

Valieva, 15, Completes Russian Euro Skate Sweep Ahead of Olympics

By [AFP](#)

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Russia also claimed titles in the men's event, pairs and ice dance. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Russia's Kamila Valieva, just 15 years old, hammered home her status as Olympic Games gold medal favorite on Saturday when she swept to the European title in Tallinn.

Valieva, in her first season on the senior circuit, led a Russian sweep of the women's podium with her 259.06 points enough to defeat world champion Anna Shcherbakova (237.42 points) and Alexandra Trusova (234.36).

Russia also claimed titles in the men's event, pairs and ice dance in a stunning performance less than three weeks before the Winter Olympics start in Beijing on Feb. 4.

"I am so happy, there are so many emotions that I can't put them into words," said Valieva who skated to "Bolero."

"The medal means that I don't just come to the practices for nothing and I guess the most important for me is not to burn out after this season, to calm down as much as possible and try to make the audience happy with my performances.

"I don't know what will happen tomorrow, I live with today but am so happy with today being at the European Championships, it's a childhood dream."

In Thursday's short programme, Valieva had set a new world record of 90.45 points after a flawless performance to "In Memoriam."

It bettered her previous world best mark of 87.42 points at the Russian Grand Prix in November.

Earlier on Saturday, Victoria Sinitsina and Nikita Katsalapov retained their ice dance title.

Sinitsina and Katsalapov won with a total of 217.96 points, ahead of compatriots Alexandra Stepanova and Ivan Bukin, who scored 213.20, and Italians Charlene Guignard and Marco Fabbri on 207.97.

Their main rivals for Olympic gold, French pair Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron, the 2018 Olympic runners-up, opted to miss the event in Tallinn as a health precaution ahead of the Beijing Games.

"These European Championships will be in our hearts for a very long time," said Sinitsina after dancing to Rakhmaninov's "Piano Concerto No. 2."

The winners obtained their best total of this Olympic winter.

But, with two scores above the 220 points in the Turin and Grenoble Grand Prix in November, the French pair still hold an edge in their long-distance duel.

Sinitsina and Katsalapov won their first European title in 2020, narrowly edging the French pair, who had won the previous five titles.

The Russians also took the world title last March after the Montreal-based French duo opted to skip the event in Stockholm following a Covid-hit season.

It was a memorable tournament for Russia in the Estonian capital.

Teenager Mark Kondratiuk marked his European figure skating championship debut with the men's title.

In the pairs, Anastasia Mishina and Alexander Galliamov claimed the European crown to add to their world championship triumph last year.

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