



Stars on Ice Begins 15th Season Ilia Kulik Shines in Third Year with Tour



All the Ilia
news that
fits, we print

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By Rebecca Patrick

LAKE PLACID, NY - It was a bumpy ride to the start of the fifteenth season of *Stars on Ice*. During the show's rehearsals in September, Tara Lipinski injured her hip and had to undergo surgery. In November, it was announced that Katia Gordeeva, who had completed rehearsals, had decided to take a year off and Yuka Sato would replace her. If that wasn't cause enough for emotion, this season marks the last full year on tour for Scott Hamilton, the show's co-founder.

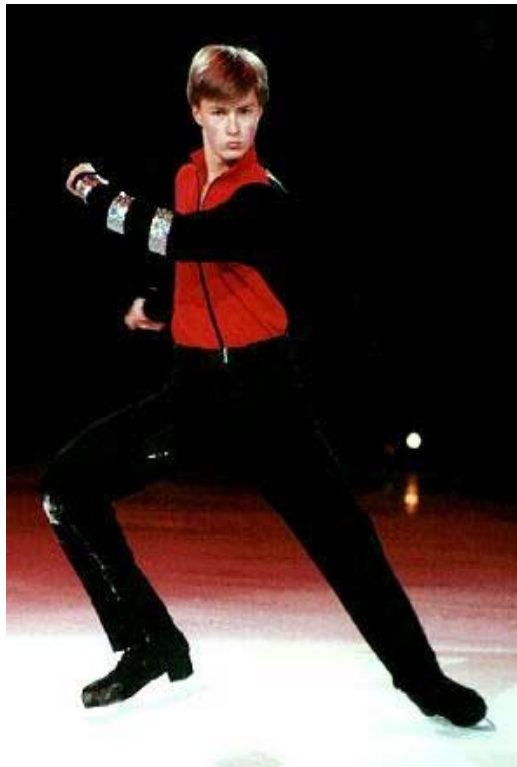
Understandably a bit rougher around the edges than prior years, the annual kickoff show took place as scheduled in Lake Placid, New York on November 25, 2000. Lipinski, still recovering from her injury, gamely participated, but wisely performed only double jumps. Despite the entire cast's lack of rehearsal time together, the overall content of the show was a notch above that of the past few tours, with Ilia Kulik and Kurt Browning serving as standouts throughout the evening.

Let's Get It On

More subdued than openings in the past, "Let's Get It On" showcased care-free and sensual choreography that grabbed the audience. Ilia Kulik and Gorsha Sur captured this mood particularly well. Keeping up the trend of recent years, everyone got into the act of pair skating, but not with their normal partners. Denis Petrov flipped Jenni Meno up in the air and caught her with her legs wrapped around his waist into a spin. Todd Sand did a two-handed star-lift with Sato and an elegant overhead lift with Renee Roca. Kulik and Kristi Yamaguchi performed the opening's most polished lift, an inverted platter with a wonderful, sexy exit where Yamaguchi came down between Kulik's legs, holding onto one of his hands and lunging backward.

The men also did a series of lifts where a woman is passed from one man to the next. For example, Sato

started in an overhead lift with Petrov and then as she descended, was grabbed around the waist by Kulik for a dance lift and swirl. However, none of these continuing group lifts looked smooth and made for too much going on at once. That said, more practice and better spacing between the groups could make all the difference. The section ended as it began with the cast holding hands in a circle facing the audience.



Rebecca

"Drive/Driven" is serious business

The first half closed with the witty "Tunnel Vision," a sneak peek at the backstage happenings on *Stars on Ice*. Complete with microphones to comment on each other, the skaters' "true personalities" emerged as they performed to Motown classics. This ensemble included the entire cast and had several memorable skits. A cocky Kulik strutted out to the tune, "Mr. Big Stuff," as he flirted with the female skaters and they tried to resist. Reminiscent of Danny DeVito and Arnold Schwarzeneg-

Drive/Driven

"It's a brand new program, but I think it has lots of potential," said Kulik referring to his "Drive/Driven" effort choreographed by Christopher Dean. The number wasn't created until Kulik and Dean arrived in Lake Placid for the show's final rehearsals, but it proved to be one of the show's highlights. Two moves in this program were simply unbelievable. Kulik did a forward lunge to one knee, turning to a backward lunge, then to an Ina Bauer directly into a triple axel. These moves were fast and connected and more impressive than any jump entrance by today's eligible skaters. He also did a half split while going full speed down the ice and slid several feet before smoothly popping up.

I Heard It Through the Grapevine

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Unique Kulik Choreography at World Pros

By Lynn Rutherford

WASHINGTON D.C. - At the 2000 Hallmark World Professional Figure Skating Championships, held in Washington D.C. on December 8-9, Ilia faced off against defending champion Alexei Urmanov; two-time Olympic Bronze Medalist Philippe Candeloro; and U.S. Champion and World Bronze Medallist Rudy Galindo.

The first evening of the competition featured the skater's technical programs. Using a 10-point scale, judges awarded the skaters two marks--technical, accounting for 60% of the evening's total score, and artistic, accounting for 40% of the evening's total score. On the second evening, the competitors performed their artistic programs; this time, the technical marks accounted for 40%

"My legs were feeling so well"

of the total and the artistic marks, 60%. On both nights, high and low scores were discarded. The totals for the technical and artistic programs were added to arrive at the final placements.

For his technical program, Ilia chose "Drive/Driven," choreographed by Christopher Dean. While this program emphasizes interesting body movements and complex footwork over traditional technical skating elements, it also includes three triple jumps, all with extremely difficult entries. Unfortu-



Krew Reunites in D.C.

By Laurie Asseo

It was cold outside, but a dozen Krew members had a warm and happy dinner at Teasm Restaurant before Ilia's artistic program at the World Pros competition in Washington D.C. I hung my little "ILIA" sign from a chair to let everyone know they were in the right place; actually, the easiest way to find us was to follow the sound of the laughter.

Of course we had just watched Ilia's technical program, "Drive/Driven," on TV that afternoon - love that costume and his beautiful moves! - and we heard from Mayi and others about Ilia's competition at Grand Slam. Junko and Marjaana had traveled the farthest to be with their Fellow Ilia Fans (Japan and Finland respectively), and Terisa arrived with a tale about snagging a great seat at the last minute Friday night. And Andrea and Kara are always the life of the party. In fact, one of the best things about being an Ilia fan and a Krew member is the chance to get together with all these friends again and again. Unfortunately, we were having so much fun we forgot to take a picture!

We all walked to the MCI Center together, and we yelled our loudest for Ilia at the show both nights. "It's the best reward I can get," he said on TV when he was asked about the audience's huge reaction to "Rockit." I am certain I saw him wave at Junko when her "We Love Ilia!" banner was unfurled, and he also smiled and waved at me and my little "ILIA" sign. That's the best reward WE can get!

Laurie Asseo is a journalist in Washington D.C. and a member of Kulik's Krew.

nately, Ilia failed to hang on to the landing of his first triple, the axel, which was attempted out of a series of three lunges. From there, he executed his flying "Kulik" into a sitspin and landed a strong double axel out of difficult footwork. However, he doubled a planned triple flip jump. Near the end of his program, he landed his only triple of the night, a toe loop.

The panel of judges for the men's event consisted entirely of former national, world and Olympic champions, including U.S. champion Barbara Roles Williams; British and World ice dance champion Bernard Ford; Canadian and World champion Petra Burka; Olympic pairs champion Oleg Vasiliev; U.S. champion Janet Lynn; U.S. champion Debbie Thomas; and three-time Olympic pairs champion Irina Rodnina. While these

individuals certainly have the knowledge to appreciate difficult choreography, as usual, there was a bias to rewarding the skaters who completed the most triple jumps. Therefore, after the first night of competition, Ilia found himself in third place with 77.9 points, five-tenths (.5) of a point behind two-time Olympic Bronze Medallist Philippe Candeloro. Though Candeloro's "It Was a Very Good Year" program had far less challenging choreography, it did feature six different triple jumps, included a clean triple axel/double toe loop combination.

With Artur Dmitriev, his wife Tatiana and Oleg Ovsianikov at the reception



Sunglasses, or Triples? No Compromise for Kulik

For his artistic program, Ilia chose the inventive and entertaining "Rockit," which he choreographed himself. In this program, Ilia - portraying a broken toy - executes an amazing series of rubber-legged moves and footwork sequences, all while wearing dark sunglasses.

While "Rockit" stirred the crowd, it failed to sufficiently impress the panel of judges. Ilia's marks ranged from 9.6 to 9.8 for technical and from 9.8 to 9.9 for artistic. The reason for these relatively



Press conference

low technical marks, which landed him in third place overall behind Candeloro and Galindo, was again the lack of triple jumps. In "Rockit," Kulik doubled three planned triples: the Lutz, flip and toe loop. Both Candeloro and Galindo landed three triples in their second programs.

Ilia, however, counted the evening as a success. "Tonight it was just too dark for the glasses, but I'm so happy with the run-through [of "Rockit"] with all the dancing parts and movement parts," he said at the World Pro press conference. "My legs were feeling so well."

Kulik stressed, however, that he intended to perform "Rockit" with three triples. "It's not really like I was selecting to do the doubles. We had a light run-through a couple days ago and it was good then and it didn't feel that dark. Maybe there was some additional lighting upstairs and it wasn't that dark. Or, maybe it looked like this or maybe I am crazy or something," he laughed. "I should have probably been practicing in complete darkness, and been able to do the jumps with my eyes closed, but I was challenging myself by putting on the glasses."

So, why not perform the program without the sunglasses? "I would prefer to have the glasses in the program and miss the jumps and create the image and create the whole routine than with no glasses and do the jumps," Kulik explained. "This routine does make sense with the glasses because the face shouldn't really be alive. If you see the eyes, you can see if the person is alive or not. And, I want to create the toy image and glasses really work for this."

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All photos this page: Rebecca Patrick

Lake Placid

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ger in the movie, *Twins*, Petrov and Hamilton did a hysterical little routine that featured side-by-side footwork and even a Detroiter! "The Sandman," formally known as Todd Sand, stripped down to leather pants and a muscle shirt and showed off his wild side much to his wife, Jenni Meno's chagrin. Off to the side, Meno's red hair was teased to new heights to match her disgust over her husband's behavior. While there was little actual skating in this ensemble, it was highly entertaining and showed a lot of originality on the part of the show's choreographers.

The Chairman

Next up was a robotic and entertaining group number choreographed by Christopher Dean and featuring Kulik, Browning, Roca, Sur and Steven Cousins skating with chairs. Set to "Terminator" by West-Bam, this was ten minutes of constant, sometimes frenetic action as the skaters pushed the chairs, flew across the ice on them and even played musical chairs. It has a very robotic look due to the choreography and the skaters' attire - gray suits and modern aviator-style goggles for the men and a straight purple dress and mirrored sunglasses for Roca.

Kulik remained standing on the ice at the conclusion of the "chair number" and was joined by Lipinski, who took off his jacket and replaced his goggles with sunglasses. Lipinski, wearing a simple, hot pink dress symbolized the dash of color to bring Kulik's "robot" to life. They proceeded to do a jazz duet to "Moanin'" by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. The lack of rehearsal time

really showed in this number as Lipinski and Kulik were not in unison and little interaction existed between the two. While it was understandable to put the two reigning Olympic champions in a number together, Kulik is the show's fastest skater and Lipinski is one of the slowest. The number should get better with more practice, but Yuka Sato, known for her speed and footwork, would be a better choice to compliment Kulik's abilities.

Rockit

A wood box was then pushed onto the ice. It had various toys and a gloved hand dangling out of the top.

The hand belonged to Kulik, who was the jack-in-the-box. Creaking music began and Kulik flipped himself out of the box for the start of "Rockit" by Herbie Hancock. "This program is supposed to represent a broken toy," said Kulik. "I choreographed it myself during the summertime and just had a blast working on it." Kulik went on to say that he originally tried to find a break dance instructor, but didn't have any luck and turned to videotapes and taught himself. Needless to say, he did an excellent job. This program was Kulik at his best - with unbelievably fast, flexible moves and footwork - and the crowd loved it. With this effort, Kulik has really come into his own as both a

Rebecca Patrick



Relaxed in rehearsal

choreographer and a performer.

Always

The finale was a continuation of Hamilton's program and for the most part was his goodbye to the cast and their opportunity to thank him. Yamaguchi saluted him with "If It's Magic," then

the rest of the cast came onto the ice. Hamilton skated around all of them, making a personal gesture to each one. During the dance section of the finale, Kulik and Sur once again demonstrated that their ability to move and feel the music is a notch above the rest as they soulfully glided to "Always."

After the closing number, Hamilton spoke of his fond memories of Lake Placid, *Stars on Ice* and its cast. It was an emotional event for him, the first of his farewells on the tour. Hamilton said he was pleased to have Kulik and Lipinski - the two reigning Olympic singles champions - to anchor the show and to offer them a place to develop as performers. "You have to let the next generation of skaters really put their mark on it and really let them take the tour to new heights. And after fifteen years, that's not a bad thing to happen."

Rebecca Patrick is a professional journalist and photographer and a member of Kulik's Krew.



Courtesy CBS

Same Show, Different Night

By Sarah A. Cunningham

MEMPHIS, TN and LITTLE ROCK, AK - Crowded parking lot. Long lines at the concession stands. Little girls hoping for a glimpse of their favorite skater. Some things are the same at any Target *Stars on Ice* performance - in 65 cities! But there are differences. I saw that for myself at SOI Memphis and SOI Little Rock. Same show, but sometimes different.

Memphis was first. One year since I had last seen Ilia skate, and I could hardly wait for the show to start. I fought the traffic, I stood in line for souvenirs, and repeated those procedures the very next evening at Little Rock; so put "lines," of cars and people, in the similarity column. And there were more similarities:

- Both of the shows started about ten minutes later than advertised; that seems to be a common practice.
- The absolute champion of both nights was Scott Hamilton, although the crowd was even more receptive to him in Little Rock.
- The performances, other than Scott's, that seemed to get the greatest reaction out of both crowds were Kurt Browning's "Don't Fence Me In," Roca and Sur's "Everything Changes" and of course, Ilia's "Rockit."

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Ilia's "Blues"

One Fan's Perspective

the 1999-2000 *Stars on Ice* Tour and the year's competitions. The music is pure jazz instrumental and its cutting edge perfectly aligns itself with Ilia's flowing edges and sky high jumps.

Ilia brings out the intensity of the music and enriches the performance for the audience. The program takes the observer into a story of anger and it makes for a fascinating ride. "Blues for Narada" as seen through the eyes of this Ilia fan, represents the conflict in us all, fighting through it and eventually overcoming it.

Ilia bursts out of nowhere to take an immediate command of the ice. He edges around slowly as if trying to keep the emotion under his control. He turns a triple loop that ends in a one-leg spin that yearns for tranquility, but the anger must be acknowledged and dealt with. He shields his face with hand movements as if trying to hide or escape from the intensity that lives inside. Gliding down the ice, Ilia performs the triple flip. It builds. Something is coming. It has come.

Ilia goes into a mini-Russian split straight into a knee slide, as if to say "take it away, I do not want it anymore." The skating becomes faster, almost frantic. Launching into the triple axel like a man on a mission, Ilia lands the monster jump flawlessly. He runs, arms outstretched, head long into passion,

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By Sarah A. Cunningham

Anguish...fever...Ilia Kulik.

An eloquently powerful introduction to Ilia's emotion-packed program, "Blues for Narada" (music by Gary Moore) performed during

World Pros

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As always, Ilia emphasized that his main goal was to skate well in the upcoming *Stars on Ice* tour. "I'm doing the program on tour and I don't think I'm going to have much of a problem with the jumps, especially since I will be doing it more and more," he said. However, the message from World Pros was clear: to win professional titles, Ilia will have to land more triple jumps, including his triple axel.

2000 Hallmark World Professional Figure Skating Championship

Men's Final Standings

Philippe Candeloro	196.6
Rudy Calindo	195.9
Ilia Kulik	195.6
Alexei Urmanov	195.2

Lynn Rutherford is a marketing executive in New York, a lifelong skating fan and a member of Kulik's Krew.

Haiku Contest Winners

You voted them in: presenting the winners of last summer's contest! All of the entries were then presented to Ilia in a booklet commemorating the Second Anniversary of the signing of "Kulik's Krew" as his official fan club (August 30, 2000).

Artistry, his gift,
reminds me of God's light when
life makes me forget.

Robyn Lee, 1st place
Los Angeles, California
USA

Power and passion
Caressing the ice: Charming,
Disarming Ilia.

Ann Stone, 2nd place
Memphis, Tennessee
USA

One midsummer day
He is standing near the bay
Thinking of Moscow.....

Miki Aoyagi, 3rd place
Fujiyoshida, Yamanashi
Japan

The End of the Season

"I wanted to see how my head



Blues

(Continued from page 3)

trying to leave the unhappiness behind. Ilia does the Kulik Spiral, he kicks his free leg out, lashing at the emotion welling up inside him. He finally admits it; the emotion wins.

Kulik goes into abrupt arm movements that define with vivid clarity his terrible anger. He propels himself into a triple Lutz. He quickly turns as if freeing himself from the emotion - yet it remains. He stops. The outstretch of his arms begging the pain to leave him. A tight camel spin permits a glance into the future, perhaps a future filled with peace. A change of direction in the camel spin signifies a turning point in our performer's character. Ilia goes into a sit spin and gradually stands up in the spin with one leg crossed over the other one at the knee. He is standing in defiance of his maddening passion. He is ready to face it.

Then into a split that represents the transition he has made. Quickly getting up, he turns a triple toe. He stops. He throws his hands up as if to say, "YES, I AM going to win." Ilia next pulls out a half death drop, as if implying the anger no longer exists within his soul. The character within pulls out and goes into a knee slide, as he says a prayer of thanks. Immediately pulls himself into a quick, slight jump in the air, a jump of



exhaustion. Some quick arm movements rid Ilia of the last traces of anger. Ilia performs a butterfly symbolizing his new flight in life while a double axel makes obvious the fading emotion. Another Kulik Spiral slams the door on the unfor-giving anger for good. A slight Besti into a sit spin and a change in direction mid spin, shows a new direction in life and attitude when he changes to a forward scratch spin. An ending death drop into a layback position on the ice allows the last drop of fire to leave our Iliushka.

"Blues for Narada" is a beautiful program that showcases Ilia's strength in artistry. With this program, Ilia provides strong evidence that he has talents in choreographing his own routines. The program leaves one longing for one more look at this gentleman with the flowing blond hair. His edges, his jumps, his presentation all blend perfectly to create a powerhouse of emotions for himself and his fans. The intensity Ilia devotes to this program is what breathes new life into "Blues" each time he performs it. This is a must-see for both fans of the technical side of skating and the artistic side of skating. It surely allows us to see what figure skating was meant to be, and in Ilia's case, is.

Sarah A. Cunningham is a journalism major at the University of Memphis and a member of Kulik's Krew.

Same Show

(Continued from page 3)

- The one skater who appeared surprised by the warm hand she received by both audiences was Yuka Sato, last minute replacement for Ekaterina Gordeeva. Both crowds saw grace and strength, and rewarded her accordingly.
- On a more personal note, I was joined at both shows by fellow Krew members Doug and Sherry Brown, who made these performances even more fun!

Give or take a few seats, the DeSoto County Civic Center (Memphis) and the Altell Arena (Little Rock) are the same in size so neither offers the "intimacy" advantage. But Little Rock felt surprisingly empty while the crowd was clearly larger in Memphis.

Despite the differences in audience size, the personal interactions between fans and skaters remained the same. I was treated to many smiles and a few waves from our Iliushka, while Gorsha Sur played to us, as did Denis Petrov, Scott Hamilton, Kurt, and Steven Cousins. Scott even said "Hi" in the middle of a number.

I came prepared to support my favorite skater at both shows. I had a small size "Ilia" banner courtesy of fellow Krew member, Laurie Asseo. In Memphis, I waved it all night, always careful not to constrict someone's view or distract a skater. I followed the same rules in Little Rock, but much to my surprise, the *Stars on Ice* security director asked us to refrain from holding the sign up until the end of the show. Strange, there were many other signs in the crowd that night. All one

could do was laugh or get upset; I chose to laugh.

This year's show did not seem as fluid as last year's. There were more cold spots in between numbers. But the variety keeps the show interesting year after year. There were no major differences in the technical side of the show but there were a few 'special events,' like Gorsha falling out of his chair during "Tunnel Vision." Ilia had a good laugh about that, as did the rest of the cast. The two shows were very clean with no falls on jumps, except a trip by Scott.

I am very proud to note, that Ilia was very "on" during both shows and delivered all his triples with clean landings. There was nothing technically different between the two shows for him.

Seeing two shows back to back is a great experience. The similarities are obvious, but there are just as many subtle difference like the differing atmospheres in the two arenas. The most important aspect of both shows for me was a similarity, not a difference that I was there to support Ilia Kulik and he was, in fact, at both shows. Thank you Ilia, for two wonderful evenings!

Sarah Cunningham and Sherry & Doug Brown: Proud Southern members of Kulik's Krew.



Sherry & Sarah with Laurie's