

[Subscribe](#)[Login](#)[Register](#)[HOME](#)[SCHEDULE + RESULTS](#)[SKATERS](#)[NEWS](#)[PHOTOS](#)[FANS](#)

## 'Small-town boy' Abbott earns fourth, final crown

Brown's artistry lands him silver; Disappointed Aaron settles for bronze

Posted 1/12/14 by Lynn Rutherford, special to icenetwork



*Jeremy Abbott returned to his rightful place: the top of the U.S. senior men's podium. His performance of his Muse free skate wasn't his best, with a quad and just four clean triples, but his components score (93.42) was the highest of the event. His score of 274.27 is a new U.S. record and gave him his fourth career national title. -Jay Adef*

It wasn't as magical as Thursday's short program, but [Jeremy Abbott's](#) free skate won him a fourth U.S. title and second trip to the Olympics on Sunday at the [2014 Prudential U.S. Figure Skating Championships](#) in Boston's TD Garden.

The 28-year-old skater, who has announced this is his final competitive season, landed a quadruple toe loop and four clean triples -- including a triple Axel-double toe combination -- in an emotional, finely nuanced program that earned 174.41 points. His 274.27-point total was enough to hold off a charging Jason Brown, who won the free skate with an exuberant outing to *Riverdance*.

"It's always magic, and I always feel it," Abbott said. "I'm going to be sad not to be on that ice next year, but I'm really, really excited to go to Sochi."

He almost didn't get there. Overwhelmed by thoughts that his 13-year relationship with the U.S. championships was drawing to a close, Abbott delayed starting his program to Muse's "Exogenesis," talking to his coach, Yuka Sato, and circling around the ice. Fans, keenly aware of the 60-second clock, jolted him into taking his spot at center ice by counting down numbers.

"I've never been that close before," Abbott said. "I was going over my goals for myself, trying to stay focused and not be overwhelmed."

"I knew he was tight, but he's usually better with deadlines," said Sato, who, with Jason Dungjen, trains Abbott at Detroit Skating Club. "The reason it took him so long was he was just soaking in the atmosphere, thinking, 'This is going to be the very last time.' I think maybe he needed that."

The delay, then rush to start, did not impact Abbott's first jump, a solid quad. He followed with a triple Axel-double toe before turning an intended triple-triple combination into a pair of doubles. A second triple Axel was under-rotated, but Abbott finished with three solid triples, one in combination, and a series of superb spins and steps.

After hitting his closing pose, he spent another few minutes on the ice, struggling to hold back tears.

"I wanted to take it all in," said Abbott, who was raised in Aspen, Colo. "I knew I skated well enough to win; I knew I would go to Sochi."

"I wanted to appreciate the audience," he continued. "I knew I was going to cry either way today, whether it was good or bad. [Being] a four-time national champion is crazy. I'm just a small-town boy. I never knew I would get here."

Abbott's fourth title lifts him into a special category of all-time U.S. greats, including Brian Boitano, Scott Hamilton, David Jenkins and Hayes Alan Jenkins. Those skaters also won Olympic gold. Another four-time U.S. champion, Charles Tickner, won Olympic bronze.

Stunning performances at the 2010 U.S. Figure Skating Championships earned Abbott a trip to the Vancouver Olympics, one that ended in a ninth-place finish.

Asked to assess his chances in Sochi next month, he said, "Right now, it's time to get back home, get back on the training regimen, the diet, the workout regimen. It's always hard after this event to get that going. That's my focus now: one day at a time, one session at a time and one jump at a time."

Abbott hopes to continue his skating career, whatever the outcome in Sochi.

"I've been skating since I can walk, and I love this sport more than I can say," he said. "I'm very passionate about what we all do on the ice. ... I want to keep creating, keep skating and keep pleasing the audience, as long as my body will allow. But there's something about competition in general I'm really going to miss."

Brown, nearly a decade younger than Abbott, earned his trip to Sochi and the U.S. silver medal with an exceptionally musical and entertaining program that grabbed the audience, which rose to its feet some 20 seconds before its final note.

A gifted entertainer, Brown was fully committed to the challenging footwork and choreographic detail created by Rohene Ward. He didn't try a quad but hit a triple Axel-triple toe and four more clean triples to win the free skate with 182.61 points (a second triple Axel was under-rotated).

"I've worked so hard to be able to put out that type of program, to play to the audience," Brown said. "I work hard every day toward calming my nerves, so I can go out and skate in these situations."

Until recently, he didn't believe he would even be part of the conversation for Sochi.

"It wasn't until midway through this season when I started to really believe it," he said. "My coach was trying to get me on that page to think 2014, 2014, 2014. But I'm really realistic with myself, and I didn't allow myself to think that."

A solid fifth-place finish at Skate America in October, followed by a bronze medal behind Patrick Chan and Yuzuru Hanyu at Trophée Eric Bompard, changed his outlook.

"Over time, I became more and more confident it could be a reality," he said.

Brown's coach, Kori Ade, arrived in Boston uncertain whether Brown's consistency and performance quality could overcome his lack of a quad, but judges responded to her student's programs.

"My reaction was, 'Thank you for giving him what he deserves in every department,'" said Ade, who trains her skaters in Monument, Colo. "Not everything was perfect, but he was rewarded for the components in program."

"Jason is part of the new generation of skaters," she continued. "He is lucky enough to have been juvenile the first year the international judging system (IJS) was applied to internationals, and growing up in that system has made a big difference for him."

Ade vowed that next season Brown would step it up technically.

"We're not trying to escape that technical side," Ade said. "He works that quad every day. It will be in his programs next year. We're excited about what potential he has when both are present."

Defending U.S. champion Max Aaron landed a quadruple Salchow-double toe and two triple Axels in his *Carmen* free skate, but after touching down on a second quad Salchow and turning an intended triple-triple into a triple-double, he had to settle for the bronze medal.

With just two U.S. men's spots in Sochi, the 21-year-old from Colorado Springs will likely not live out his Olympic dream this year, although he was named first alternate to the team should Abbott or Brown be unable to go.

"Today didn't go as planned, or the way I was training," Aaron said.

World junior champion Joshua Farris, also from Colorado Springs, took fourth place with a solid and heartfelt performance to music from *Schindler's List*. After a career-best short program, Californian Richard Dornbush turned an intended quad Salchow into a double and popped a few other triples into singles to fall from second to fifth place overall.



[Privacy Policy](#)

[About Our Ads](#)

[Terms](#)

[Blackout Restrictions](#)

[Login](#) | [Register](#)