

Japan wins its first-ever Olympic pairs skating gold

19th February 2026



Japan has scooped its first-ever Olympic gold medal for pairs figure skating. Ice skater Riku Miura and her partner Ryuichi Kihara dazzled a highly appreciative crowd on their way to placing first in the pairs free skate competition. Their

outstanding and dynamic performance also set a world record. After the first round, the pair were a fair way down the field of contenders for gold. They knew they would have to pull out all the stops to have any chance of getting a medal. And they did that with aplomb. Their routine was a stunning display of athleticism, daring, speed, and technique. The spectators at the Milano Ice Skating Arena gave the duo a standing ovation to thunderous applause.

The couple seemed shell-shocked after leaving the ice to speak to waiting reporters. An out-of-breath Mr Kihara exclaimed: "We were determined to nail it." He added: "It's still unbelievable. I never thought we could win gold today, so it feels incredibly good." The couple first teamed up in 2019. Ms Miura said: "We have had so many experiences over the past seven years and we have grown a lot, so I think that is the reason why we managed to triumph and win the gold medal." Their coach, Bruno Marcotte, showered them with praise. He said: "I think today they were able to create magic. They skated with their heart. Their connection really came through, and it was just pure magic."

Sources: japantimes.co.jp / forbes.com / nbcolympics.com

Writing

Winter sports are more exciting than summer sports. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

Olympics / gold medal / figure skating / appreciative / world record / athleticism / shell-shocked / nailing it / determined / couple / triumph / praise / heart / pure magic

True / False

- 1) Two Japanese figure skaters made a crowd at the Olympics dizzy. T / F
- 2) The skaters' performance equalled a world record. T / F
- 3) The skaters were in last place before their winning round. T / F
- 4) Spectators at the arena stood up and clapped the skaters. T / F
- 5) One of the skaters was a little breathless when he spoke to a reporter. T / F
- 6) The pair have been skating together for over a decade. T / F
- 7) The skaters' coach told them to have a shower after their performance. T / F
- 8) The coach said the skaters created pure magic. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. scooped | a. perfect |
| 2. appreciative | b. bravery |
| 3. pull out all the stops | c. 100% |
| 4. daring | d. supportive |
| 5. applause | e. relationship |
| 6. nail | f. won |
| 7. reason | g. approval |
| 8. praise | h. clapping |
| 9. connection | i. do one's best |
| 10. pure | j. explanation |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Which are better, the Winter or Summer Olympics?
- c) Which is better, figure skating or speed skating?
- d) When was the last time you were shell-shocked?
- e) When was the last time you nailed something?
- f) How would it feel to win Olympic gold for your country?
- g) What was the last thing you saw that was 'pure magic'?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the gold medallists?

Phrase Match

1. Japan has scooped
 2. set a
 3. Their routine was a stunning
 4. a standing
 5. to thunderous
 6. We were determined to nail
 7. I never thought we
 8. The couple first
 9. that is the reason why
 10. I think today they were
- a. world record
 - b. teamed up in 2019
 - c. ovation
 - d. we managed to triumph
 - e. display of athleticism
 - f. its first-ever Olympic gold medal
 - g. able to create magic
 - h. it
 - i. applause
 - j. could win gold today

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think of the Winter Olympics?
- b) What do you think of figure skating?
- c) When was the last time you were dazzled by someone?
- d) Have you ever won a medal?
- e) What Olympic sport would you like to win a gold medal in?
- f) Have you ever had to pull out all the stops?
- g) When was the last time you gave someone a standing ovation?
- h) How do you feel when your country wins Olympic gold?

Spelling

1. a highly ieapctevarpi crowd
2. a fair way down the field of nntrosedec
3. they did that with lapbmo
4. a stunning display of titmeilasch
5. a standing avtoion
6. to thunderous plpasuae
7. The couple seemed k-hselescdolh
8. An hotobfuate-r- Mr Kihara
9. We were edritemend to nail it
10. It's still elubibeavenl
11. we managed to uthmrpi
12. Marcotte ehworesd them with praise

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. d	3. i	4. b	5. h
6. a	7. j	8. g	9. e	10. c

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What did the article say the crowd was like?
2.	What did the skating duo set?
3.	What did the duo have to pull out to win?
4.	What did spectators do when they stood up?
5.	How loud was the applause for the two skaters?
6.	How was Ryuichi Kihara when he spoke to reporters?
7.	What were the skaters determined to do?
8.	When did the two skaters start working together?
9.	Who is Bruno Marcotte?
10.	What did the skaters' coach say the pair created?

Speaking – Winter events

Rank these with your partner. Put the best events at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Figure skating
- Speed skating
- Snowboarding
- Slalom
- Bobsleigh
- Curling
- Ice hockey
- Ski jumping

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	F	4	T	5	T	6	F	7	F	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.