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Kayne, O'Shea soar to top pairs spot in Taipei City

Cain, LeDuc win silver; Sakamoto tops Mihara, Miyahara for ladies crown

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Tarah Kayne and Danny O'Shea added a Four Continents gold medal to the silver they won at this event in 2014. Sitting in third place after the short, the U.S. runners-up turned in a 128.68-point effort of their 'Swan Lake' free skate Friday, and they finished the competition with a personal-best mark of 194.42. - Getty Images

Japan's Kaori Sakamoto bested countrymates Satoko Miyahara and Mai Mihara to win the ladies gold medal, while Americans Tarah Kayne and Danny O'Shea rallied to claim the pairs title at the 2018 Four Continents Championships in Chinese Taipei.

Ladies

Sakamoto delivered a confident and playful routine to *Amélie*, reeling off a triple flip-triple toe, double axel-triple toe-double toe and four more triples, as well as Level 4 footwork.

The 2017 world junior champion set a personal best with 142.87 points and earned a total of 214.21 to take the title in her Four Continents debut.

"I skated here at junior worlds last year, and I did a clean short and long program, so I have a good memory at the rink," Sakamoto said. "That made me feel confident, and I was able to skate comfortably."

Skating to music from Ennio Morricone's *The Mission*, Mihara landed a triple lutz-triple toe and four more clean triples, and added three Level 4 spins. The 2017 Four Continents champion earned a season's best 140.73 points, giving her 210.57 overall.

"I am a little bit happy. My performance was not perfectly clean; I got an underrotation on the triple lutz, and I am bit frustrated about that," Mihara said. "I felt nervous before my program, but I tried my best."

Miyahara, who led after the short program, produced four clean triple jumps and exquisite spins in her *Madame Butterfly* program, but she under-rotated two triples and fell on a triple salchow. With a free skate score of 135.28 and a total of 207.02, the Japanese champion slipped to third place.

"I have a lot of regrets about today's performance," Miyahara said. "When I came here, my jumps were not so perfect, and I think that made me uncomfortable and affected my confidence. I want to fix that before the Olympic Games."

This marks the third time the Japanese ladies have swept the Four Continents podium, having previously achieved the feat in 2003 and 2013.

Dabin Choi of Korea turned in a strong performance to *Doctor Zhivago* to climb from fifth to fourth place (190.23 points).

The three Americans in the competition, Mariah Bell, Starr Andrews and Angela Wang, came in fifth, seventh and ninth, respectively.

Pairs

Performing to *Swan Lake*, Kayne and O'Shea produced a triple twist, side-by-side triple salchows, throw triple salchow and a throw triple lutz, as well as Level 4 lifts and spins. The 2014 Four Continents silver medalists recorded a personal-best segment score of 128.68, and their two-day mark of 194.42 enabled them to vault from third place after the short program to first in the final standings. The triumph was also the first ISU title for the American pair.

"Winning this event means so much to us, more than winning in any other year because of what we had to go through, coming back from injury," said Kayne, who underwent knee surgery in February. "This year

was very tough. I spent many months off the ice while Danny was training by himself. Not only to be here as a competitor but to have won the event -- that's huge for us."

Overnight leaders Ashley Cain and Timothy LeDuc started strong in their program to music from *The Great Gatsby*, opening with a triple twist followed by a triple salchow-double toe-double loop combination and a throw triple lutz. Their only mishaps came on one shaky lift and with Cain's stumble on their triple loop. The Texas-based pair set a personal-best free skate score of 123.85 but dropped to second place overall with 190.61 points.

"We're extremely proud of ourselves. Being in first place after the short program was a really big thing for us, but we kept our goals the same and we just stayed connected," Cain said.

At the press conference, Cain revealed she was dealing with personal matters throughout the competition.

"I got some devastating news yesterday: My grandfather was in the hospital, and he might pass away soon," she said. "So when I skated out there today, I skated for him and I felt his presence."

Fourth after the short program, North Korea's Tae Ok Ryom and Ju Sik Kim delivered a historic performance to Ginette Reno's "Je ne suis qu'une chanson." The program featured a triple twist, triple toe-double toe combination, throw triple salchow and difficult lifts. Despite Ryom falling on an under-rotated double axel and stepping out of the landing of their throw triple loop, the pair still became the first team from North Korea to reach an ISU podium, as they finished the competition in third place with a total of 184.98 points.

"After the short program, we were fourth and I regretted that and hoped we'd be able to do better in the free," Ryom said. "When we came third and got the medal, I was very happy."

"The Four Continents were a preparation for the Olympic Games for us," Kim added. "We'll participate for the first time in the Olympic Games, and we'll train as usual and do what our coach says."

Lubov Iliushechkina and Dylan Moscovitch of Canada -- who won bronze at this event last season -- managed to secure a fourth-place finish with 179.00 points despite failing to earn credit for a lift and Iliushechkina struggling with a toe loop.

Americans Deanna Stellato and Nathan Bartholomay climbed one spot to land in fifth in the final standings with 178.38 points. Ekaterina Alexandrovskaya and Harley Windsor of Australia dropped from second place after the short to sixth overall after having to abort a lift and suffering through additional errors in their free skate. They finished with 178.10 points.



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