

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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2004 ISU World Junior Figure Skating Championships, Day Three

The 2004 ISU World Junior Figure Skating Championships continued Wednesday in The Hague, The Netherlands, with the Ladies Qualifying and the Pairs Short Program.

Ladies, Qualifying Round

The Ladies competition started with the Qualifying Rounds. The top 15 skaters of each group advance to the Short Program. Group B skated first. Japan's Mai Asada won this group, putting Katy Taylor (USA) and Hungarian Viktoria Pavuk into second and third place.

Asada had to overcome a stumble on her opening double Axel, but she went on to complete a triple Lutz-triple toeloop combination (however, the second jump was underrotated), a triple flip-double toeloop and three more triple jumps as well as solid spins. She appeared tentative in some places of her routine to a Romance by Ludwig van Beethoven. The performance earned her marks from 5.1 to 5.5 for technical merit and from 5.0 to 5.5 for presentation. "It was ok, but I think I could have smiled more", the 15-year-old said. "I wasn't nervous, but I had too much power going into the double Axel. I didn't plan to do a triple Axel, I don't need that in Qualifying, but I want to try it in the final free skating."

Skating to "America the beautiful", Taylor produced seven triple jumps including a triple Lutz-triple loop sequence as well as a triple Lutz-double toeloop at the very end of her program. The 14-year-old National junior silver medalist maintained good speed throughout her performance and was awarded marks from 5.1 to 5.6 for technical merit and from 5.0 to 5.7 for presentation. "I'm excited about how I did", Taylor told the press. "I think I held back on it (the triple toeloop), knowing that it was a new jump, but I'm pretty happy with it." She explained that she really learned the triple toeloop only after her Junior Grand Prix event in Japan last fall. "I like it (the triple Lutz-double toeloop combination) down there (at the end), because it gives me a goal to set towards. I'm not as focused on the triple Lutz, and it kind of takes a little bit the pressure off."

Pavuk, who is battling a foot injury, hit four triple jumps, but the landings were shaky, and she made two errors, falling on the first triple loop and stepping out of the triple toeloop. She scored marks up to 5.4 for technical merit and up to 5.5 for presentation. "Viktoria injured her left foot yesterday in practising when setting up for a triple Salchow", coach Szabolcs Vidrai explained. "She hardly was able to walk yesterday. Therefore we changed our program today. We left out the triple Salchow, and she had problems with the triple toeloop."

Miki Ando of Japan captured Group A with Kimmie Meissner (USA) and Aki Sawada (JPN) coming in second and third.

Ando opened her program to "Firebird" by Igor Stravinski with a triple Lutz-triple loop combination, but she fell hard on her quadruple Salchow attempt. The Japanese Champion got up quickly and continued without any further mistakes. She completed three more triple jumps and good spins to receive marks from 5.4 to 5.7 for both technical merit and presentation. "I enjoyed skating today. It was almost like in practice. The fall on the quad Salchow would have affected me one year ago, and this is something we have been working on. The practice paid off, and I feel stronger than last year", the two-time World Junior medalist (bronze in 2002 and silver in 2003)

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commented. She added that she doesn't feel any pressure in spite of being one of the top contenders in this event.

Meissner's performance to "Pines of Rome" included a triple flip, a triple Lutz-triple toeloop combination (but the second jump appeared underrotated) and three more triples. She only slightly two-footed her second Lutz. The US Junior Champion scored marks as high as 5.7 for both technical merit and presentation. "I'm very happy. I did the triple Lutz-triple toeloop for the first time (in competition), although I did it in sequence before", the 14-year-old revealed.

Sawada went for a triple Axel, but she stumbled out of it. The 15-year-old landed a triple Lutz-double toeloop and five other triple jumps, and she had a very nice position in her layback spin. Her marks ranged from 5.3 to 5.4 for technical merit and from 5.0 to 5.3 for presentation. "I was nervous, and until I did the triple Lutz, my heart beat so fast! I was relieved when I realized the program was over," the athlete said. "My coach (Mie Hamada) told me that it was 70 percent. I felt I was holding back. Overall competing at Junior Worlds doesn't feel so much different from the (Junior) Grand Prix."

Sawada, Taylor and Meissner all are competing in their first Junior World Championships.

Lucie Krausova (CZE) withdrew due to illness from Group A.

Pairs, Free Program

Traditionally, the first medals were awarded in the Pairs event. The Pairs Free Skating turned out to be an interesting competition at a high level. First to skate in the final flight were Maria Mukhortova/Maxim Trankov of Russia, who stood in third place following the Short Program. They opened their program to Raul di Blasio's romantic piece "The Day You'll Love Me" with a side by side triple toeloop. Mukhortova had to fight for the landing, but she hung on. Their program had good flow and included a double twist, a throw triple loop and Salchow as well as two nice lasso type lifts with changes of position for her, but Mukhortova tumbled down on the double Axel. The Russians received marks from 4.9 to 5.4 for technical merit and from 5.1 to 5.5 for presentation and had to wait and see what happened next. Their teammates and overnight leaders Natalia Shestakova/Pavel Lebedev took the ice. Both were dressed in black with silver trim, which suited their "Matrix" routine. They started with a side by side triple Salchow-double toeloop sequence, but he doubled the first jump and she stepped out of it. The team then didn't make any major mistakes, they completed a high double twist, a throw triple loop and Salchow as well as side by side triple toeloop, just their last lift appeared shaky. Their marks from 4.9 to 5.6 (A) and from 4.8 to 5.7 (B) put them into the lead, and with two more couples to come, they knew they would be on the podium. Then it was the turn of Jessica Dube/Bryce Davison (CAN). Performing to the "Romeo and Juliet" soundtrack by Nino Rota, the Junior Grand Prix Champions executed a triple twist, but they collided when he caught her. A triple throw Salchow was next, but then Davison fell on the side by side triple Salchow, and their side by side spin lost unison. The team recovered to land a double Axel-double toeloop sequence, a nice throw triple loop and good lifts. They received marks from 5.1 to 5.6 for technical merit and from 5.1 to 5.8 for presentation. With four first place ordinals, three seconds and two thirds, they were second overall. Shestakova/Lebedev captured the title and the bronze went to Mukhortova/Trankov. Lebedev had competed with two different partners at Junior Worlds before, the last two years with Mukhortova, but he never was on the podium. Trankov competed last year with Shestakova, and Dube/Davison only teamed up last year as well. "I still can't believe it, maybe I realize it tomorrow or the day after tomorrow", Lebedev said. "We changed partners between us", he explained, referring to the switch. "Last year, we didn't

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realize the goals we've set for ourselves. So we thought we try to switch partners. I think the change worked for both of us well." Shestakova agreed. "Pavel is a very good partner, and I feel comfortable skating with him." Lebedev added that they will compete in seniors next season. Dube/Davison plan to stay in Juniors. "We're very happy with our performance. We wanted to focus on the second mark, and that's what we did", Davison told the post-event press conference. "As soon as I was on the back edge it just didn't feel good", he continued, referring to the fall on the triple Salchow. "As soon as I hit that back edge, I knew it wasn't going to be a swish triple Sal." Trankov commented: "We didn't skate so well in both Short and Free Program, we definitely could have done better. We'll stay one more year in juniors, and we hope to be strong competitors of the Canadian couple."

Russia's Tatiana Kokareva/Egor Golovkin made a few errors to remain in fourth place.

The Championships continue tomorrow (Thursday) with the Original Dance and the Men's Free Skating. For full results, please see: www.isu.org

The New Judging System, which was developed following a decision of the ISU Congress in 2002, was used for the 2003 Grand Prix of Figure Skating series and Grand Prix Final. As the ISU Council prepares the New Judging System for a Congress decision in June, the interim 6.0 system will be used at ISU Championships. The New Judging System received widespread support from skaters and officials during the Grand Prix series and the Council will propose that it be included in ISU Regulations from 2004/5 onwards. The ISU's Figure Skating Member Federations will debate and vote on the proposal at the Congress in June.

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