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Volosozhar and Trankov Win Gold

By The Moscow Times

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Tatyana Volosozhar and Maxim Trankov celebrating after their victory, which brought both of them to tears. **Alexander Demianchuk**

SOCHI — There were roars and tears as Tatyana Volosozhar and Maxim Trankov produced a stirring free skate to become the first duo to capture two gold medals at the same Olympics by winning the pairs title on Wednesday.

Three days after capturing the team event, Volosozhar and Trankov kept up Russia's gold rush at the Iceberg Skating Palace with a "Jesus Christ Superstar" performance that left the couple in tears and the home crowd in raptures.

The world and European champions obliterated the opposition with a total score of 236.86 to give Russia their 13th Olympic pairs title.

Kseniya Stolbova and Fyodor Klimov made it a one-two finish for the hosts, albeit 18.18 points behind the champions, while Germany's Alyona Savchenko and Robin Szolkowy finished third despite two falls.

"I was crying because I felt so many emotions, nerves, concentration. I am still nervous and shaking but I am also so happy," said Volosozhar, her make-up streaked by tears.

Her partner added: "We are like two halves of the same person, we are like twins. We always know where each other is, feel each other, we are always together and we share the same moments.''

"Today was a big day for all of Russia. Two of our couples have skated very well and I think everyone in our big country is pleased. It was the hardest job of our lives.

"We dealt with huge pressure today. We already have gold in the team event but this is the realization of the goal and the dream of our lives."

Among those giving them a prolonged standing ovation were Lyudmila Belousova and Oleg Protopopov, the husband-and-wife team who won the first-ever gold medal for the Soviet Union at the 1964 Innsbruck Games.

"This gold medal is for all the Russian people especially because we dominated pairs skating [by winning 12 successive titles] since the 1964 Olympics," Trankov said.

Volosozhar and Trankov expected a tough battle with Szolkowy and Savchenko but in the end it was not even close.

The Germans, who skated last, needed a world record 157.22 to gatecrash the Russian party but those aspirations vanished just moments into their "Nutcracker" free skate.

First Szolkowy stumbled on to the ice attempting a triple toeloop and things went from bad to worse in the dying seconds as Savchenko went flying on to her bottom.

It left Szolkowy fuming and Savchenko shaking her head in despair as the four-time world champions realized they had no chance of improving on their bronze medal finish from four years ago.

"My triple toeloop felt good in the air and the next moment I was sitting on the ice. It was not a good skate today. We wanted much more, having the bronze medal feels like losing," Szolkowy said after they finished fourth in the free skate but earned a bronze thanks to the cushion they had carried over from the short program.

Russia's golden couple were also far from perfect, with Volosozhar touching down with one hand following a throw triple loop and the duo going off sync in one of their combination spins.

However, the glitches did not stop them from mesmerizing the crowd as they flew through their triple Salchows, delivered perfect landings from their triple toeloop-double toeloop combination and showed off their core muscle strength during gravity-defying lifts.

It was little wonder that as soon as the final notes of their music had ended, Trankov roared to the heavens and then collapsed on to his knees as he slid across the ice with both arms raised triumphantly.

He then crouched over to kiss the ice as his partner stared in bewilderment, with a look on her face that seemed to say: "Where have you disappeared to?"

When Trankov finally had the energy to pick himself off the ground, there was a deluge of tears flowing down his cheeks and Volosozhar went up to him to share an embrace.

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