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## Arutunian wants Chen to learn physical limitations

Coach emphasizes moderation for injured pupil; Hochstein ready for worlds

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*Rafael Arutunian says Nathan Chen "will come back stronger and smarter" once he is recovered from his hip injury. -Jay Adef*

On Sunday afternoon, [Nathan Chen](#) became the first skater in history to land four clean quadruple jumps in a free skate at a U.S. championships. His technical brilliance earned him spots at both the 2016 World Junior Figure Skating Championships and the 2016 World Figure Skating Championships.

By Sunday evening, a left hip injury suffered during a quadruple jump attempt during the Skating Spectacular exhibition gala put Chen's competitive dreams on hold. The U.S. bronze medalist underwent surgery at UC San Diego Health on Wednesday, ending his competitive season.

"I think he will come back stronger and smarter, and realize that with preparation, you take care of your body," said Rafael Arutunian, Chen's coach. "It is a part of training, of preparation, that he will improve."

The 16-year-old Chen, who told reporters last week that he had grown "two heads" in height over the last two years, has endured a series of growth-plate injuries over the past few seasons. He arrived at the U.S. championships still troubled by a sore hip, for which he received physical therapy. Still, he landed six quadruple jumps in competition: two in his short program and four in his free skate.

Arutunian indicated that it was unwise for Chen to attempt difficult jumps in the exhibition gala just a few hours after making history in his free skate.

"You must learn how to count whenever you do something," he said. "You must take care of your body. There are many options (including) physiotherapy and massage. It is part of training for every athlete. Nathan is smart -- he's a good boy. He is motivated, and he will learn. His technique and jumps are very solid. At 16, he has time to learn that and make U.S. figure skating stronger."

The coach rejected the idea that learning four-revolution jumps was too taxing on growing skaters' bodies.

"There is never a way to say how much is too much," he said. "There is always risk. Nathan needs to look after his body and prepare. There are a lot of options, and he must learn."

Chen will begin his rehabilitation in San Diego and is tentatively scheduled to continue recovery at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. He is expected to return to the ice, with restrictions, in 8-10 weeks. Arutunian emphasized there will be no rush to return to training quads.

"There is a transition period; it will not be jump, jump, jump," he said. "There will be a period when we will [work on] skating skills and new programs. We already have ideas for next season."

Two other Arutunian pupils -- newly crowned U.S. champion Adam Rippon and three-time U.S. champion Ashley Wagner -- are scheduled to compete in Boston at the world championships.

"Unfortunately, now I will have only two, not three, skaters at worlds," Arutunian said. "I wish next year I will get more people to worlds."

Chen's injury opens the door for two other skaters. Tomoki Hiwatashi, the 2016 U.S. junior champion, is the first alternate to the world junior team and will compete March 14-20 in Debrecen, Hungary. Grant Hochstein, who won the pewter medal at the 2016 U.S. Championships, will make his world championships debut March 28-April 3 in Boston.

"Obviously, this is not the way I wanted to make my worlds debut," Hochstein said. "We skate together (in Artesia, California), and Nathan is a hard worker. He earned his place at worlds, and it's terrible he was injured. In the same sense, I deserved fourth place at nationals, so I put myself in this position."

"My mindset in training will not change," he added. "My goal is to treat Four Continents and worlds like any other competition. As a whole, at each competition this year, my skating has improved, and I'm pushing for that to continue."

Hochstein, 25, is having his finest season ever, placing fourth at both of his Grand Prix events. He landed a quadruple toe loop in his free skate in Saint Paul, as well as seven triple jumps, including two triple axels.

"Grant had a wonderful international season, including beautiful quads in both programs (at NHK Trophy in Japan," said Peter Opegaard, Hochstein's coach. "What I've been working on, and what Karen [Kwan-Opegaard] is working on, is to make sure he's in a range every time so he can hit that jump. Last year, he took a huge stride improving at nationals, and then this year again."

"I feel well prepared for worlds," Hochstein said. "Both of my Grand Prix (events) had difficult fields. In Japan, there were 11 quads landed in the short programs, so I have had some decent success in high-pressure competitions."

Hochstein will focus on working a quad toe-triple toe combination into his short program at both the 2016 Four Continents Figure Skating Championships in Taipei next month and the upcoming world championships.

"That's the plan," he said. "It hasn't happened yet this year. At NHK, I did quad toe and then a (triple) lutz combination. The next two events, I want to get the quad-triple in. It's the most consistent it's ever been, and I land it every day in practice."



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