

Canada's Chan Dazzles With Record Figure-Skating Score

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The  **Moscow Times**

Canada's Patrick Chan recorded the highest-ever score to win the men's short program at the World Figure Skating Championships on Wednesday and take a giant step toward his first global title.

The 20-year-old dazzled the Moscow crowd with a near-perfect performance by earning 93.02 points to beat the previous best mark set by Russian former world and Olympic champion Yevgeny Plushenko last year by more than a point.

"I knew that if I skated really well I would get in the high 80s, but I didn't expect to get above 90, and that's amazing. I'm so happy," the Ottawa native told reporters.

"To be able to achieve this, it's a dream come true. The program itself was excellent. I was really proud of myself."

Chan, who finished second at the last two world championships, leads his nearest rival, Nobunari Oda of Japan, by more than 11 points heading into Thursday's free skate at the

Khodynka Ice Palace.

Oda's compatriot, Daisuke Takahashi, who became the first Asian man to win the world title when he triumphed last year in Turin, was third with 80.25 points.

With Plushenko, who is serving an indefinite ban from competition, watching attentively from the stands, Takahashi avoided any major slip-ups, but his sum was 10 points lower than his personal best achieved at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics where he finished third.

Russian 17-year-old Artur Gachinsky, coached by Plushenko's mentor, Alexei Mishin, and making his world championship debut, was a surprise fourth with a personal best of 78.34.

European champion Florent Amodio of France came fifth on 77.64, while his compatriot, 2007 world champion Brian Joubert, could only finish ninth after a disappointing performance.

Joubert, considered one of the favorites for the title, missed a combination jump and botched a landing on his quad that almost certainly rules him out of contention for the medals.

"I made a big mistake on my combination jump," said the Frenchman.

"This season is very difficult for me. I've changed many things trying to get better. I know I can come back but not this season."

The championships were moved to Russia from Japan after last month's earthquake and tsunami left 28,000 people dead or missing.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin officially opened the competition, paying tribute to Japan and its people during a solemn ceremony on Wednesday evening.

"We are sure that Japanese people will overcome all the problems with honor and courage," Putin told the audience.

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