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Little Jason in big China: Brown blogs from worlds

U.S. champion takes readers on tour of sights and sounds in Shanghai

Posted 3/24/15 by Jason Brown, special to icenetwork



Jason Brown and his coach, Kori Ade, are both experiencing the World Figure Skating Championships for the first time. -courtesy of U.S. Figure Skating

U.S. champion [Jason Brown](#) made his debut at the [2015 World Figure Skating Championships](#). He kept a blog for icenetwork.

Saturday, March 28

Final day of competition

The ladies event started off the final day of competition. The men had practice in the main arena right before the women competed. So, while the ladies event was going on, we all headed back to have lunch and get ready for the night's event.

When the U.S. ladies took the ice, (my coach) Kori [Ade] and I were in my room playing cards. We took a break to turn on the TV and watch the ladies compete. China aired every event live, so even though we couldn't be there cheering in person, we were cheering loud and proud from my hotel room!

Polina [Edmunds], Ashley [Wagner] and Gracie [Gold] all rocked the house! All three of them skated beautiful programs. Gracie and Ashley got small medals for placing second and third, respectively, in the free skate. The three U.S. ladies finished the event in fourth (Gracie), fifth (Ashley) and eighth (Polina). Gracie and Ashley's finishes combined to secure three spots for the U.S. at next year's worlds in Boston.

Last but not least, the men!

By the end of the men's free skate, all three U.S. skaters had moved up. I'd call that a success. :)

Josh finished his first worlds in 11th, Adam in eighth, and I placed fourth. Since my placement and Adam's placement added up to 12, we retained our three men's spots at worlds next year. We were so thrilled to maintain the three spots, and the fact that the 2016 World Championships are in the U.S. is the cherry on top!

Flashbacks, learning, overcoming and growing

As I mentioned earlier, skating last at the world championships brought tons of flashbacks and memories, and a déjà vu moment from the Olympic Games.

Skating last at the Olympics was not easy. There was so much energy in that building when the final group took the ice -- it was insane! Then, having to wait 45 minutes after the warmup ended to the time I got to skate felt like ages. Hearing the crowd roar from backstage as the top skaters did their programs was a bit startling at the time, and definitely got my adrenaline pumping.

When it was finally my turn, I felt like I had already lived through the emotions of the entire event. I went out there and did the best I could to stay focused and to stay in the moment. Although I gave it my all, I knew I could have done better. I wish I could have held my focus for just four-and-a-half minutes longer that night. It's experiences like that which lead to the most growth but also cause many sleepless nights pondering how to make that growth a reality. I think a lot about how I could have done better for not only myself but for Team USA, U.S. Figure Skating and my coaches.

Even though it wasn't perfect, it taught me more than I ever could have learned if I had skated perfectly. That experience of imperfection allowed me to grow as a skater. I gained an experience and lessons that will last me a lifetime. As soon as I left Sochi, I took everything that I learned from the Olympics and started applying it to my skating.

So, you could only imagine what was going through my head when I was in the exact same position a year later at my first world championships. I've grown so much since that moment a year ago in Russia. I'm a changed competitor. I saw this as an opportunity to finally put myself at ease, to overcome those feelings of regret and demonstrate what I learned from the Olympics.

After 45 minutes of waiting after the final warmup, I stepped onto the ice with confidence. I felt ready. I felt focused. I had learned from last year how to truly stay in the moment, and because of that, it didn't dawn on me that the event was over until they announced that I was in fourth place.

Getting fourth meant so much more to me in that moment than being fourth in the world. I had proven to myself that I had grown as a competitor. In that instant, I felt deep down inside that each moment in my life truly does prepare me for something further down the road. I had finally come to terms with my Olympic experience.

Three spots!

We were so excited to keep three spots for next year's worlds. It was a huge goal of mine to do the best I could to maintain the spots, and when I realized that we had done it, I was ecstatic. Mission accomplished!

My apologies

I am so sorry for my delayed post. It was difficult to run U.S. Figure Skating's Instagram account (which I hope you all enjoyed) and write the blog once I started competing, so I want to apologize and thank everyone for all the support throughout the week. Whether you cheered from home or in the stands, followed along on Twitter/Instagram, watched through the computer or were thinking of us and sending positive thoughts to China, it all really means a lot to me and all of the Team USA athletes!

Friday, March 27

First world medal for Team USA

The third day of competition couldn't have started any better. All three U.S. dance teams were awesome! Since I was competing that night, I wasn't able to watch the event, but I was in my room anxiously following the live results.

Madison [Hubbell] and Zach [Donohue] finished the event in 10th. Maia [Shibutani] and Alex [Shibutani] skated their way into fifth, posting their season's-best score. They were very happy to end the year on such a high note.

Madison [Chock] and Evan [Bates] left these world championships as the silver medalists! They had an incredible season, winning medals at every event along the way. Huge congrats to them and the other two dance teams for a great event and an awesome year of skating!

Finally, our time to begin

The men's short program was the last of the four disciplines to get underway. It was weird to be just starting after the pairs and dancers had already finished. Walking into the arena was insane -- the place was packed! I couldn't wait to get out onto the ice.

I had the privilege of skating after Han Yan, my friend from China, who I've competed against since my first international year as a junior. Despite the major language barrier, we support each other at every event, and to see the reaction from the roaring crowd after he finished his great short was unbelievable. It was a real treat competing alongside him in his own country.

At the end of the short, Josh [Farris] was in 13th. I love his Ed Sheeran program. He connects to that music and floats across the ice when he skates to it.

Adam ended in 11th. He looked awesome! He stood up on his quad lutz, and his face said it all when he hit his final pose: He was extremely happy.

I finished sixth. I was really pleased with my performance. It was great to get a season's best at the world championships. We were all looking forward to the long program.

Déjà vu at the men's free skate draw

Since I was sixth after the short, I made it into the last warmup group for the long. The draw began, as always, with the first six skaters drawing for the last six slots. They start with the winner of the short and go down from there. Since I was sixth, when it was my turn to draw, there was only one number left.

I was already starting to have flashbacks to the Olympics, where I was also in sixth going into the long program. I remember the draw in Sochi so vividly...when it came time for me to draw, number 24 (last) was all that was left.

As each of the five skaters were called up, the last six slots started to fill up. Well, by the time it was my turn, 24 was all that was left. I was going to close out the men's event at worlds! I had goosebumps as the feeling of déjà vu swept over my body. I was determined to finish with a much stronger skate than I had in Sochi a year ago...

Thursday, March 26

Day 2 of competition

The ladies started the day off with their short programs. Polina Edmunds looked great: She skated a solid and clean program, putting her in seventh place going into the free skate. Gracie Gold and Ashley Wagner (eighth and 11th, respectively) are looking to the free, determined and excited to gain back some missing points after skating imperfect short programs. Send all three ladies good-luck messages for them to rock out their free skates! There are very few points between some of the ladies, so the free will be an extremely exciting event.

The pairs were the first to finish, as they competed their free skates Thursday night. Haven Denney and Brandon Frazier had a great worlds debut, finishing in 12th. I could watch their *Lion King* free all day! It's one of my favorites, and I'll miss seeing it next year.

Alexa Scimeca and Chris Knierim were awesome! I was getting ready for bed while they were skating, and got to watch them on TV before turning off the lights. It was a great way to end the night! They finished the event in seventh.

Practice makes perfect

The dancers and men had another day of practice. With the dancers having already finished their short dance, they had their whole 40-minute practice to solely work on their free dances. Thursday also gave the men one more day to work on and have their music played for either their short programs or free skates.

The dumpling saga continues

Not only have I been back to the dumpling place that I wrote about in my first entry but I've been back multiple times...and when my parents and brother arrived in Shanghai, that is the first place I showed them! Whenever Kori and I travel, we always find a place that we get hooked on, and continually want to go back to for more. On this trip, it is the delicious dumpling place!

Tuesday, March 24/Wednesday, March 25

Practice day, take 2!

Everyone on the team had two 40-minute practices Tuesday. One was in the main/competition arena, and the other one was in the practice rink. Both rinks are beautiful, and the volunteers couldn't be nicer!

It was a successful day of practice for Team USA. Everyone feels and looks great. :)

I can officially add a pin to my map

I have a huge world map in my bedroom at home, and every time I skate somewhere new, I put a pin over that country. So, my first day of practice marked my first time skating in China...which means I get to add another pin to my map!

The main rink is a maze

The competition rink is huge, and the backstage area is a complete maze. There are tons of different hallways, doors and signs telling you how to get everywhere. There are even labeled signs on the ground directing you where to go. It is one of those buildings where every hallway splits off into more hallways, splitting off to more rooms! I've gotten lost a few times, but the signs have helped immensely.

Paso-ing to the top!

The ice dance teams rocked the house Wednesday! It's amazing to watch all the teams getting better and stronger as the year progresses.

Madison [Hubbell] and Zachary [Donohue] sit in 11th after the short dance, while Maia Shibutani and Alex Shibutani are in sixth. Their short dance program was so unbelievably dynamic and sharp!

Madison [Chock] and Evan [Bates] will go into the free dance with the lead. They earned their season's best, vaulting them into first and setting the event on fire! It was a great dance event, and the free dances Friday are sure to be extremely exciting.

Pairs short

It was an awesome pairs event, and the U.S. teams were great! Both teams skated solid programs and are in seventh (Alexa Scimeca and Chris Knierim) and eighth (Haven Denney and Brandon Frazier). As they compete two days in a row, their long program is Thursday night. They are all looking forward to day two of their competition.

Instagram takeover

I am taking over [U.S. Figure Skating's Instagram account](#) this week. Please feel free to comment and let me know what you guys want to see or want me to post while I am here in Shanghai. Use the hashtag #BrownsTakeover or comment at the end of my blog/on the Instagram posts.

Thursday's preview

The ladies event begins Thursday morning. Ashley [Wagner], Gracie [Gold] and Polina [Edmunds] are all feeling good and excited to start competing! They all skate in the last two warmup groups.

The night will end with the pairs free skate. Brandon and Haven, and Alexa and Chris will skate in the third warmup group. By the end of the night, the first 2015 world champion will be crowned! Tune in if you can...it's definitely going to be an incredible event!

As for the men and dance, we have a day of practice before starting/resuming competing Friday.

Sunday, March 22/Monday, March 23

No such thing as a "turbulence" free travel day

There is absolutely no travel day that Kori and I have experienced that has gone smoothly from start to finish. It's sort of that thing that makes traveling together so exciting and unpredictable...but we always make it where we need to go. On our trip to Shanghai, the craziness occurred before we even got to the airport...

Emily, one of the coaches at the rink I train at (Colorado Sports Center), was kind enough to wake up before 5 a.m. to drive me and Kori to the airport. She picked Kori up first, and then headed over to the Olympic Training Center, where I'm currently living. When they arrived, I got all my bags from my room, except one, and rushed out to bring them to the car. Within a matter of seconds, I realized I had forgotten my room key and was locked out of the building!

During regular business hours, I would have been able to simply ring the main entrance's doorbell, and someone would have let me in...but during the 5 o'clock hour, the front desk is closed! I couldn't even get in the building. So Emily quickly drove to security and notified them that I had locked myself out.

I've come to know most of the security guards because they check my badge every time I enter the training center. They are extremely nice and are always there to help the athletes in any way they can. When the guard came to let me in, I quickly explained what had happened, and we both sprinted to my room, determined not to waste any more time.

Flying with Polina

After we got that early morning adventure out of the way, our travel day improved.

We had a layover in San Francisco, where we met up with Polina [Edmunds], her mom, her coach (David Glynn), U.S. Figure Skating Communications Manager Renee Felton and U.S. Figure Skating Executive Director David Raith. (I want to thank David Raith profusely for giving up his aisle seat and suffering through 12 hours of travel in my middle seat! Thanks to him, I was able to move around freely, stretch and hydrate as much as I needed to so that when I came off the plane, I felt somewhat normal!)

Flying with Polina was a blast! We spent a good portion of the flight talking in the open space by the bathrooms. We walked around a bit, stretched in the aisles and took some videos.

Channelling my inner Tristan

Before leaving Colorado, I downloaded the movie *Tristan and Isolde*. I read up on it and have researched what the story was about at the beginning of the skating season, but I watched the movie for the first time on the plane. I couldn't think of a better time to watch it than on my way to the world championships!

Sometimes you find inspiration where you least expect it

I sat next to a man on the plane, and it wasn't until nine hours into the flight that we struck up a conversation. Unexpectedly, our conversation lasted two hours! He was born and raised in a city called Wuhan, which is 500 miles from Shanghai. It was so interesting talking to someone who grew up across the world. But what made him so fascinating was how driven this man was. He was a chemist who decided to become a battery engineer. He moved to the U.S. 10 years ago to pursue his passion. He told me how he constantly wants to better himself, how whenever he feels that his current job has plateaued or if he finds himself in a position where he can no longer grow as an engineer, he looks for a new job. He talked about the feeling of being too comfortable in a job and always trying to push himself outside of his comfort zone.

It was so special connecting with someone who was raised in another part of the world, working in a completely different field than me yet sharing the same mentality as I do in terms of the way I train as an athlete. Kori [Ade] and Rohene [Ward] (my coach and choreographer, respectively) constantly change my programs, add choreography and make transitions harder when I get too comfortable with something. Every year they change the style of music I skate to so that I continue to expand my artistic style, and they push me beyond what I believe is capable. They challenge me to continue growing as an athlete and performer.

Dumplings!!!

As I've heard from multiple people, Christina Gao discovered this dumpling restaurant near our hotel that everyone says is absolutely delicious. While on the flight, Polina mentioned how Christina took her there during Cup of China last fall, and that she has been craving it ever since.

Polina wasn't kidding! She showed us multiple pictures of the half fried/half steamed dumplings, and upon arriving in Shanghai, that's the first place she went. With all the amazing hype surrounding this place, I decided to tag along...and, WOW, were those dumplings incredible! I got the shrimp dumplings: They had a perfectly soft, steamed top with a hard, crunchy bottom. I'm definitely going back again...and again...and again!

It was the perfect way to end the night!



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