



Ilia Wins Pro Championship

All the Ilia
news that
fits, we print



Ilia wins with "Pick Up the Pieces"

Photo © J. Barry Mittan

By Laurie Asseo

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Ilia Kulik won the Hallmark Skaters' Championship on Dec. 8 with a high-energy performance of "Pick Up the Pieces" and his Krew cheering him on from the stands and at home, watching the live TV broadcast.

"I was in a zone. It was fun," Ilia said after his scores came up, including five perfect 10s. "I love this program, it's fun music and people love it and just, you know, energy flow."

The audience saw two nights of tremendous and very entertaining skating at the Hallmark championship, the replacement for the old World Professional Championship at the MCI Center. One thing held true from the former competition — the emphasis on jumps in judging pro competition.

Jumps trumped footwork, and Ilia was ready. For the first night's technical competition, he brought his Olympic long program, "Rhapsody in Blue," which he had performed earlier in the week during a celebration of Olympic champions in Dallas. That show hadn't been televised yet, but we'd heard reports of his new costume to replace the yellow-and-black giraffe shirt he gave away in 1998.

So when we saw Ilia standing in the wings in his black-and-white

striped vest, we knew we were in for a memorable treat. He skated beautifully, drawing on his many performances of this program in 1997 and 1998. Even his hand positions were the same, and by the second jump he looked so confident it was certain that he would land them all. Ilia landed seven triples, including two huge triple axels, by far the most in the competition. It was an authoritative performance, and also very nostalgic for his fans — those who got to see him perform "Rhapsody in Blue" live years ago and those who didn't.

"I actually was surprised that it would be so good," Ilia said later, as quoted by the Associated Press. "It's just somewhere inside; you never forget it. I feel like this program I probably could do my whole life long."

After the first night Ilia was in front of Kurt Browning, who performed a spirited version of U2's "Elevation" with fast footwork and four triples. Brian Orser, who got lots of cheers from the audience with "Sir Duke," was in third place, followed by Steven Cousins and Philippe Candeloro.

The best was to come Saturday night. Ilia skated last among the men, so the nervous Krew had to wait through Candeloro's outlandish "George of the Jungle" and beautiful programs of "Belfast Child" by Cousins and "Somewhere in Time" by Orser, which included an homage to the old

(Continued on page 4)

Kulik Goes Solo-Crazy in 2002 Stars on Ice

By Rebecca Patrick

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. — The first *Stars on Ice* post-Scott Hamilton — the tour's co-founder and mainstay for 15 years — yearned to be hip, yet sophisticated and focused on its three Olympic ladies champions: Tara Lipinski, Kristi Yamaguchi and Katarina Witt.

The spotlight on the women didn't faze cast member and 1998 Olympic Champion Ilya Kulik. "Us guys get enough attention," he said, laughing. "It's great to do something that showcases the ladies. After all, they are an important part of our lives."

Besides the three female stars, the theme running throughout the show, particularly in the ensembles, was *Moulin Rouge*, the famous music halls of Paris that inspired the 2001 feature film of the same name. These establishments were known for their elaborate production numbers, singers, glitter and outrageous costumes. Though the cast members stopped short of breaking into song, the 2002 *Stars on Ice* featured more talking than ever before, including even a rap number.

In addition to Witt, who rejoined the show after a three-year absence, the tour welcomed two-time world champions and 1998 Olympic dance silver medalists Anjelika Krylova and Oleg Ovsiannikov, and Swiss spinning sensation Lucinda Ruh. Rounding out the cast were veterans Kurt Browning, Jenni Meno & Todd Sand, Denis Petrov and Steven Cousins.

The Opening

The show began with several spins by Ruh, dramatically lit to the music *Superstar*. It transitioned into the lively *Black Betty* by Ram Jam featuring the entire cast, with Kulik and Ruh paired together. There was plenty of playful dancing and the costumes were a standout: ladies in pink and red sequined tones with long boas and men in tight vinyl red pants and black shirts. As the men stepped aside, the six women strutted to the sexy *Lady Marmalade*.

Act I

Midway through the first act came the first of Ilya's three self-choreographed solos of the night. Ilya said the move to more solo programs and no duet was a conscious decision he and the show's director made before the season. "Sandra (Bezic) and I decided that it would be great to push myself to do three solos. I really feel it because it's such a challenge. The music and the nuances of each program are so different, and I will have to find ways to save energy and recover quickly," explained Ilya.

Rendezvous showcased Kulik's amazing speed and jumping ability. He said his goal with this effort was to "show that I could still do the difficult, technical elements." Mission accomplished. He executed two triple axels, a triple flip and a triple lutz, plus superb Russian split jumps and a dramatic knee slide. It was a welcome sight to see Kulik return to performing big, sweeping moves on the ice.

Ilya was back on center stage after only a brief break. "I barely have 12-15 minutes to recover. It's something I'm going to have to play with all season and see what I have to do to bounce back so quickly," Ilya said. Whatever he's

doing is working because the crowd really got going with this finger-snapping catchy tune, *Pick Up the Pieces* by Average White Band. Kulik showed personality throughout this number while doing amazingly fast, intricate footwork and three soaring jumps — triple flip, triple toe and double axel.

As Kulik finished his number, a lace-and-leather clad Lipinski, Yamaguchi and Witt skated to the ice with microphones. After calling them all *davas*, Kulik exited and the women proceeded to do a rap entitled G-O-L-D, all about being the Olympic Ladies Champions. At times the words were a little hard to understand and it seemed not the most effective way to showcase these talented women. Toward the end of the rap, Krylova, Meno and Ruh joined in the act.

Not to be outdone, Browning, Sand, Petrov and Cousins then appeared in bustiers, spandex and fishnet hose, plus long boas, to the tune *Because We Can*, a bawdy Can-Can. Unlike past group numbers to take the audience into intermission, this one needed to be longer, have more than a one-note feel and involve more interactions among the cast. Nevertheless, the crowd chuckled as the men got in touch with their feminine side. Mercifully though, not ALL the men were in drag!

Act II

Ilya's lone appearance in the second half, excluding the finale, came near the end with his spotlight to *Rubberband Man* by Yello. This program shows off his fast footwork and flexible positions, including a low-to-the-ice cantilever and a Wagenhoffer flying cartwheel. "The concept is a man that can do anything with his body," described Kulik. It was somewhat reminiscent of *Rockit*, his tour hit from last year.

The Finale

In an interesting choice, the finale was set to a collection of songs made famous by The Carpenters, with most, however, remixed with fresh vocals and much faster music. While using all original Carpenters songs would have been too monotonous and sweet, the new versions made the music almost unrecognizable. For example, Kulik skated to a jazzed-up version of *On Top of the World*.

On the fashion front, the men looked great in black pants and shirts that ran the gamut between white and black. In contrast, the women wore fabulous varying dress designs, all in delicate pink.

Stars on Ice producer Byron Allen remarked the show has "gone in a totally different direction" than in the past, without Hamilton.

Kulik admitted that because of Hamilton's departure the cast does feel more pressure to entertain this year. "When we stop and think about it, we realize this and feel more responsibility. However, when the show goes on that leaves your mind. All we think about is giving 100 percent."

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



© heartll

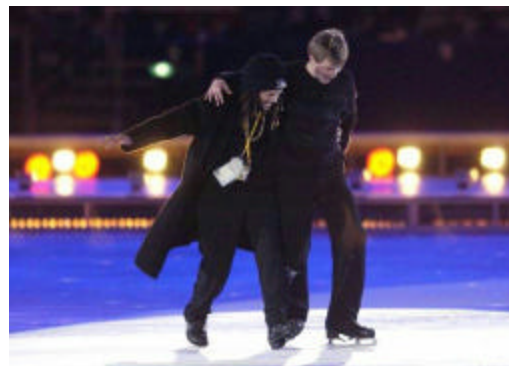
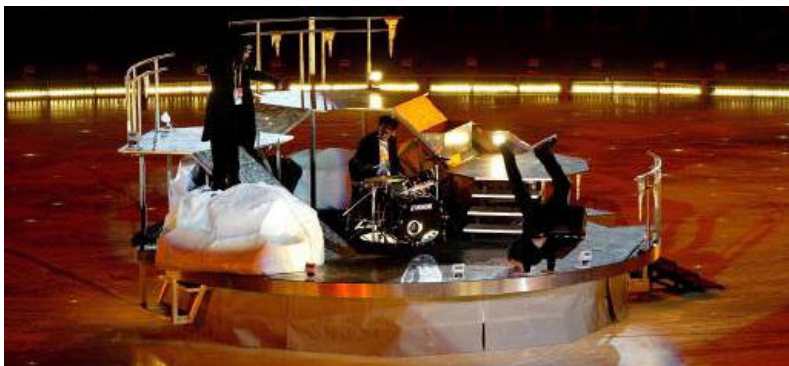
"Rendezvous" a classical beauty

songs made famous by The Carpenters, with most, however, remixed with fresh vocals and much faster music. While using all original Carpenters songs would have been too monotonous and sweet, the new versions made the music almost unrecognizable. For example, Kulik skated to a jazzed-up version of *On Top of the World*.



He's the "Rubberband Man"

© Rebecca Patrick



Photos © Allsport

Iliia and tap dancer Savion Glover jazz it up with the Harry Connick Jr. Orchestra

Two From Krew Skate at Olympic Ceremonies

Kulik's Krew was represented by two members in the 2002 Olympic ceremonies in Salt Lake City. Not only did our Krewmaster, Iliushka, have a featured role in the closing ceremony (see his chinstand above!), but Krew member Karen Kugler auditioned and won a skating role in the opening ceremony. Here is her report.

By Karen Kugler

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah — It has really been an exciting Olympics experience for me!

I had my audition for the Olympic ceremonies at the Salt Lake Sports Complex, otherwise known as the Steiner Ice Rink, the official practice rink for the 2002 Olympics, on June 28, 2001. Once we arrived, we had to check in and get a number to pin on our shirts. No one was allowed to watch any of the other groups audition. We were called out onto the rink, where Sarah Kawahara, the official choreographer for the Olympic ceremonies, led the audition.

The entire audition was filmed. First, each of us stood before the camera and introduced ourselves. Then we had a short warm-up period. Next we were led around the rink in a big figure-eight doing forward and backward stroking and cross-overs. Then we learned a short piece of choreography, which we performed to music. Sarah was very nice about showing us the steps as many times as we needed to see them.

We split into two groups and the steps were filmed twice, with each group taking a turn being in the front row. Afterward we were asked to perform a spin of our choice, then a jump of our choice, and then a move-in-the-field. I performed an upright forward scratch spin, a toe-loop and an Ina Bauer. The audition was over, and we were to be informed what part we had in September.

Rehearsals

In September I received confirmation that I would be in the ceremonies, and we were given our parts at a cast meeting in October. I was part of the snake in the "Land of Enchantment" segment of the "Western American Suite" in the opening ceremony. We were shown prototypes of our costumes and given a general idea of the different parts of the ceremonies, but at that time I wasn't sure exactly what part in the whole ceremony I would play.

Rehearsals began shortly thereafter at the ice rink. We mostly waited in the dressing room because our costumes and props weren't ready. About one month before the ceremonies, the rehearsals moved to the stadium. Most were at night. Things got a lot more exciting because we were working with everyone in the whole segment, not just the other skaters. All of the other "animals" were there with their props, and we got a much better idea of how things would come together. When we began to have all-day rehearsals (about eight), the dancers, pioneers etc. were working with us and our part of the ceremony really began to look dynamic.

We all held puppets/props, and our costumes were black bodysuits. The idea was to make the people holding the props disappear underneath them when the lights in the stadium were shown on us. I was able to keep warm by adding a light turtleneck sweater underneath the costume in addition to the silk long underwear that came with the costume.

The Performance

The night of the dress rehearsal and the final Olympic performance were unbelievably awe-inspiring! Sarah came through the holding area wishing us all good luck.

Skating out there with a stadium full of spectators, athletes and dignitaries was incredible! While skating I had to pay attention to what I was doing, but as I skated off at the end of our routine, I glanced around the arena to take in the whole picture. It is a night I'll always remember!

Ice Rink Volunteer

I was also a volunteer at the Steiner Ice Rink, which was the official practice rink for figure skating. I was there almost every other day for about three weeks. The first week before the opening ceremonies was a bit slow, but after the opening ceremonies everyone showed up.

The hardest people to adjust the music for were the ice dancers, because they wanted the music super-loud. It was wonderful to be able to see such outstanding ice skaters practice in person! I was also amazed at the never-ending supply of gorgeous costumes! The ice dancers particularly dress up for practice sessions, and all of their

clothes were brightly colored and very fancily decorated with sequins, rhinestones, fringe and ruffles. Naomi Lang & Peter Tchernyshev and Beata Handra & Charles Sinek, the U.S. ice dancers, were a little more conservative than the others. Gwendal Peizerat, Sasha Zhulin and Tatiana Tarasova all spoke to us asking for louder music.

After the controversy, I saw Jamie Sale and David Pelletier for the first time, as I was not scheduled for many pairs practices. Tamara Moskvina spoke to us while her skaters were practicing.

I enjoyed watching Michelle Kwan a lot. Except for one practice session, she was there all by herself. There were a lot of television cameras at the rink whenever she was there. Sasha Cohen and Sarah Hughes came to one of the practice sessions that I was attending, and they were both very good. Maria Butyrskaya and Julia Soldatova were the only Russian women who came to practices.

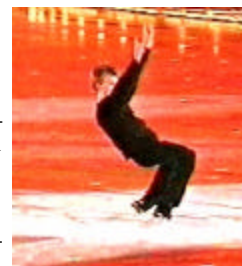
All the American men were at the first men's practice I attended. I spoke with Michael Weiss and his coach because we needed to have them fill out the forms for their music. Elvis Stojko practiced at two sessions I attended, but never skated his full program; he practiced mostly triple axel-triple toe combinations and spins. Emanuel Sandhu skated at only one session, and unfortunately that was where he hurt his knee. Alexei Yagudin practiced for about 20 minutes. I got to speak with him when the techs asked me to ask him what music he planned to use for his exhibition and encore.

I attended the men's competitions at the Delta Center. The tickets were good, and it was everything I hoped it would be.

Security was tight, but if you went early the lines weren't long. At the Steiner Rink people were always checking our badges.

The day before the opening ceremonies I saw the Olympic torch pass just down the street from where I live! It was exciting even though it only lasted about 30 seconds!

Karen Kugler lives in Salt Lake City and is a member of Kulik's Krew.



© NBC Olympics

Hallmark Pro
(Continued from page 1)

compulsory “school” figures.

Kurt was next with “Nyah,” his extremely popular flamenco program from last year’s *Stars on Ice* that commentator Scott Hamilton called his masterpiece. He skated very dramatically and his footwork was spectacular, but he doubled a salchow and stepped out of a double axel — the program originally was designed and performed with no jumps. Also, the lighting didn’t seem to enhance the program as well as during the SOI tour.

During the men’s warmup session and later as Ilia circled the ice during what seemed like an interminable television commercial break before his performance, he wasn’t doing a lot of jumps. Remember what he said after skating his Olympic short program? “If in your mind you are confident 100 percent that you will do it in the program, there is nothing to do in the warmup.” It seemed like a good sign.

And Ilia was confident. As “Pick Up the Pieces” began, he gave a grin as if to say, “wait till you see this!” The program was choreographed by Ilia and has gone on to become a crowd favorite at *Stars on Ice* this season. It’s short, only 2 minutes and 40 seconds, but he packed it with fun — a high triple axel, a triple flip, lots of fantastic footwork and best of all, special for Hallmark Pro, a deep cantilever right into a triple toe loop. The whole crowd was cheering and the energy in the arena was amazing. You could feel the energy level zooming up and up as he skated. Of course we in the Krew were yelling and waving our banners for him at the end.

But while the television audience was immediately told that Ilia had won, there was no announcement of the final result in the arena, and with the way the scores were weighted we couldn’t be sure. Krew members pulled out our cellphones and tried to reach

friends watching at home, but didn’t immediately get through. So Nancy and I ran over to the announcers’ booth and asked Sandra Bezic (who was off-camera at the moment) who won, Kurt or Ilia? “Ilia,” she said, and needless to say, we were pleased. By the time we got back to the group, Mayi also had gotten word of the results by phone.

NBC’s Beth Ruyak asked Ilia about skating “Rhapsody in Blue” the night before. “That one I was in a zone yesterday,” Ilia said. “It was absolutely great. Absolutely love this program and my technique’s still there; you know, just love it.”

She also asked him whether it was a sentimental time for him, with the next Olympics approaching.

“Yeah, it’s sentimental. I’ll be, you know, watching the Olympics and cheering for the guys and I’ll have fun with watching it,” Ilia said. But he said he didn’t view his 1998 Olympic victory as the high point in his life. “I think life’s just growing up every day, you’re growing up every day, so nothing stopped there.”

“I try to connect more after three years of *Stars on Ice*,” he told AP later that night. “It’s so fun and so much more energy. Sixty shows on the road — you’ve got to try to get some energy back and keep going.”

The other competitions were very entertaining too. Yuka Sato skated to “The Color of Roses” to win a close contest with Kristi Yamaguchi in the ladies’ portion.

The pairs were won by Oksana Kazakova and Artur Dmitriev, skating a dramatic and very original program to “Matrix,” portraying a puppeteer and his rebellious puppet. In dance, the winners were Anjelika Krylova and Oleg Ovsiannikov, skating “The Last of the Mohicans,” which has been very well received by audiences during the current *Stars on Ice* tour.

Laurie Asseo is a journalist and a member of Kulik’s Krew.

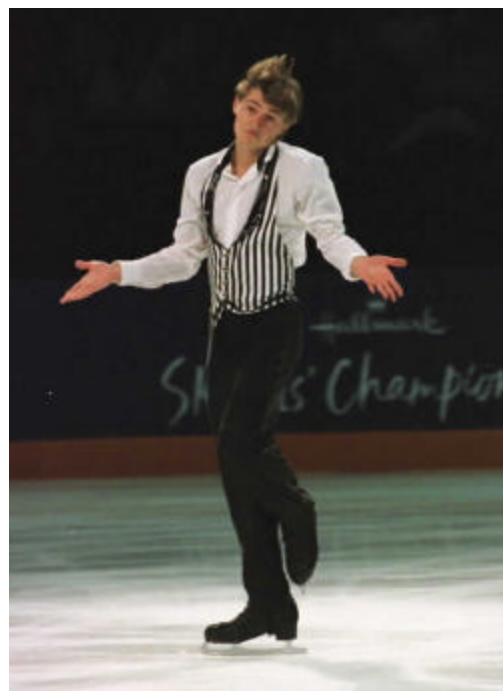


Photo © J. Barry Mittan

“Rhapsody in Blue,” 2001 style

Hallmark Skaters’ Championship Final Results:

Ilia Kulik	197.7
Kurt Browning	197.3
Brian Orser	195.8
Steven Cousins	194.7
Philippe Candeloro	194.0



Photo © Doua & Sherrv Brown

Here we proudly introduce Doug & Sherry Brown’s “Iliabago,” as officially registered with the state of Arkansas. An Iliabago, of course, is any vehicle that takes Sherry on a trip to see Ilia!

Kulik’s Krew Board of Officers and Trustees — 2002

Joyce Watson, President
Ontario, Canada
joyce@kuliks-krew.com

Maria Kuhlka, Trustee
Wisconsin, USA
maria@kuliks-krew.com

Andrea Thompson, Vice President
Virginia, USA
andrea@kuliks-krew.com

Sarah Cunningham, Trustee
Tennessee, USA
sarah@kuliks-krew.com

Cathy Hamilton, Secretary
Michigan, USA
cathy@kuliks-krew.com

Laurie Asseo, Trustee
Washington D.C., USA
laurie@kuliks-krew.com

Nancy Hall, Treasurer
New York, USA
nancy@kuliks-krew.com

Mayi Husosky, Trustee
Florida, USA
mayi@kuliks-krew.com

Anna Wimmer, Trustee
Virginia, USA
anna@kuliks-krew.com