

Jeremy Abbott leads way again

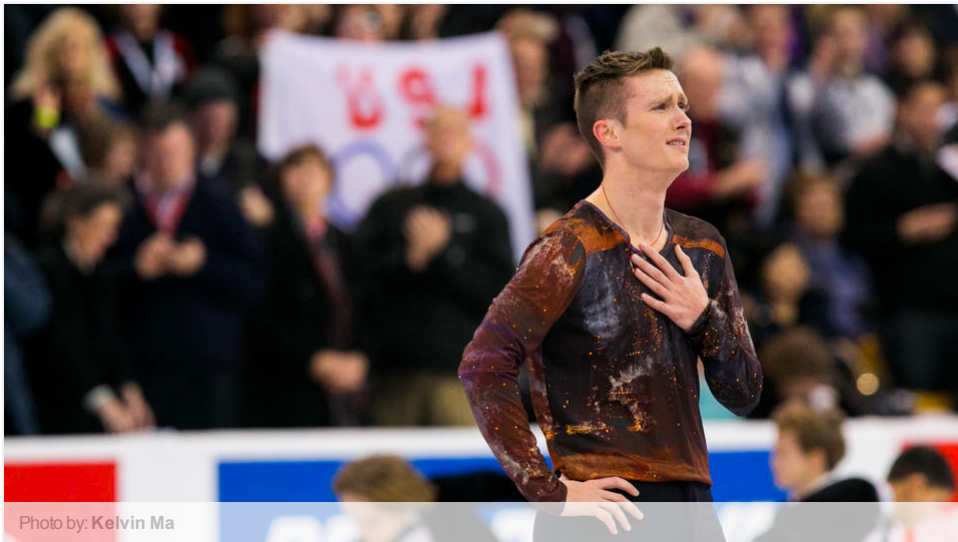


Photo by: Kelvin Ma

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EMOTIONAL MOMENT: Jeremy Abbott reacts after wrapping up a fourth national championship — and second trip to the Olympics — with a second place in yesterday's free skate at the Garden.

Monday, January 13, 2014

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By: Kat Hasenauer Cornetta

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In his last U.S. Figure Skating Championships, Jeremy Abbott nearly ran out of time.

As the short program leader skated to center ice for his free program yesterday, he did not realize how much time he was taking. When he heard the audience counting down, Abbott wondered exactly what they were counting for — until he realized it was how much time he had to get into his opening pose before he would be disqualified.

"I've never cut it that close before," Abbott said. "I was going over my goals. I didn't know my time was running out until they started counting. I had to race into my spot."

Abbott put the distraction behind him and went on to win his fourth U.S. national championship. His free program score of 174.41 wasn't record breaking like his Friday short program, but it got Abbott another title and a spot on his second Olympic team.

Abbott opened his program, set to the music of Muse, with a clean quadruple toe loop. He landed a giant triple axel, but then doubled the triple toe loop on the end of the combination. He popped his triple-flip, triple-toe combination, and under-rotated his second triple axel.

Abbott didn't let the bobbles hold him back, though, and landed a triple-lutz, double-toe, double-toe combination into a triple loop as the program drew to a close.

"That last triple lutz combination into the triple loop was the hardest part of my program," he said. "I relied on my grit and experience. I knew I did what I came here to do."

After he finished, Abbott broke down at the realization his skate was good enough to get him to Sochi for a second Olympics, and that it would be his last at nationals.

"I was trying to take it all in," he said.

Silver medalist Jason Brown actually won the free skate, earning a 182.61 for his Riverdance program that included two triple-jump combinations. His lack of a quad in either program, however, left him with just an overall score of 270.08.

"I've trained so hard and worked so hard to put a program out like that in this situation," said Brown, the two-time world junior championships medalist.

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The result gave Brown the second men's Olympic team spot, something he wasn't sure he was capable of until a few months ago.

"It wasn't until the midpoint of this season that I believed that this could be a reality," Brown said. "I got more and more confident that this could be a reality."

Last year's national champion Max Aaron jumped from fourth place in the short program to third overall (260.44) with jumps backloaded into the last half of his free skate for scoring bonuses.

Ross Miner's "Boston Strong" free skate elicited much emotion from his hometown crowd, but jump problems and a nagging ankle injury left the Watertown resident in seventh overall (224.81).

"I knew that this was really an opportunity to show this program," Miner said. "I've got to say that's going to be one of the most meaningful programs when I look back, when I get a little older."

Wakefield's Stephen Carriere stumbled on his opening quadruple toe loop, but redeemed his 12th-place short program performance with seven triple jumps, and high-graded step sequences and spins, to move into 10th overall with a 203.25.

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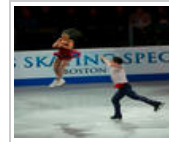
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