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AUSTRALIAN PAIR SKATERS HIT THE BIG-TIME WITH HISTORIC ISU JUNIOR GRAND PRIX INVITE

Western Sydney's indigenous figure skater Harley Windsor and his 16-year-old partner Ekaterina (Katia) Alexandrovskaya have been invited into the prestigious International Skating Union (ISU) Junior Grand Final to be held in Marseille, France from December 8 – 11.

The young Moscow-born Katia, who has a penchant for Vegemite, has been skating for Australia since July 1st and is seeking to be a permanent resident along with her mother.

The invitation for the young pair comes at the cost of Russian skaters Ekaterina Borisova and Dmitry Sopot who unfortunately had to withdraw from the Junior Grand Prix Final due to injury. Only the world's six highest ranked skaters in Pairs, Dance, Ladies and Men in Seniors and Juniors are invited to the Grand Prix Final.

Australia's fairy-tale couple have risen to 7th place in the junior world rankings in their first season after winning a Junior Grand Prix Gold medal at the Tallinn Cup in Estonia ahead of three Russian pairs.

The International Skating Union (ISU) contacted Ice Skating Australia overnight to advise that, "as first substitute, your Pair Alexandrovskaya/Windsor are now invited to attend the Junior Final."

Harley and Ekaterina's Gold medal in Estonia was an historic first for Australia at a Junior Grand Prix event and they are the first Australians to ever compete in a Grand Prix Final.

The impact their rise to the top has had on the Australian skating community is profound.

"This great pair skating duo are a perfect example of the talent that is here in Australia. With careful guidance and nurturing this talent can blossom. Ice Skating Australia is extremely proud of Ekaterina and Harley," Ice Skating Australia President Peter Lynch said from Melbourne where the Australian Figure Skating Championships are still underway.

Harley and Katia continue to create history at almost every event in which they compete, winning their first national title in Melbourne on Wednesday night landing the very difficult Throw Triple Lutz in both the short and free programs.

No-one would have believed this outcome 12 months ago.

"It's been an amazing time," said Harley. "This time last year we hadn't met – let alone skated together."

Windsor is a laid back kind of guy, who laughed when asked if he could believe the success their hard work was delivering.

“I wouldn’t have believed it a year ago. No way. I think I would have quit skating if it wasn’t for pairs.”

“But I can believe it now. It’s very exciting. Makes it more exciting when you see it in official writing.”

Whilst the pair began with a language barrier – almost 11 months together makes a big difference.

“I think it will be OK,” said Katia with a maturity that belies her years but a determination as fierce as her 20-year-old partner.

Sydney-based coaches Andrei and Galina Pachin shake their heads in wonder.

“Sometimes we can’t believe it, but we knew as soon as they took their first steps together that it was right,” the Pachins said.

“We’re excited, nervous – all of that - but they had great training yesterday and will train again today in Melbourne before heading home to Sydney on the weekend.”

Australia’s latest sport sensations head to the Junior Grand Prix Final next Tuesday and will compete in the ISU Four Continents Championships next February in the Olympic venue in PyeongChang, Korea before heading to the World Championships in Helsinki, Finland.

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