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Chen makes more history in Finlandia free

Fellow competitors in awe of gold medalist's jumping prowess

Posted 10/9/16 by Jyrki Pirkkalainen, special to icenetwork



Nathan Chen continued to rewrite the record books at the Finlandia Trophy. -Getty Images

He had planned to do four different quads, something no one had ever attempted before.

But then, in the middle of his free skate at the Finlandia Trophy, Nathan Chen decided to add a fifth quad on the fly.

"I missed the first (quad) toe and was kind of annoyed by that," Chen said. "The toe is usually my most solid jump, so I decided to try it again."

Despite two falls, Chen's "Polovtsian Dances" free skate put the skater in the history books. He scored 168.94 points for his performance and 256.44 overall to land on top of the podium in his first senior international.

What is it like to skate on the same ice with someone who not only can do four different quad jumps and but keeps landing them left and right?

Jorik Hendrickx of Belgium, who finished fifth in the competition, said it can be a bit overwhelming.

"In the morning practice today, I put myself a little bit more in the corner," Hendrickx confessed. "I was a bit insecure."

Patrick Chan and Maxim Kovtun, who landed "only" one quad each in the free skate to finish second and third, respectively, have gotten the message loud and clear from a younger generation of skaters.

"I didn't know he had so many quads," Kovtun said. "Guys like this are great for figure skating. It's really showing the development of figure skating, and a big step forward. I haven't seen [Chen's free skate] yet, but I want to congratulate him."

Chan said that seeing young skaters do multiple quads easily was frustrating at first, but now he views it as a positive.

"I'm fortunate to train with Nathan every day. It's motivating and helpful to see it visually," Chan said. "You aren't going to see quad flips and lutzes from me anytime soon, but just like the toes and sals, it's good to have someone who understands the technique and the motion. It's become a huge advantage."

Chan's free skate, set to a piece of music composed by fellow Canadian competitor Eric Radford called "A Journey," showcased the skater's strengths on the program components side, but the jump content was also noticeably ahead of what the three-time world champion usually shows at this stage in the season.

"I don't think I have ever been this ready going into Skate Canada," he said. "I was well trained coming into this event, and Marina [Zoueva] (his new coach) did a great job to get us prepared. All those little things that the audience doesn't know about, just getting used to working with a new coach at competition, all that stuff I'm learning. I'm really happy with the result."

Kovtun skated a new free skate to music from the movie *Iron Sky*, the theme of which is freedom. In the program, he lets a bird go and tries to follow it, but the bird flies off into the sky

"I'm not completely ready yet, but we don't want to rush it," the three-time Russian champion said. "So far, everything is going with mixed success with the jumps. I will continue to work with my coach. (Kovtun started training with Inna Goncharenko in May.) Now we will most of all pay attention to adding more consistency. We will not make programs harder right now; instead, we rely on what we have."

Russia's three men all finished within three points of one another in the free skate. Alexander Petrov placed third in the segment, ahead of Kovtun, but only sixth overall, while Mikhail Kolyada maintained his fourth-place standing after the short.



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