



## NEWS

# Chen leads novice men after short program

Savary second; Warren third

By Mickey Brown, special to icenetwork.com

(01/17/2010) - Size doesn't always matter. Just ask Nathan Chen.

Chen -- all four feet, five inches of him -- skated circles around the rest of the novice men's field Sunday afternoon, scoring 51.24 points for his *Kung Fu Panda* short program to take a sizable lead over Emmanuel Savary (46.85 points) and Philip Warren (46.65).

Skating last, Chen landed a triple toe-double toe combination, triple Salchow and double Axel. In terms of GOE, the combination spin with which he ended his program was the best-performed element in the competition, earning +2's from all nine judges.

Having won the 2008 U.S. juvenile bronze medal and the 2009 U.S. intermediate silver, Chen, the youngest skater in the field at 10 years old, now has his sights set firmly on gold.

"He's very down to earth for such an amazing talent," said his coach, Evgeniya Chernyshova. "[Despite his age], I think he understands what this really means."

Savary skates his short program to music that's rarely -- if ever -- heard in a figure skating rink: the immediately recognizable theme from the video game *Super Mario Bros.* (He also used the music last year to capture the U.S. intermediate title.).

Right when the first note is played, a wave of laughter erupts from the crowd.

"That pumps me up a lot, hearing them cheer for me. It makes me excited," said Savary, who represents the University of Delaware FSC. "It's my first nationals, and I want to have as much fun as I can have."

Savary's fun quotient was helped by his landing a clean triple Salchow-double toe, triple toe and double Axel.

Warren's showmanship is seemingly always on display, from his antics during his Big Bad Voodoo Daddy program, which includes him blowing kisses to the judges, slicking back his hair and gyrating his body in countless ways, to his media headshot, in which he's seen tipping the brim of his porkpie hat.

Warren, whose best previous finish at a U.S. Championships is a 12th-place showing in intermediate in 2008, credits his previous coach, Adam Dooley, with instilling in him the love for skating that he radiates when he's on the ice. He's now trained by Tammy Gambill and Braden Overett, who has worked with him on playing to the crowd.

Warren started his program, set to music from the movie *The Mask*, with a beautiful double Axel (1.14 GOE) and followed it with a triple Salchow-double toe (1.14 GOE). He had to fight the landing on his triple toe, but he hung on to it.



Nathan Chen dazzled the crowd in Spokane with a spunky short program. (Michelle Harvath)

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"The jumps were a little weird, but the presentation was really good," said Warren, whose 22.57-point program components score was the second highest in the competition. "I loved the response from the crowd."

Austin Wagner, the younger brother of Olympic hopeful Ashley, is fourth. Big sis arrived in Spokane Saturday night, and she met Austin to wish him well just before his short program.

"It's an inspiration to me that she's at such a high level." Austin said. "She makes me want to skate the best I can and hold up the Wagner name."

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