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## He's back: Brown blogs from Nebelhorn Trophy

U.S. Olympian checks in from his first international competition since Sochi

Posted 9/23/14 by Jason Brown, special to icenetwork



*Jason Brown makes his return to international competition this week at the Nebelhorn Trophy in Oberstdorf, Germany. -Robert Cianflone*

Reigning U.S. silver medalist [Jason Brown](#) is in Oberstdorf, Germany, for the Nebelhorn Trophy. He kept a blog for icenetwork from the event, his first international competition since the Sochi Winter Olympics.

### Saturday, Sept. 27

Today was officially the conclusion of the Nebelhorn Trophy. The ladies free skate kicked off the day, and both Mariah Bell and Gracie Gold skated beautiful programs. Mariah finished her first senior event in fifth, and Gracie brought home the bronze for Team USA!

The dance event began shortly after the ladies finished. I can't even put into words how breathtaking both Kaitlin Hawayek and Jean-Luc Baker, and Madison Chock and Evan Bates' programs were. I was

cheering so loudly in the stands that the women in front of me started covering her ears! I felt so bad that I toned it down a bit. It was incredible to see Kaitlin and Jean-Luc in their senior debut, and watch Madison and Evan break 100 points in their free dance for the first time. They ended up fourth and second, respectively.

There is also a team trophy awarded at the end of the event based on the results over the past three days, we finished first overall, with Russia coming in second and Canada third. It was so cool seeing Madison, Gracie and Alexa Scimeca stand on top of the podium, watch our flag rise and listen to our national anthem as they received the trophy on Team USA's behalf.

Four medals for Team USA in four different events: one gold, one silver and two bronzes ... plus our first-place team trophy! I'm so proud of this team. It was definitely a successful event. :)

### **Exhibition**

Tonight's exhibition was filled with fun show programs, and the range of music was perfect to keep the crowd interested and clapping along. I always love getting to be a part of the exhibition at the end of the event.

Exhibitions generally have such a light and fun mood to them because everyone is relaxed after finishing their week of competition. It's great to see everyone let go and really show their personalities!

### **All good things must come to an end...**

Every day I wake up here, and Oberstdorf seems even more beautiful than the day before. Alas, by the end of the day, I, and everyone else on the U.S. team, will be safely home in our training locations.

Even though I'm sad to leave, I can't wait to get back to training and working even harder. Next stop: Skate America!

Thanks everyone for reading my blog. I hope you guys enjoyed it. Until next time ... AUF WIEDERSEHEN!

Friday, Sept. 26

### **Ladies short**

While Alex Johnson and I had our last official free skate practice, the ladies were on the ice for the short program.

Mariah Bell started the event, kicking off her senior debut with a bang! She finished the segment in sixth, not only making it into the last warm-up group but drawing dead last (16th) ... how cool is that? She started off the event today, and she will end it tomorrow!

Gracie Gold goes into the long sitting in third, and she skates 12th.

I can't wait to be cheering in the stands, decked out in red, white and blue, as our ladies skate their long programs Saturday!

## **Two events done**

The pairs had their free skate today. Madeline Aaron and Max Settlege ended up sixth, and Alexa Scimeca and Chris Knierim won Team USA's first medal of the event, as well as their second medal of the season, a bronze.

Today was also the conclusion of the men's event. Alex skated a beautiful free program and finished sixth. I left the rink proud to add a second medal to Team USA's collection at this event. It felt great to compete internationally again (the last time being at the Olympic Games) ... I truly couldn't ask to start off the year with a better experience. I leave here with lots of feedback to apply to my training for the season to come. Next stop: Skate America!

## **Test event**

As I said in yesterday's blog, I would try my best to explain the test event judging for the men's and dance events.

Sorry if it's hard to follow the terminology: There are 12 judges, five of whom evaluate Grades of Execution and either one or none of the five components marks. The other seven judges are responsible for judging only three of the five components marks, but they all have a different combination of the three to judge. The goal is to determine whether there needs to be a wider distribution among the components and whether skaters will be rewarded differently for each separate component. It also would lighten the load on the judges, allowing them to focus on grading a few specific features instead of an entire program's worth.

## **Saturday's preview**

Tomorrow wraps up the competition, starting with the ladies free skate and ending with the free dance. The exhibition concludes the entire event tomorrow night.

Time to rest up. Another great day in Oberstdorf! Night, everyone...

Thursday, Sept. 25

## **Team USA off to a great start**

All three events today were a success for Team USA. The dancers started off with their paso-themed short dances, skating into second (Madison Chock and Evan Bates) and fourth (Kaitlin Hawayek and Jean-Luc Baker). The pairs finished third (Alexa Scimeca and Chris Knierim) and fifth (Madeline Aaron and Max Settlege), while the men sit first (me!) and sixth (Alex Johnson). It felt great to get back out there and compete again internationally. We are all super psyched for our longs tomorrow and Saturday.

Fun fact: For the dance and men's events, the short programs were scored differently, as this is a test event for a new judging structure. It's crazy to see a different protocol result sheet after having the same format since I was a juvenile! It's definitely making the event exciting; nobody is 100 percent sure what to expect when their scores are announced. I'll try to explain more about the new judging in tomorrow's blog.

## **Ladies short program draw**

The ladies had their short program draw today. Mariah Bell will lead off the event, skating first, and Gracie Gold will go 12th. The ladies short programs will kick off Friday's competition day.

## **Free skate draws**

Fifteen minutes after the conclusion of the short program and short dance events, the skaters all met back in the draw room to determine the start order for the free programs. Tomorrow, the pairs and men will compete their free skates. Madeline and Max will skate sixth, and Alexa and Chris will follow them in seventh. Alex and I drew ninth and 13th, respectively. Our dancers, who don't compete until Saturday, will be the last two teams on the ice, skating 10th (Kaitlin and Jean-Luc) and 11th (Madison and Evan). I couldn't think of a better way for that event to end. :)

## **Family reunion**

One of the best parts of traveling internationally for me is that my parents make the trip and I get to see them again. :) Since moving away from my family last year, my competition schedule has really dictated when I get to see them. So, when they arrived in Germany this morning, it was the first time I'd seen my mom and dad in two months! There truly is no better feeling than being with my parents again.

## **Junior Grand Prix Estonia shout-out**

Continued luck and success from all the seniors to the juniors at JGP Estonia, which is also going on this week. Everyone here in Germany is cheering on our junior skaters in Tallinn ... go Team USA!

## Tomorrow's preview

The ladies short program begins tomorrow, followed by the pairs and men's free skates. The dancers have official free dance practices and then will resume competition Saturday. Another day of exciting competition tomorrow ... GOODNIGHT EVERYBODY!

Wednesday, Sept. 24

## What's jet lag?

All that self-determination to stay up the whole day really paid off when I awoke to my alarm going off at 10 a.m.! It seemed like the whole team also had great luck sleeping through the first night!! The day was off to an awesome start. Woohoo!

## Breakfast

There is absolutely no shortage of great food, beginning with breakfast at the hotel to literally every single restaurant in the town for lunch and dinner -- not to mention the unbelievably tempting dessert menu, which I've already ordered from.

But back to breakfast. My favorite part of most European breakfasts is that there is always bread! Here in Oberstdorf, our hotel has the most ginormous bread bowl I have ever seen, filled with every sort of bread you could think of. I'm in love with the pretzel bread rolls. Also, what I think is special about our hotel, The Morhen Hotel, is that the Restaurant provides take-out bags so you can pack up some snacks or a lunch for later! They actually encourage you to take as many bags as you want and stuff them with food. That's definitely one of the many things we love about this hotel.

## Adjustment day

Everyone on Team USA had an official practice today. I always take the first day of practice to make adjustments to my jump patterns and get acclimated in the new environment. To me, it's very rare for two surfaces of ice to feel exactly the same. On each official practice, we get to decide which program music we want played. As Alex Johnson and I had two today, we both did both a short and a free.

I got to watch Jean-Luc Baker and Kaitlin Hawayek, and Madison Chock and Evan Bates practice today, and they looked unreal. Both of their programs are pretty sick! The theme for the senior short dances this year is the paso.

As a team, everyone I talked to felt great about his/her first day of practice and is ready to begin competing tomorrow! (The ladies don't start competing until Friday.)

## **The draw**

The men, dance, and pairs all had their short program starting order draws today, and the No. 4 seems to be the number of the team so far. Myself, Madison and Evan, and Madeline Aaron and Max all drew fourth. Dance kicks off the competition day (Kaitlin and Jean-Luc are eighth), followed by pairs (Alexa Scimeca and Chris Knierim are third), and men at night (Alex skates 12th).

## **Test event**

The Nebelhorn Trophy marks the first time the judges will divide the components, and each will only be responsible for a max of three of the components or a combination of components and Grade of Execution. This test event is for only the men's and dance event and it will help to determine whether there is a more efficient judging system.

## **Tomorrow's preview**

Tomorrow, the competition begins with short program for dance, men's and pairs, and another day of official practice for the ladies, along with their short program draws.

GOODNIGHT FROM GERMANY, and to all the Jews out there, L'Shanah Tovah!

Tuesday, Sept. 23

## **Another season, another blog**

I'm so excited to be blogging from my first international event of the 2014-15 season! The event is taking place in Oberstdorf, Germany. It's so fun to be sharing this event with my training mate, Mariah Bell, and our coach, Kori Ade. I can't wait to share all of the experiences throughout the week. This will be my first international competition since the 2014 Winter Olympic Games. Let the adventures begin.

## **Never take no for an answer**

No matter how early Kori and I get to the airport, we always seem to board the plane relieved we made it to our flight. Today, we made it to the airport one hour and 45 minutes before our flight's departure, but after trying to check in, we realized we were dropped off at the wrong terminal!

That's when the running began. We raced through the airport hallways to the tram with our arms full of luggage. When we finally made it to the check-in counter, we had 55 minutes to spare. To our surprise, the check-in agent told us we were five minutes too late and missed our opportunity to check in! She said she was sorry, but there was no way we could board our flight now. Kori was not taking no for an answer, and told me and Mariah to wait while she took off around the corner.

Kori came back waving us over to a desk 30 feet away, and Mariah and I bolted over there. We got all our bags packed and sprinted to security.

We panicked at the site of the insanely long security line...but a travel agent who saw the entire situation unfold showed up a few seconds later and helped us get through security in 10 minutes.

Twenty minutes after we checked in, the three of us were all sitting in our seats, beet red -- but we made it! So, if anyone reading this has airport troubles in the future and you are told something isn't possible, don't always settle for the person who says no. Find that person who will say yes and don't give up without trying.

### **Smooth sailing**

The rest of the travel day was smooth as can be. Our flight into Munich was pretty fast. I've learned over the past few years how to make use of my time on international flights. My routine consists of watching TV shows or movies, partaking in occasional aisle-stretching sessions, taking bathroom breaks, constantly drinking water to stay hydrated, eating meals and a solid hour of "trying" to sleep. Before you know it, the flight attendants start preparing the cabin for landing.

Funny side note: The flight attendants were notified that there was a couple on their honeymoon in row 24, the same row Mariah Bell and I were in. We were dying of laughter when the flight attendant came up to us to ask if we were the newlywed couple!

### **Returning to Oberstdorf**

I've rarely had the opportunity to return to an event for a second time, and when I found out I was going back to the Nebelhorn Trophy for the second year in a row, I couldn't have been happier.

It's so nice to be able to return to such a familiar place, recognizing the same faces and places, from the restaurants, the hotel, the rink and the shops. There is something so comforting about going back to a city and rink that I've already been to and competed at before. Of course, we went back to our favorite spots as soon as we arrived. The memories from last year continued to flood back into our minds.

### **We're all here**

By 6 p.m., after some cancelled flights, lost luggage, and a two-hour bus ride from Munich, the entire US team eventually made it to Oberstdorf -- bags and all! We met in the lobby of the hotel for a quick team meeting and then walked to a nearby restaurant for dinner. The food was delicious, but the conversation was limited due to jet lag and everyone trying to keep their eyes open through the meal. We are all

beyond thrilled to be here, although it was hard to tell from our exhausted faces as we mustered up our strength to not fall asleep at the dinner table!

We all went to bed excited for the morning to come. Wednesday will mark the first day of official practices for all four disciplines, along with the draws for the starting orders for the men's, ice dance, and pairs! GUTE NACHT (Good night) from Germany. GO TEAM USA!



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