



# NEWS

## Sacre Brun! Jason Brown blogs from JGP France

World junior bronze medalist, Junior Grand Prix Final champ writes daily diary

By Jason Brown, special to icenetwork.com

(08/21/2012) - Reigning **Junior Grand Prix Final** champion **Jason Brown** shares his adventures from Courchevel, France, where he competes in the **Junior Grand Prix France** event.

### Saturday, Aug. 25

Today was quite an eventful one for team USA, with the men's long and free dance, awards ceremony, doping, the exhibition, the closing banquet and saying goodbye as the buses came to take my unbelievable teammates to the airport. :(

### Men's free skate

The last day of competition started off with the men's long. **Harrison [Choate]** and I ended up fourth and second, respectively. There are so many lessons that I have learned that I can take away from the past week of competition. I always have so much to work on to become better and stronger, and to keep growing as a skater. A successful event in my eyes is an event you can learn from. I am truly honored to bring home a medal for Team USA, and I hope I represented U.S. Figure Skating proudly.

### Free dance

The dancers rocked it today! I don't exactly know what I watch when I am cheering on the dancers, but I loved their programs, and both teams seemed to be having a blast on the ice. All of Team USA was in the stands decked out in red, white and blue, cheering the dancers proudly on. **Quinn [Carpenter]** and **Lorraine [McNamara]** ended up sixth, and **Holly [Moore]** and **Daniel [Klaber]** ended up eighth.

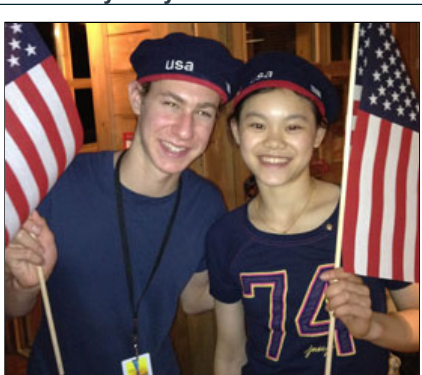
### Award ceremonies

When the dance event finished, the awards ceremony for the men took place. Along with medals, the medalists got huge COW BELLS! Who would have ever thought that you could win a cow bell at a skating event? It was such an honor to stand proudly on the podium representing my country. It is one of those feelings that you can't describe.

### Doping

Harrison and Lorraine were both picked to dope at the end of their event. They both just happened to be the lucky ones who were randomly selected. They go home with more stories to tell.

### Exhibition



Jason Brown gets patriotic with fellow American Vanessa Lam in Courchevel, France. (courtesy of Jason Brown)

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The highlights of the exhibition were definitely Team USA dancing on the boards to "Call Me Maybe" during **Vanessa [Lam]**'s exhibition program and slow dancing to "My Heart Will Go On" from *Titanic*, performed live by a French singer. It was quite a blast...moments that I will never forget!

### **The closing banquet**

The closing banquet was super formal. It consisted of a three-course meal. The first was thinly sliced potatoes, a small salad and goose liver. (The word in French made it sound much more appealing.) I was afraid to try it, but the rest of the team said it tasted amazing! That was followed by course two, which was delicious chicken with a light, creamy sauce with mushrooms. The final course was dessert, which was outstanding: a warm brownie with a creamy chocolate inside along with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. The perfect dessert to end the competition.

### **Team USA's favorite moments**

**Quinn:** I had so much fun on my trip to Courchevel; every bit was amazing! Aside from the rink, performing my programs with my partner, Lorraine, and getting to meet all the new people, the highlights of this trip were: getting to see all the European cars they drive here (they're so small!) and the gondola ride up the mountain. The view was indescribable -- you really must see it to comprehend it. I also found the old-fashioned snow cat halfway up the mountain to be very interesting!

**Holly:** Aside from the delicious food, of course, my favorite part of the trip was getting to know the other members of Team USA. Since this was our first JGP, it was so great to be with such an awesome group of people. It was so much fun hanging out with everyone, and I loved every second of it!

**Ashley [Cain]:** My favorite part of this trip was making new friends and memories. We all had so much fun dancing to "Call Me Maybe," playing cards and, of course, cheering each other on! I will remember this team forever; we have become so close. I loved every second of this trip, and I am so sad to leave.

**Harrison:** Any time we were all together. This was the most fun I have had at a competition. The banquet and the last night were awesome because we had all gotten so close.

**Vanessa:** My favorite memories are: meeting many new people, experiencing real French culture and cuisine for the first time, hanging out with all my teammates, traveling on the windy mountain road and having Team USA dance with me during my exhibition program to "Call Me Maybe"!

**Lorraine:** Playing intense tournaments of Egyptian Ratscrew. It showed very "different" sides of everyone.

**Robyn Knutson Bueling** (U.S. team doctor): Getting to spend time with an awesome group of skaters and calling it work!

**Paula Naughton** (U.S. singles judge): Having our own U.S. chalet and moments spent in the living room.

**Daniel:** My favorite moment was dancing to "Call Me Maybe," along with the entire trip! I can't think of any better group to travel with.

It was truly a great trip with an unbelievable team. I miss them all already. Good luck to Team USA in Lake Placid next week!

### **Friday, Aug. 24**

#### **The morning of competition, day two**

After a late event last night and having late practice this afternoon, I was looking forward to sleeping in. But, as is with many internationals, things don't always go as planned.

I woke up at 4:00 a.m., just in time to see my roommate, Quinn [Carpenter], leave for practice! I've learned that having a roommate on an opposite schedule means lots of communication, mutual respect for each other's sleep needs and the ability to go with the flow. When I have trouble sleeping, I end up trying to tire myself out by researching inspirational quotes, going on icenetwork.com, checking Facebook or "face timing" with one of my best friends, Sara, from home.

I was out again by 5:00 a.m., and when I woke up at 9:15 a.m., Quinn was already back in bed after his practice! I went down to breakfast and arrived in the dining area, which was filled with teammates: Ashley and her parents, Harrison and Peter (and Peter's mom), Holly and

Daniel, and my coach Kori [Ade] and I. It was quite a breakfast; I swear, we were all laughing through it all. Couldn't have been a better way to start off my day.

### **The short dance**

Both dance teams rocked it out there! We learned at breakfast that the rhythms for short dance are blues and/or hip hop. Starting with Holly and Daniel -- as Sandy and Danny from *Grease* -- and then Lorraine and Quinn mesmerizing the crowd, skating a hip hop blues zombie program. Both teams were incredible and so much fun to watch.

Harrison and I were in the stands, dressed in red, white and blue, holding our flag proudly for Team USA. Our cheer for the short dance was "GO USA ... RED, WHITE AND BLUES." Anyone else cheering at JGPs, chant our cheer!

The two teams ended up in seventh (Lorraine and Quinn) and eighth (Holly and Daniel), and they drew eighth and ninth for the free dance, respectively.

### **Trampolines**

After cheering on the dancers, my dad, sister, Kori and I went to go jump around on these awesome trampolines, the kind where you are harnessed in and attached to stretchy strings. It was so much fun; I could have jumped for hours! It was a great way to enjoy the nice, sunny day.

### **Ladies free**

I apologize for very little info on the ladies because I was getting ready for bed as they were taking the ice to compete. I only know that Vanessa ended up fourth and Ashley ended up fifth. So sorry for such little detail!

### **Preview for tomorrow**

The final day of competition begins with the men's free skate, followed by the free dance. We are all so excited! Please keep sending us good vibes. Next time I write, the event will be complete. Bittersweet...

### **Thursday, Aug. 23**

#### **Day one of competition begins**

To make things harder for the team leader and doctor, yesterday's draw put us in all different warm-up groups for today's official short practice ice. The day started off with Ashley at 7:30 a.m. and ended with Lorraine and Quinn, who finished practicing at 1:20 p.m. -- just in time for them to take a quick break and get ready for the women's event, which started at 2:30 p.m. They were such great supporters and couldn't be better leaders for Team USA!

#### **Trip to the top of the mountain**

Between the short program warm-up and lunch, Kori, my sister, my dad and I decided to take the gondola -- which is located across the street from the rink -- to the top of the mountain. It takes about 15-20 minutes to get up to the top of the mountain, and man, it was one site to see! The rink is already about 6,069 feet above sea level, and the mountains are stunning from there, but you truly feel like you are on the top of the world! The views just get prettier and prettier; I can only imagine how magical the entire town looks covered in snow during ski season.

My dad and sister attempted to walk a trail down but used the "rain" as an excuse for hopping on the gondola at the halfway point -- Kori and I think they were worried they wouldn't make it down in time for my event! (P.S. My skates were in the trunk of their car so they HAD no choice.)

#### **Pre-competition dinner**

If you are ever fortunate enough to travel to Courchevel, check out La Boulotte, a great little restaurant owned by a super cool British lady named Katie. She cooked up the perfect pre-competition meal of pasta carbonara and served it with delicious French bread.

#### **The ladies**

The competition opened with the ladies short program, and Ashley got Team USA off to a great start. She skated a beautiful short program and finished fourth, followed by Vanessa ending close behind in fifth. They compete their free skates tomorrow with Ashley skating 24th and Vanessa finishing off the competition, skating 27th!

### **The men**

Harrison skated great, finishing the event in fourth place and drawing 16th for the free skate. I ended up third and drew 18th. We both agreed that it was great to get the first short of the international season out of the way, and we are psyched for the long!

As for how I skated, I struggled on my SPINS of all things, almost falling in two of them and not getting credit for my last combination spin. But other than that, I felt good. I guess I just needed to get my early-season anxiety out.

Regardless of the outcome, I'm always relieved when the first short program of the international season is over; it's a real "ice breaker." I'm excited to move forward from here and glad to take the lessons I learned and apply them to the free skate.

### **Tomorrow's preview**

Tomorrow morning begins with the dancers practice ice at 6:30. And unlike today, GO TEAM USA for all being in the last warm-up groups!

Tomorrow, competition begins with the dance event, as Holly and Daniel, and Lorraine and Quinn make their international debuts. Following the dance event is the ladies free. First day for dance and last day for ladies. Keep the positive thoughts coming!

Jusqu'a demain

### **Wednesday, Aug. 22**

#### **Waking up**

When waking up at internationals, you generally wake up super excited for your day -- partially because you can't wait to skate on the ice for the first time, and partially because you still can't believe you are here and can't wait to go exploring and start your day full of adventures!

#### **French breakfast**

Breakfast at our hotel is served around 7-9 a.m., in the dining area next to the lobby. What's really neat is that we, Team USA, are the only people besides three Danish skaters staying in this entire hotel, so it's really cool that we kinda have the hotel to ourselves. Also, as the "breakfastpouts" are pretty short, most of us all went down at similar time.

This morning I had the privilege of eating with John Cole (USA dance judge), Robyn, Paula, Vanessa and her coach Dianne, Harrison and Kori. I'm so lucky to be a part of such a great team!

The breakfast was a real traditional French breakfast, or at least I think it was. There was amazing bread, unreal croissants, some yogurt, fruit and juice! Not tons of protein, but that's why I came prepared and brought protein bars! Kori doesn't count protein bars as a legitimate source of protein, so she made sure I had a sufficient amount of protein for lunch.

#### **The town**

It is so unbelievably peaceful and beautiful here; as it is a ski town and it's summer, there is not a whole lot of commotion going on here. During this time of the year, this place is a shopping haven for coaches -- at least for mine it is -- because as a ski town during the offseason, everything is on sale. I have never seen more 50-percent-off signs in my life! And the jackets are super warm and comfy.

The weather has been great so far: nice and warm with about a 30-minute rain storm in the early evening. There are mountains everywhere you look. I swear, they go on more miles in every direction; it is truly breathtaking. I guess that's what makes the French Alps so famous.

#### **The draw**

All eight of us had our draws today, beginning with the dancers and ending with the women. The draws took place either before or after the skaters' practice ice time, and I believe everyone was peppy about the way they skated!

So, for the draw, Lorraine and Quinn drew ninth, and Holly and Daniel drew third. Harrison and I drew third and 10th, respectively. We were the only skaters to sit in the front row and were the second- and third-to-last skaters to draw. It was so unbelievably nerve-racking; Harrison and I were shaking! We both agreed that sometimes drawing can make us more nervous than the actual event.

Ashley will start off the USA skaters tomorrow in the ladies event, skating eighth, and Vanessa will be later, skating 17th.

### **Ending the day with some cards**

As the night began to come to an end -- and the girls were getting ready to go to bed due to early morning practice the next morning -- the rest of us forced ourselves to stay awake (so we could hopefully sleep through the night) and played UNO! It was Harrison's first time playing, but sadly he didn't really have beginner's luck. Holly ended up dominating the game, winning within 10 minutes! It's been quite a day, and the first day of events begin tomorrow.

### **Tomorrow's preview**

Tomorrow starts with practice ice for all disciplines and concludes with the ladies and men's short programs, respectively. Please send us good vibes!

### **Tuesday, Aug. 21**

Bonjour! It's Jason Brown here in Courchevel, France, blogging for the first time ever. Hope you enjoy!

### **Travel day fun**

Kori and I travel together so often that by now I know exactly how to pack; weighing in at about 44 pounds, I know Kori's luggage will ALWAYS be about 56 pounds. So, as usual, we reorganized for Harold, our super friendly sky-cap, and were through security (skates and all) with no problem.

### **Big week for the Brown family**

I'm super fortunate that my dad and sister are making the trip to France tomorrow, but my younger brother is starting high school this week, and it's just one of those big milestones that no mother would want to miss; so mom and Dylan are homebound. It will be my sister's first time coming to an international skating event, and I can't wait for her to experience this unbelievable event and to see her proudly cheering me on from the stands throughout the week. It means so much that some of my family could come.

### **An unusual take-off**

Just as the safety video was coming to an end, an announcement was made that an additional passenger was joining us ... so they said that -- due to airline rules -- they had to play it again; that was a first for me. Then, long after the 12 or so announcements to turn off electrical devices were made, and as the plane was moving to the runway, a phone started ringing, loudly! Rather than the usual shame, fear or embarrassment that most people would feel, the passenger next to me answered the call and continued to talk as we accelerated toward our ascent. So, for all of you wondering what happens if a phone goes off during takeoff, I can tell you first hand, it's NOTHING! (Please do not try this yourselves. :-))

The flight itself was great; watched two movies: *Tower Heist* (with Eddie Murphy and Ben Stiller) and *Big Miracle* (with Drew Barrymore...the one about the whales being trapped in ice in Alaska). It was a very good tale of perseverance and courage and a perfect pre-competition choice.

Dinner and breakfast were served on the flight, but nothing beat the breakfast croissant; I would have eaten the whole plane's supply! For anyone traveling to compete internationally, or at altitude, or internationally at altitude, DRINK WATER! I really hope that the two gallons I typically drink on flights is what helps me combat jet lag quickly. I'll be drinking tons more throughout the rest of the trip.

### **Arrival in France**

We shared our 3 1/2-hour ride with the team from Spain and found out that our driver was an ice dancer on the French national skating team in 1978. Part of what makes international competitions so amazing is the people you meet and the histories they have with skating. I was trying my hardest to stay awake for the beautiful drive from Lyon to Courchevel, but I must not have succeeded because the driver made fun of my efforts when we got to the rink.

**The rink is incredible**

I was fortunate enough that I got to come to this event in 2010, and I could not be happier to come back! It is so unbelievably gorgeous here. The rink is beautiful; not only is it warm, but there are windows on one side that face the side of an amazing mountain.

**Team USA**

After a quick and delicious dinner at the famous Le Chabichou with Vanessa, we all met up in the lobby of our hotel for our team meeting. All but three of the skaters had arrived at this point. Laurie Johnson, our awesome team leader, made us all goodie bags with USA flags, USA berets, pins, pom-poms, clackers and more red, white and blue goodness. We will definitely be the most spirited team at this event!

Day one has come to an end.

**Tomorrow's preview**

Let the official practice ice and draws begin. Au revoir for now!

## 12 Comments

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**Lou Sherman**

Good blogging, Jason. Skate well and have fun! ---Shirley Sherman & Lou Sherman.

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**Pete Murray**

Excellant blogging Jason! Enjoy the competition and make some new friends! Life is Great!

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**Sue Berman Libowsky**

The Libowskys wish you the best! Good luck and safe travels back to HPHS.

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**Stacy Fleisher Friedland**

Love reading about your adventures! The entire Friedland family wishes you all the best!

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**Hope Bernstein**

What a great blog. I really feel I was there with Jason. G Hope

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**Kristina Ziegler**

Enjoying your blog so far, Jason! I'm glad your dad and brother will get to be there.

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**Audrey Weisiger**

Wonderfully written Jason. Good luck and we are cheering for you! Say hi to your dad.

Like · Reply · 3 · 5y

**Gisele Czajka**

sk8 gr8 Jason!

Like · Reply · 1 · 5y

**Sarah Crawford**

I enjoy reading your blog. Skate great! 😊

Like · Reply · 5y

**Beth Shapiro Kopin**

Hi, Jason! The Shapiro/Kopin family is enjoying reading your blog, which makes us feel even more that we are with you. Bon chance! Skate well!

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