

## **KERRIGAN'S IN CONTROL HARDING OUT OF CONTENTION: IMPROBABLY COOL NANCY HITS ALL HER COMBINATIONS**

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HAMAR, Norway – So now, along with Liston-Clay in Lewiston, Maine, and Ali-Foreman in Kinshasa, Zaire, Harding-Kerrigan puts Hamar, Norway, on the list of the world's out-of-the-way burgs to have hosted a heavyweight title bout.

But in Wednesday's battle, unlike the other two – and unlike in Detroit last month – self-inflicted blows decided the outcome.

Those who landed their combinations, led by the improbably cool Nancy Kerrigan, are going for the medals in Round 2 on Friday night in the long program.

"She's been perfect on the combinations, and that is the short program," Kerrigan's coach, Evy Scotvold, said of the jumps.

Those who didn't land them, including 10th-place Tonya Harding, who botched her triple Lutz-double toe loop, are down for the count.

"I'm just glad we didn't have the hearing (on whether to remove Harding from the team) in Oslo," said Harvey Schiller, executive director of the U.S. Olympic Committee, who spoke between the performances of Harding and Kerrigan. "Of all the things that have happened, we're a lot better off with it ending like this."

With Kerrigan, 24, in the trio that has the best chance for gold are second-place Oksana Baiul of Ukraine and France's Surya Bonaly, who finished 1-2 at last year's world championships. The remainder of the top six, which round out the list of realistic medal hopefuls, are China's Lu Chen, fourth; and Germany's Tanja Szewczenko, fifth, and Katarina Witt, the 1984 and '88 gold medalist.

Kerrigan heads into the long program having answered, at least for one night, all the questions about whether she could deal with Harding, the pressure and the controversy resulting from the attack on her at the nationals in Detroit on Jan. 6.

"I'm happy," Kerrigan said, "because I did exactly what I wanted to do."

## **Problem with long program**

But Friday night's free skate program, which is 90 seconds longer than the short and packed with at least twice as many jumps, has been the killer of Kerrigan's career. She hasn't done a clean one in competition since at least before the 1992 national championships.

A bad long program cost her a silver medal at the Albertville Olympics. Just 11 months ago, Kerrigan came out of the world championship short program in first place only to fall, and fall apart in the long, ranking ninth for the program and fifth overall.

But that was another time and another skater, a buoyant Kerrigan said after Wednesday's skate to "Desperate Love," which was composed by her choreographer, Mark Militano.

## **'Never been so confident'**

"Last year, I guess being famous was all new to me just to begin with," she said. "I was doing speeches, a couple of commercials and things. I think I'm a lot more used to all that now.

"I've never been so confident and so ready to do a long."

Tension, and perhaps the ironic choice of music – "Much Ado About Nothing" -- haunted Harding's program from the outset.

Warming up in the second group of five skaters, she was shaky on her first try at the triple Lutz that initiates her combination and couldn't do the double toe on the end. After consulting at the rail with her coach, Diane Rawlinson, she went at it again only to fall. She failed on both subsequent warm-up attempts. When it came her turn to skate, Harding, 23, glided onto the ice with her hands apparently clasped in prayer, then shook her fist.

## **Problems from the start**

The combination was first up in her program, but she stepped out of the landing on the Lutz, and then stepped over to her other skate. By definition that means the double toe that followed was no longer part of a combination jump, which is a required element of

the short program. She faced a mandatory deduction of .2 to .5 on the technical mark for not completing the element.

She made a sloppy landing on the double flip that followed. Not even her knockout punch, the triple Axel she plans for the long program, can put her in the medals without the collapse of skaters ahead of her.

Harding's technical marks ranged from 4.8 to 5.3. Her artistic marks ranged from 5.3 to 5.6. At that point, she ranked second to Witt, who did a relatively easy triple toe-double toe combination, on every judge's score sheet except U.S. judge Margaret Wier's, where Harding was first.

Afterward, Harding declined to meet with reporters.

Kerrigan was the first-place choice of all but the British and Ukrainian judges, who went for Baiul. Kerrigan's technical and artistic marks ranged from 5.6 to 5.9. Baiul's technical marks ranged from 5.4 to 5.8, and her artistic marks went from 5.7 to 5.9. Bonaly got from 5.6 to 5.8 technically and 5.5 to 5.8 artistically.

### **Combinations told the story**

The combination jump was the dividing line between medal contenders and also-rans throughout the evening. The top six all were successful, although Chen was fortunate. She had just completed her triple Lutz-double toe when she came to a dead stop in the corner against the rail.

Failing to land triple Lutz-double toe combinations were Japan's Yuka Sato, who failed on her Lutz and omitted the toe to rank seventh; Canadian Josée Chouinard, who fell and is eighth; and Poland's Anna Rechnio, who also fell and is ninth.

Six weeks after the clubbing of Kerrigan in Detroit, and three months since her last competition, Kerrigan's other choreographer said she could hardly be more pleased. "I was so emotionally moved by the way she skated tonight," Mary Scotvold said. "She was so deliberate – everything she did, every gesture, every jump. It was very exciting to see her do her best."