

Russian Leads Team Figure Skating

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Ksenia Stolbova and Fyodor Klimov capped a near-perfect day for Russia in the Olympic team figure skating event on Saturday, winning the pairs free program and giving the host nation a commanding six-point lead at the top of the standings.

The duo, replacing Maxim Trankov and Tatiana Volosozhar after the world champions won the short program, performed an effervescent "Addams Family" routine with just one obvious mistake as Stolbova stepped out of a double toeloop.

"We knew it would be crazy with all the people but we had prepared, we were ready to skate," Klimov said. "We felt a huge responsibility but it was a good feeling."

"We are so proud to be in first place; we are proud of Russia, of our team, and we wish all our skaters luck."

They scored 135.09 to earn a maximum 10 points for Russia. Canada's No. 2 pair Kirsten Moore-Towers and Dylan Moscovitch came second with 129.74 and nine points for their

country, while Stefania Bertone and Ondrej Hotarek claimed third place with 120.82 and eight points for Italy.

"It went well tonight," said Moore-Towers. "There was a little brain fart on my part and I made a mistake that shouldn't have happened. There was a lot of build-up going in."

The results see Russia surge to 47 points, with Canada in second on 41 and the United States in third on 34. Italy is fourth with 31 points and Japan rounds out the top five with 30 points.

The day went about as well as Russia could have hoped for, with 15-year-old Julia Lipnitskaya beating an experienced field to win the women's short program and Yekaterina Bobrova and Dmitry Soloviyov, the world bronze medalists, coming third in the pairs.

Three events remain Sunday — the free programs in the men's, women's and ice dance. Team figure skating is making its Olympic debut this year.

The pairs have their free skate later on Saturday, with the men's, women's and ice dance finishing on Sunday.

Earlier in the evening, Canadian ice dancers Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir had pulled Canada to within a point of Russia at the top of the standings.

Virtue and Moir finished runners-up to perennial rivals Charlie White and Meryl Davis, while third place for Bobrova and Soloviyov was enough to keep Russia's noses in front.

Russia had charged into the lead on Thursday, when world champions Volosozhar and Trankov won the short program in the pairs and Yevgeny Plushenko finished second behind men's short program winner Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan.

Five countries were eliminated from the competition after the last of the short programs, Lipnitskaya's victory. They were France, China, Germany, Ukraine and Britain.

The team figure skating event is being held for the first time in Olympic history.

Countries send out skaters in all four categories: men's and women's individual, pairs and ice dance. They all perform a short program, and the winners of each segment earn 10 points for their country, the runners-up nine, third place eight, down to one point for last place.

The points are aggregated and the top five nations progress to the free program while the others are eliminated.

Adding tactical intrigue to the event, nations may switch skaters after the short program but only if the replacements are part of the country's team in the traditional event.

The introduction of the team event gives skaters a second shot at a medal that they have welcomed, but it also comes with the inherent risk of injury before the traditional individual disciplines.

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