of Arabia* soundtrack for their free skate, earning another personal best of 111.57 points.

The routine featured the only level three triple twist, a throw triple loop and Salchow, and level-four lifts and spins. The only error came when Sopot put his hand down on the side by side double Axels. Nevertheless, the pairs team accumulated 171.86 to set a third personal best and won the title overall with over nine points to spare.

 “Now we’ll just have to add a triple jump or even two,” Borisova commented. “I also see that we didn’t get a level four for everything, so we can improve on that.”

The 16-year-old also felt that their performance rated a “four out of five” and that they could still improve.

“I think we did about 90 percent of what we can do, so we are happy with the result and with our placement and performance,” she added. “We probably did not expect so much from our first international competitive season.”

In fact, they really didn’t know what to expect, but they felt they had worked well in practice and that the results showed it.

The skaters also have a good relationship with their teammates.

“Although we are competitors on the ice, we are very good friends,” said Borisova. “Especially Amina (Atakhanova) and me. It is not like we are enemies and not talking to each other…we get on well.”

The young skaters enjoyed watching the senior pairs competition and were especially impressed with the quad throws and twists.

“I watched and thought, ‘Wow! How do you do that?'” said Borisova. “To be honest, I am scared to do a quad throw.”

1. http://www.goldenskate.com/2015/12/polina-tsurskaya/

**Polina Tsurskaya flawless in Barcelona**

Russia’s Polina Tsurskaya, who made her international debut in August 2015 at the Junior Grand Prix (JGP) in Bratislava, Slovakia, won the title at the 2015-16 JGP Final in Barcelona, Spain, this past Saturday.

The 14-year-old won both the short and long program with more than 10 points overall (195.28) to spare in her first major ISU championship event. While the teen is not age-eligible for the European or World Figure Skating Championships, she is hoping she will make the Junior World team.

“I’ll go to Junior Nationals and I have to skate clean there and finish first so I can qualify for Junior Worlds and the Youth Olympic Games,” she acknowledged.

In Barcelona, the 2015 JGP Bratislava champion delivered a flawless short program to Albinoni’s “Adagio in G minor” which featured a triple Lutz-triple toe, triple flip and double Axel. She earned a level four on two of her spins, as well as her straight line footwork, and posted a new personal best of 66.69 points.

“I did everything clean, but I could have had a few more pluses on my elements,” critiqued Tsurskaya. “I felt very confident in my performance and it was the best of the season so far. Technically, I could compete with (the senior Ladies), but my second mark is not as good yet and my skating is still junior-ish.”

The Muscovite, who is coached by Eteri Tutberidze and Sergei Dudakov, also delivered a solid long program to “Chess” which featured seven triple jumps—including a triple Lutz-triple toe-double toe and triple Lutz-triple toe combination. Once again, two of her spins and her footwork was graded a level four, and she earned another personal best of 128.59 points.

With an overall score of 195.28—another personal best, the young skater was the clear winner in this event.

“I was a little nervous before the free skating, because I was in first place after the short program and I needed to skate clean,” Tsurskaya admitted. “The other girls are very strong, so I was focused on each element and I tried to execute them as ideally as possible.”

Tsurskaya realizes she lacks the power, speed, and confidence of the senior ladies, and that it will all come with time and years of training.

1. http://www.goldenskate.com/2016/01/ksenia-stolbova-fedor-klimov-3/

**Stolbova and Klimov hope for strong return at Europeans**

When Russia’s Ksenia Stolbova and Fedor Klimov had a rough start into the season finishing fourth at Skate America with sub-par performances, quite a few people wrote them off—especially given they had a few post-Olympic season ups and downs as well.

The team rebounded at their second Grand Prix in Moscow, Russia, where they defended their Rostelecom Cup title and earned the fourth of seven spots at the 2015-16 ISU Grand Prix Final in Barcelona, Spain, thus proving that they are back on track and even better than ever before.

The Olympic silver medalists won the Grand Prix Final with two clean skates with nearly 13 points to spare ahead of reigning World Champions Meagan Duhamel and Eric Radford of Canada.

“This result is a turning point for us,” said 25-year-old Klimov. “Finally we were able to skate our long program clean without any mistakes. It took us long to get there and we’re very happy that we were able to do it in competition.”

While the duo has not yet included a quad throw in their free skate, they are the only team to do a side by side triple toe-triple toe-double toe combination and also have a side by side triple Salchow. Their triple throws and other elements were of excellent quality as well.

In Barcelona, five out of the seven teams went for the quad throws and three landed at least one successfully. This has not escaped Stolbova and Klimov’s attention, although they didn’t need a quad to win this time.

“Our victory proves that you can compete (against) quadruple elements with quality skating and strong jumps,” Klimov pointed out. “However, we think that figure skating is moving forward and we’ll nevertheless have to learn these (quad) throws and maybe some other highly difficult elements.”

Stolbova is not in a rush and doesn’t want to put too much emphasis on the quad throws at this time.

“We did a clean triple-triple-double combo in the free program, isn’t that difficult enough?” the 23-year-old rhetorically asked. “Who else is doing that?”

The skater from Saint Petersburg, Russia, added that they had also revamped their lifts in both programs.

“We have changed not only our style, but also the technical part,” she said. “We’ve made the lifts stronger and we changed the entries and the layout of the elements. We’ve done a good job and a big job. Already at the Grand Prix in Moscow we looked different than in earlier competitions of the season. We’ve progressed since Moscow, as we said we would.”

Nevertheless, the two-time European silver medalists have been working on a throw quad Salchow.

“Everything has its time,” Stolbova noted. “We hope to show it by the end of the season.”

Last year, Stolbova and Klimov ended their season early after taking the silver at Europeans, opting not to go to worlds in order to have more time to prepare for the current season. They also used their time to go for different, more modern types of programs with “I Put a Spell on You” for the short and “The Unknown Known” by Danny Elfman for the long.

The team has entitled the long program “Man and Shadow” and the music was Stolbova’s idea.

“We knew what we were doing,” she explained. “We changed everything this season, down to costumes and hair color, but more importantly, we’ve grown up. I think that this season all pairs feel that they have to stand out, to change, and everybody is searching for their way to do this and for something special.”

The changes and the new programs, choreographed by Nikolai Morozov, have been well received by the judges and the audience.

However, Stolbova and Klimov recently suffered a small setback when they had to withdraw from Russian Nationals at the end of December, preventing them from going for a third consecutive title. Prior to the event, Klimov had back problems and was advised to rest for about two weeks.

The team hopes to be back in top shape in time for the 2016 European Figure Skating Championships later this month in Bratislava, Slovakia, however, competition will be tough. Their competitors include defending champions and teammates Yuko Kavaguti and Alexander Smirnov, who have two quad throws, and Olympic champions Tatiana Volosozhar and Maxim Trankov, who are back in the game and just won the National title.

Five-time World champion Aljona Savchenko of Germany will also be back with her new partner Bruno Massot, who have proven themselves competitive during the Challenger Series.

1. http://www.goldenskate.com/2015/11/elizaveta-tuktamysheva-2/

**World Champion Tuktamysheva gains momentum**

Russia’s Elizaveta (Liza) Tuktamysheva reigned supreme in the past season, collecting gold medals at the World and European Championships, the Grand Prix Final, Cup of China Grand Prix, and a couple of smaller competitions.

The World Champion started her Grand Prix season at Skate Canada International last month with a silver medal. While she faltered in the short program, she rallied back in the free to pull up from seventh to second place with the best free skate.

“I am very pleased that I managed to skate a basically clean free program,” she said. “I am happy that I did the triple Axel, although with a little error, but still I did it and that is a big step forward for me.”

Overall, the Grand Prix Final Champion felt the competition in Lethbrige, AB, was helpful for her in terms of progress.

“I did the triple Axel in the early morning practice which I wasn’t able to do before,” she explained. “In the free program I went out calmly, I was focused and I felt a sense of peace. There was some nervousness, obviously, but it is always there at any competition.”

Tuktamysheva stepped out of the triple Axel, but landed seven clean triples in the long to thePeer Gynt Suite by Edvard Grieg that was mounted with Stéphane Lambiel.

“Stéphane Lambiel did the program and he suggested the music from Peer Gynt,” the 18-year-old offered. “To be precise, Stéphane suggested on part of the music. All of us found another one and I picked the third one. I really wanted something with a symphonic orchestra. When I heard it I knew right away that this will be the final part of my program.”

In the short program to a modern version of Carmina Burana, which was choreographed by Benoit Richaud, things went wrong. The European Champion didn’t go for the triple Axel and then doubled the Lutz and her triple toe-triple toe combination was wobbly.

“I can’t explain what happened (in the short program),” admitted the European Champion. “In practice everything worked better and I was more confident than at other competitions. I felt athletic, I felt that this is my body and I thought I’m finally getting into shape.”

However, during the warm-up, the skater felt she wasn’t in her body anymore. Regardless, she doesn’t feel that replacing the triple Axel with a double Axel in the short program threw her off.

“We decided not to take the risk and do the triple Axel in the short program, but the performance nevertheless wasn’t clean,” the former Russian champion noted. “In training I am doing the triple Axel on a regular basis. This jump is working better than at the beginning of the season.”

The next day Tuktamysheva regrouped and came out much stronger.

“I am by principle not a depressive person,” she offered. “Yes, I didn’t get many points in the short program as there was a silly mistake, but the day ended and I had to move on. You are gaining experience with each performance. Even though it was a bad skate (in the short program), I learned a lot from it. I just have to be able to put it behind me and focus on the next performance.”

The skater, who is coached by Alexei Mishin and Tatiana Prokofieva, was able to move on and took the mishap in the short program as a learning experience.

“With each year you are learning from your experience and you start to realize that not always everything will be good and that you are lacking consistency not just because of one reason, but of several. Everybody makes mistakes. Even the Olympic Champion Yuzuru Hanyu made errors (at Skate Canada). Each athlete can miss something, but you need to tone down these thoughts and pressure, suppress them and forget about them. You just have to go out on the ice and do your job.”

“For most athletes after a very successful season, the next one is quite difficult,” coach Mishin observed.

The skater from Saint Petersburg, Russia, agreed, admitting that it can take a while getting back into the new season and that is harder this season than last.

“Last year I was in very good shape and I remember these feelings,” she analyzed. “After my vacation the feeling was different and I couldn’t get back the kind of feeling I had at the European and World Championships for a long time. My body was in a very comfortable condition then and I wanted to return to this feeling quickly and get my body into the same condition right away. But that didn’t work so fast.”

Nevertheless, Tuktamysheva feels that she is gaining momentum now, and is looking forward to her next Grand Prix event at 2015 Trophée Bompard in less than two weeks.

“I hope that I find myself back step by step and there won’t be such failures again,” she summed up.

1. http://www.goldenskate.com/2015/12/nathan-chen-2/

**Nathan Chen readies for 2016 U.S. Nationals**

USA’s Nathan Chen skated to gold at the 2015-16 ISU Junior Grand Prix (JGP) Final in Barcelona, Spain, this past Friday. It was the fourth appearance at this event for the 16-year-old who won bronze two years ago in Fukuoka, Japan.

“I’m very excited that I was able to become Junior Men’s Grand Prix champion,” he told the press. “It’s a big accomplishment for me. I was able to do exactly what I wanted to do coming into the event and I am very happy with how I placed.”

Chen took the lead in the short program with a new personal best of 78.59 points with Russia’s Dmitri Aliev trailing close behind. The skater, who trains in Artesia, Calif., nailed a triple Axel, triple Lutz-triple toe and a triple flip in his routine to a Michael Jackson medley.

While all of his spins were rated a level three, the skater was the only one in the Junior men’s field to earn a level four for his step sequence in the short program.

“I’m glad I could pull it off, said the 2014 World Junior bronze medalist. “It’s been getting better this season and I think I’ve put more effort in this season than before. I love Michael Jackson. As kids, we used to moonwalk across the floor, but my choreographers chose it for me because they wanted me to do something out of my comfort zone.”

Chen kept his short program from last season as he felt it was starting to grown on him and he could better reflect the character that he wanted.

While his long program to Saint-Saëns’ “Symphony No. 3” wasn’t perfect, Chen still led the field by more than 12 points (146.45) to win that segment and overall (225.04). He turned out the landing on his opening quad Salchow and then fell on his quad toe. While he rebounded and landed a quad toe-double toe combination, he fell again on his triple Axel.

Despite the errors, the 2013-14 JGP Final bronze medalist landed five clean triples and showed strong level three footwork, but two of his spins only garnered a level two.

“I was happy that I was able to put out a program I have been training for, but I was not 100 percent happy with my performance,” he admitted. “Now I’m going to be training for nationals where I’ll be competing as a senior.”

Initially, the skater had four quad jumps planned for the free skate, however, afer practice he decided it would be smarter to pull it back to three.

“Hopefully in the future I will be able to do it, but that’s just a goal for now,” said Chen, who is coached by Rafael Arutyunyan.

His main goal for this season was to build on the long program which was choreographed by Nikolai Morozov.

“We wanted to do something I’ve never done before, something powerful and strong, so he chose this symphony,” Chen explained. “Initially, the program was very soft, so he really worked out the jumps to improve. I hope by the end of the season to really be able to bring the character out.”

Now the skater will focus on the upcoming 2016 U.S. National Figure Skating Championships which will determine if he is named to the Four Continents team, as well as Worlds (junior and/or senior).

“My goal going into competitions is not to beat others, but to beat myself,” said the 2014 U.S. Junior champion, when asked regarding his strategy competing against others later this season. “I set a goal for all competitions and I like to accomplish that goal, but I like to know what the others are doing so that I can better prepare myself.”

1. http://www.isu.org/en/single-and-pair-skating-and-ice-dance/news/2015/12/gp-final-barcelona-day-2-seniors

**Weaver/ Poje (CAN) dance to lead, Stolbova/ Klimov (RUS) win gold & Evgenia Medvedeva leads**

**Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje (CAN) dance to lead**

Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje of Canada danced to the lead in the Short Dance. Madison Chock/Evan Bates (USA) and Italy’s Anna Cappellin/Luca Lanotte are not far behind in second and third place. All three teams set a new seasons best for themselves.

Dancing to “On the Blue Danube” and “Annenpolka”, Weaver/Poje collected a level four for the Ravensburg Waltz pattern, their curve lift and their twizzles. The partial step sequence was rated a level three. The defending Grand Prix Final Champions received 72.75 points. “We felt great after practice all week. There’s something very familiar and pleasant about being back in Barcelona. The crowd feels like they’re with us every step of the way. There’s always something we could do better. We haven’t seen the levels yet but it’s good to be in this position and we’re looking forward to tomorrow”, Weaver shared.

Chock/Bates’ dance to “More” and “Unchained Melody” featured three-level four elements. The current World silver medalists scored 71.64 points. “The crowd was absolutely amazing, so spirited and lively and we felt the energy while skating. It’s just a pleasure to skate here and we really enjoyed it. There’s obviously still work to be done, levels to be gained but we’re very pleased with how it went”, Chock offered.

Cappellini/Lanotte turned in a strong performance to “The Merry Widow” as well, collecting a level four for four elements. The 2014 World Champions picked up 70.14 points. “We made a little mistake on the twizzles. There was just one twizzle too many. I don’t know why it happened. We were feeling very relaxed throughout the performance. The levels were good but we still feel we can improve. We can go smoother through the compulsory dance and we need more power at the end and during the partial step sequence”, Lanotte analyzed.

Maia Shibutani/Alex Shibutani (USA) are currently ranked fourth at 69.11 points, followed by Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue (USA) with 66.21 points and Ekaterina Bobrova/Dmitri Soloviev (RUS) with 65.43 points.

**Ksenia Stolbova/Fedor Klimov (RUS) win gold**

Ksenia Stolbova/Fedor Klimov of Russia claimed the Pairs Grand Prix Final title. Canada’s Meagan Duhamel/Eric Radford took the silver medal and Russia’s Yuko Kavguti/Alexander Smirnov earned the bronze.

Stolbova/Klimov put out a flawless performance of their program titled “The Man and the Shadow”, completing a triple toe-triple toe-double toe combination, triple twist, throw triple Salchow and flip as well as six level-four elements. They posted a new personal best with 154.60 points and racked up 229.44 points. “We are very happy that we finally in this season managed to skate clean and did all the elements for the first time in competition and we are very happy with this medal.  We think pair skating is moving forward and more and more couples do quads and now in this competition it was enough to do a clean program with good jumps but in future I think we need to do more high level elements like a quad throw”, Klimov told the post-event press conference.

Duhamel/Radford’s program to “Hometown Glory” by Adele included side by side triple Lutz and throw quadruple Salchow as well as five level-four elements, but she stumbled on the throw triple Lutz. The 2015 World Champions scored 143.93 points, a seasons best and pulled up one spot to second at 216.67 points. “Eric and I are really proud about our performance today. We felt more comfortable with this program and we executed our program much better than the short program and we are proud to have this medal”, Duhamel commented.

Kavaguti/Smirnov had to overcome a rough start into their “Manfred” program when she fell on the triple toe and triple Salchow, but the European Champions recovered to land a throw quadruple Salchow, throw triple loop and difficult lifts. The two-time World bronze medalists received 132.95 points and slipped from second to third at 206.59 points overall. “The second part of the program was excellent. I feel that the audience is excited about our performance too. But I made two major mistakes at the beginning of the program on jumps, so I’m really disappointed”, Kavaguti admitted.

Julianne Seguin/Charlie Bilodeau (CAN) came fourth at 200.98 points followed by Xiaoyu Yu/Yang Jin (CHN) with 186.87 points, Cheng Peng/Hao Zhang (CHN) with 183.04 points and Alexa Scimeca/Chris Knierim (USA) with 177.42 points.

**Evgenia Medvedeva skates to the lead in Ladies Short Program**

Evgenia Medvedeva of Russia skated to the lead in the Ladies Short Program. Teammate Elena Radionova came second and Japan’s Mao Asada finished third.

Medvedeva hit a triple flip-triple toe, triple loop, double Axel and level-four spins and footwork in her routine set to “Melody of the White Nights” by Isaac Schwartz. The 2015 World Junior Champion set a new personal best of herself with 74.58 points. “Last year I was sat in the same place, in the same room in this press conference as a junior, and now I am here as a senior. I made the step up and that’s a very nice feeling, so I’m happy. I tried to perfect what I do and it has worked, I have started to skate better and more like an adult”, the 16-year-old commented.

Radionova hesitated on her triple Lutz and didn’t do the combination, but added the triple toe to the triple loop later into her program to “Je t’aime”. The 2015 World bronze medalist also got level fours for two spins and the footwork to earn 69.43 points. “I was a bit nervous and so I had to add the toeloop (to the end of the triple loop instead of the Lutz) but I was glad that I fought through it. I felt my foot go down at the end of the Lutz and felt that something was not right, so I knew I had to carry on further. But to do a triple-triple in the second half of the program is a difficult thing and I did it so I am pleased”, the defending ISU Grand Prix Final silver medalist said.

Asada opened her playful program to “Bei mir bist du schoen” with a big triple Axel, but then underrotated the triple flip-triple loop combination and singled the Lutz. The three-time World Champion picked up 69.13 points. “I made one major mistake today and I regret that, but overall don’t think my performance was too bad and I hope to do even better tomorrow. This is my comeback season and the Axel has been going quite well. Actually this season I just started to be able to take off from the correct edge on the Lutz, but it’s still not so consistent yet, so I think when I get nervous that shows and becomes my weak point”, the 2010 Olympic silver medalist explained.

Satoko Miyahara (JPN) finished fourth with 68.76 points. Gracie Gold (USA) is currently ranked fifth (66.52 points), and Ashley Wagner (USA) is standing in sixth place with 60.04 points.

1. http://www.isu.org/en/single-and-pair-skating-and-ice-dance/news/2015/11/gp-rus-day-2

**Radionova (RUS), Fernandez (ESP), Stolbova/Klimov (RUS), Weaver/Poje (CAN) strike gold**

Rostelecom Cup continued in Moscow (RUS) on Saturday with the Free Dance and the Men’s, Pairs and Ladies Free Skating. A capacity crowd of 8,500 spectators followed the competition in the Malaia Arena in Luzhniki Sports Park. Rostelecom is the fifth of six events in the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Series 2015/16.

**Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje (CAN) dance off with gold**
Kaitlyn Weaver/Andrew Poje of Canada danced off with the gold. Italy’s Anna Cappellini/Luca Lanotte claimed the silver medals and the bronze went to Victoria Sinitsina/Nikita Katsalapov of Russia.

Performing to “On the Nature of Daylight” by Max Richter and “Run” by Ludovico Einaudi, Weaver/Poje produced innovative lifts and smooth step sequences, earning a level four for the twizzles, two lifts and their combination spin a level three for the footwork and the straight line lift. The 2014 World silver medalists scored 104.09 points and totaled 173.58 points to win their second Grand Prix title this season. “We put together two really good performances. I think the free could have been a little bit stronger in some places, but it is still early in the season. We felt like the competition was very, very strong. We’re happy we were able to be strong and come home with the gold medal”, Weaver said.

Cappellini/Lanotte completed four level-four and three level-three elements in their playful routine to “La Dolce Vita”. The 2014 World and European Champions earned 103.79 points to remain in second place at 171.61 points overall. “We lost a few points in this competition here and our plan for (the Grand Prix Final in) Barcelona is to get feedback and to go home and work on it. We’ll try to make our performances stronger, particularly the short dance that here was not as strong as we can perform it. Also we didn’t have enough time to work on our programs in between our Grand Prix events”, Lanotte told the press.

Sinitsina/Katsalapov’s dance to “Io Ci Saro” was highlighted by difficult lifts and footwork. The Muscovites scored a personal best of 103.77 points which added up to 167.40 points overall. “This is our second Grand Prix (this season) and overall we are happy that we skated clean again. We improved our score. We continue to gather opinions that we’ll take into account. We still have time to get better”, Katsalapov commented.

Charlene Guignard/Marco Fabbri (ITA) came fourth with 153.54 points ahead of Elena Ilinykh/Ruslan Zhiganshin (RUS) with 153.01 points. Ksenia Monko/Kirill Khaliavin (RUS), who stood in fifth place following the Short Dance withdrew before the Free Dance as he was injured.

Weaver/Poje proceed to the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final with two victories while Cappellini/Lanotte qualify with a gold and a silver medal. Sinitsina/Katsalapov will wait and see if a second and third place is enough to get them to Spain.

**Javier Fernandez (ESP) skates to Men’s gold**
Javier Fernandez of Spain skated to gold in the Men’s event. Russia’s Adian Pitkeev picked up the silver medal, his first medal at a senior-level Grand Prix. Ross Minor (USA) took the bronze.

Skating to “Guys and Dolls”, Fernandez reeled off a quad toeloop, quad Salchow-triple toeloop combination, triple Axel and five triple jumps as well two level-four spins. However, he fell on a popped Salchow. The reigning World Champion posted a seasons best of 184.44 points and racked up 271.43 points to move up from second to first, winning his second Grand Prix gold medal this season. “I felt much more comfortable today in practice and warm up than yesterday. We still have to work on the third quad, I popped and there was a fall. I was so excited that the program went so well. Now I’ll go back to training and prepare for the Grand Prix Final. The Final will be a difficult competition with many strong skaters”, the three-time European Champion said.

Overnight leader Pitkeev hit a quadruple toeloop, triple Axel-double toe and five more triples in his routine to “The Mission”, but he crashed on his second triple Axel. The 2014 World Junior silver medalist improved his personal best significantly with 162.93 points and accumulated 250.47 points overall. “It was hard for me to pull myself together, because I heard the scores of the others and that everybody had new personal record scores. I fell on the triple Axel and I was holding back after that a little, I didn’t feel so comfortable. But I’m glad that it worked all out and I’m here in this room (at the press conference) again”, the 17-year-old commented.

Miner’s program to a Queen medley featured seven clean triple jumps, but he missed his quad Salchow. The skater from Boston achieved a new personal best with 163.56 points and had 248.92 points overall. Miner’s score was changed and 0.50 points added when the Technical Panel changed the level for his flying change foot combination spin from three to four. “I went out there and I stayed calm, which is something I struggled with in the past, consequently it was a lot more fun to be out there fun to skate in front of a packed audience”, Miner explained.

Adam Rippon (USA) pulled up from sixth to fourth at 248.63 points. Mikhail Kolyada (RUS) came fifth at 247.97 points.

 Fernandez now advances to the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final with two gold medals from the circuit.

**Ksenia Stolbova/Fedor Klimov (RUS) strike Pairs gold**
Ksenia Stolbova/Fedor Klimov of Russia struck gold in the Pairs event. Their teammates Yuko Kavaguti/Alexander Smirnov earned the silver and China’s Cheng Peng/Hao Zhang collected the bronze medals.

 Performing to “The Unknown Known” by Danny Elfman, Stolbova/Klimov completed a triple twist, throw triple Salchow and throw triple flip, as well as two level-four spins and lifts, but she struggled with the side by side jumps. The 2014 Olympic silver medalists scored 139.25 points and accumulated 214.70 points. “There were some mistakes, but now it became clear to us in which direction we’ll have to work. With today’s result we still have the chance to go to the Grand Prix Final and we hope to go there”, Klimov said.

Kavaguti/Smirnov completed a side by side triple toe, a triple twist and five level-four elements in their “Manfred” program, but missed the throw quad loop and the throw quad Salchow. The reigning European Champions were awarded 136.32 points and remained in second place at 208.02 points. “We are pleased with the result today and with our performance overall. Too bad, that the quad throws didn’t happen today. Now we have some time to work on our throws and the twist before the Final”, Smirnov explained.

Peng/Zhang’s routine to “Les Pecheurs de Perles” included a quadruple twist and a side by side triple-double toeloop combination, but Peng fell on the throw quadruple Salchow. The Chinese team picked up 124.94 points which added up to 193.04 overall. “Our performance today was not bad. We went for two quads – the quad twist and quad throw Salchow. It hasn’t been long that we include both of them in our program”, Zhang noted.

 Tarah Kayne/Daniel O’Shea (USA) moved up from sixth to fourth at 181.23 points. Natalja Zabijako/Alexander Enbert (RUS) remained in fifth place (180.56 points).

Kavaguti/Smirnov booked their ticket to Barcelona with a first and a second place while Stolbova/Klimov will have to see if a first and fourth place will be enough to go to the Final.

**Elena Radionova (RUS) leads Russian sweep**
Elena Radionova led a Russian sweep in the Ladies event. Evgenia Medvedeva took the silver and Adelina Sotnikova moved up from fourth to earn the bronze medal.

Radionova’s performance to the “Titanic” soundtrack was highlighted by a triple Lutz-triple toe combination, a triple loop-single loop-triple Salchow combination, three more triples and level-four spins and footwork. The World bronze medalist set a new personal best score with 139.53 points and was ranked second in the Free Skating, but overall remained in first with a total of 211.32 points. “At the end I was again overwhelmed by my emotions. This competition was hard for me, I had to go through a lot of emotions. I feel I redeemed myself after the Cup of China”, the 16-year-old commented.

Skating to the “W.E.” soundtrack, Medvedeva hit seven triple jumps including two triple-triple combinations and difficult spins. The World Junior Champion was ranked first in the Free Skating with a new personal best of 139.73 points and overall moved up to second place at 206.76 points. “I’m happy with today’s performance not only because I skated fairly clean, but also because I came back from that unexpected fall in the short program. At the end of the performance there were so many ovations, that was so nice and is probably the bonus when you skate at home”, the ISU Junior Grand Prix Final Champion noted.

Sotnikova produced four triples and excellent spins in her performance to “Je suis malade”, but she underrotated two triple toeloops in her combination jumps. The reigning Olympic Champion scored 119.63 points and accumulated 185.11 points. “I am back. There is still a lot of work to do, but it is a big victory for my team. This third place means a lot to me”, the 19-year-old shared.

Polina Edmunds (USA) placed fourth (183.20 points) followed by Rika Hongo (JPN) with 179.12 points. Alaine Chartrand (CAN) slipped from second to sixth (173.42 points).

Radionova and Medvedeva now qualified for the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final.

1. http://www.isu.org/en/single-and-pair-skating-and-ice-dance/news/2015/11/gp-fra-day-1

**Volosozhar/Trankov, Gold, Uno, Hubbell/Donohue lead at Trophee Bompard**

Trophée Eric Bompard in Bordeaux (FRA) kicked off Friday with the Short Dance and the Short Programs.

**Gracie Gold (USA) wins Ladies Short Program**

Gracie Gold (USA) won the Ladies Short Program. Russia’s Julia Lipnitskaya and Roberta Rodeghiero of Italy follow in second and third.

Skating to “El Choclo”, Gold produced a triple Lutz-triple toe combination, triple flip, double Axel and three level-four spins to set a new personal best for herself with 73.32 points. “I made the improvements that I wanted to coming off Skate America. I worked really hard the past two weeks. I’m really happy that I did the program that I train every day in practice. It was strong from start to finish”, the Skate America silver medalist said.

Lipnitskaya’s Elvis Presley program was highlighted by a triple toe-triple toe combination, triple flip and excellent spins. The 2014 European Champion picked up a seasons best of 65.63 points. “(Compared to Skate America) It was already easier for me, I got more into shape physically and mentally and I tried to calm down as much as possible and not to be as nervous as in my previous competitions”, the 17-year-old noted.

Rodeghiero landed a triple toe-triple toe and triple flip in her program to “Pretty Woman”. She earned 58.81 points, a new personal best.”This is my first senior Grand Prix and I didn’t expect this result. I’m very happy with how I skated today. I was calm and confident”, the Italian skater told the press.

Kanako Murakami (JPN) sits in fourth with 58.30 points and World Champion Elizaveta Tuktamysheva (RUS) came fifth as she missed her triple Axel and the Lutz (56.21 points).

**Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue (USA) lead after Short Dance**

Madison Hubbell/Zachary Donohue (USA) danced to the lead in the Short Dance. Piper Gilles/Paul Poirier of Canada are sitting in second and Russia’s Alexandra Stepanova/Ivan Bukin are currently ranked third.

Performing to “Hallelujah”, Hubbell/Donohue completed a strong Ravensburg Waltz pattern (level four and three), level-four twizzles and a level-four curve lift. The 2014 Four Continents Champions scored a seasons best of 64.45 points. “The program felt smooth and comfortable tonight. We’ve been putting in a lot of work this off-season to make sure we were in shape and we made really the best debut possible after our coaching change. It’s a program we’re really connected to and it’s really a joy to skate”, Hubbell shared.

Gilles/Poirier’s dance to “Lucky in the Sky with Diamonds” by the Beatles and “German Dance No. 6” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart featured level-four twizzles and a level-four lift while the step sequence and the Waltz merited a level three. The Skate America bronze medalists picked up 63.94 points, a seasons best as well. “We’re definitely really happy with today’s performance. Every time this program is getting stronger and stronger and our program components are going up, which is something that we really want to be working on this year. We look forward to attacking the free dance tomorrow”, Poirier explained.

Stepanova/Bukin turned in a solid performance to Waltz and Foxtrot from the movie soundtrack “The Stuntman” that included two level-four elements. The 2015 European bronze medalists scored 60.64 points. “We are satisfied with the performance today and everything is good”, Bukin said. “We did everything we planned”, added Stepanova.

Penny Coomes/Nicholas Buckland (GBR) finished fourth (58.34 points) ahead of Laurence Fournier Beaudry/Nikolaj Sorensen (DEN) with 54.72 points. World Champions Gabriella Papadakis/Guillaume Cizeron (FRA) had withdrawn before the event as she is still recovering from an injury.

**Shoma Uno takes lead in Men’s Short Program**

Shoma Uno of Japan took the lead in the Men’s Short Program. Maxim Kovtun of Russia came second and Daisuke Murakami of Japan is in third place.

Skating to “Legends” by Sacred Spirits, Uno hit a triple Axel, quadruple toeloop and triple flip-triple toe combination so earn 89.56 points, a new personal best score. “I think my performance was less than 70 percent today. The quality of my quad toe and triple Axel could have been better and also my steps and moves were not as good as I can do them in practice”, the World Junior Champion commented.

Kovtun’s program to “I Can’t Dance” by Genesis featured a shaky quadruple Salchow-triple toeloop combination, a quad toe (he touched down with his hand) and a good triple Axel. The Russian Champion posted a new seasons best with 88.82 points. “The jumps might not have been the best today, but I did them and I didn’t feel tired in the program. The program feels comfortable now, after we made many changes to it”, the 20-year-old said.

Murakami landed a quadruple Salchow and triple Axel in his routine set to “Bring Him Home”, but he reduced his combination to triple Lutz-single toeloop. He scored 80.24 points. “I was a little too overconfident, because I had my harder elements finished and my combination is one of my easier jumps. I learned a great lesson today that don’t give up until the end, because every element counts”, the Skate Canada bronze medalist told the press.

World bronze medalist Denis Ten (KAZ) ranked fourth after a fall on the quad toe (80.10 points) and three-time World Champion Patrick Chan (CAN) is sitting in fifth after he popped his combination into double toe-double toe (76.10 points).

**Tatiana Volosozhar/Maxim Trankov (RUS) win Pairs Short Program**

Russia’s Olympic Champions Tatiana Volosozhar/Maxim Trankov won the Pairs Short Program comfortably. Vanessa James/Morgan Cipres of France finished second, ahead of Canadians Julianne Seguin/Charlie Bilodeau.

Skating to Bollywood music, Volosozhar/Trankov produced a triple twist, side by side triple Salchow and level-four lift, pair combination spin and footwork, but Volosozhar two-footed the throw triple flip. The Olympic Champions picked up 74.50 points, a new seasons best. “We were more focused and not as nervous as in Oberstdorf (their first competition this season). I was sure of myself and sure of my partner. Today we were the Volosozhar/Trankov from before. We had some technical problems, but there is a reason for this”, Trankov explained.

James/Cipres’ program to “I Put A Spell On You” included a triple twist, side by side triple toeloop and throw triple flip. The French couple set a new seasons best with 65.75 points for themselves. “We are happy with the performance today. The short program is usually not so good for us, we are better in the free skating, but we worked a lot in order to do a good short program”, Cipres said.

World Junior silver medalists Seguin/Bilodeau landed a triple twist, triple Salchow and throw triple flip in their program to ”Monde Inverse” to earn 64.95 points, another seasons best. “Like at Skate America, we are happy with our performance. We did our elements. At each competition we just want to do what we do at practice at home”, Bilodeau noted.

Cheng Peng/Hao Zhang (CHN) are not far behind in fourth place at 64.10 points after she fell on the triple toe. Nicole Della Monica/Matteo Guarise (ITA) follow in fifth at 64.08 points.