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## Arutunian says six quads on the table for free skate

Chen more at peace with showing in short: 'Whatever happens, happens'

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*Already having landed five quads in a program, Nathan Chen could have even bigger things in store for Saturday's free skate. -Getty Images*

HELSINKI, Finland - Nathan Chen will apparently try to make history again Saturday.

His coach, Rafael Arutunian, said after the skater's late Friday afternoon practice that Chen intends to do six quadruple jumps in the free skate.

That is to include two quad lutzs, two quad flips, a quad toe loop and a quad salchow. One quad lutz is to be followed by a triple toe loop, one quad flip by a double toe loop.

"If he sleeps well, and all goes well, that is what we are planning to do," Arutunian said. "We need that for the Olympics next year."

That could bring another can-you-top-this moment for Chen, 17, who two months ago became the first skater to land five quads in a free skate on his way to earning the U.S. title. He repeated the feat in winning the Four Continents Championships in South Korea last month.

"[Arutunian] hasn't told me that yet," Chen said, with a laugh, after his first practice of the day earlier Friday afternoon. "We obviously have a lot of different variations that we can possibly do. So, whatever Raf said..."

At that first practice, following a fall on a triple axel that gave him a frustrating sixth place finish in the short program, Chen clearly was just trying to get his feet back under him.

By the later practice, he was letting it rip. In a 20-minute span, he attempted 17 quads and landed 13: five toes, four salchows, two flips and two lutzes. He was also two-for-three on triple axels. After that, he put on a warmup jacket and glided with no jumps during what would have been the run-through to his music, Borodin's "Polovtsian Dances."

Chen's five-quad free skate had a different layout at Four Continents than at the U.S. championships, the major change being he did two triple axels at the former but just one at the latter. He said Friday there will be just one triple axel in Helsinki, no matter how many quads he does.

In both those events, his repeated quad was a toe loop.

The points Chen lost for the fall on his triple axel likely kept him from being at least third going into the free skate. He trails third-place Patrick Chan of Canada by 4.8 points and leader Javier Fernández of Spain by 11.72.

Immediately after his short program, Chen said he was "honestly disappointed by his performance." Friday, he tempered the reaction a bit.

"I wasn't overly disappointed," he said. "It's my first (senior) worlds. Whatever happens, happens, and then I just move on from this."

Since December, when he won the free skate at the Grand Prix Final (and finished second overall), Chen has gone from a skater of great potential to a projected title contender at this world championships and the 2018 Olympics.

Such estimations were based on both his formidable quadruple jumps and his consistency in landing them -- and his other jumps, as well.

Since the last time he fell, in the Grand Prix Final short program, Chen had landed 48 straight jumps, including 20 quads in a row.

His U.S. teammate, Jason Brown, who is eighth after the short program, felt Chen would benefit from what happened in Thursday's short program.

"Skating is so much more than just consistency," Brown said. "It's about coming back when you have a tough skate. Even if you are, let's say, 10th, it's about going into that free skate with a new mindset, kind of going in with vengeance.

"Every aspect we go through in competition is just another way to prepare us for the future. You're not always going to have perfect skates going to the free."

Chen said his competitive consistency has masked recent deficiencies in practice, the way black duct tape is covering the wear and tear in his black skating boots.

"Leading into this event, I was making a whole bunch of mistakes," he said. "My confidence level was not as high as it should have been.

"Things seem to tie together when I need them to. I'm still trying to adjust to that. I've always had issues in the past, not in terms of competition consistency but with practice consistency. I've just learned to push through it, and that's what I am trying to do now."



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