

RICHARD DORNBUSH TURNED IN THE EVENT'S BEST FREE SKATE EN ROUTE TO A SILVER-MEDAL FINISH. DORNBUSH WON THE JUNIOR GRAND PRIX FINAL A COUPLE MONTHS EARLIER.



PHOTO BY PAUL HARVATH



PHOTO BY PAUL HARVATH

ROSS MINER PUSHED HIMSELF TO THE LIMIT IN PRACTICE AND THAT HARD WORK PAID DIVIDENDS WITH A BRONZE MEDAL IN GREENSBORO.

"Everything went so well," said Dornbush, who trains in Riverside, Calif., under coach Tammy Gambill. "It is just a little bit surreal. I've been training for this all season. I had a great program in China at the Junior Grand Prix Final and that set me up with confidence to be able to do it here again.

"I was talking to Ross earlier and we were talking about how we had gone through almost an entire program before it hit us that we had done everything. That's one of the most exciting moments you can have."

Miner, who struggled in his first senior Grand Prix campaign last fall, took some of those tough lessons to heart when he returned home to The Skating Club of Boston to begin training for the U.S. Championships.

"I took away an understanding of what people at the top level of the sport are doing and the realization that I really wasn't doing enough if I wanted to be at the top level," said the 20-year-old.

Miner, who is coached by Mark Mitchell and Peter Johansson, said the difference in his training was not settling for anything.

"If something wasn't good enough, do it again," he said. "It didn't matter if I didn't want to do it, if I didn't feel great. Just stick to my plan

and do it. There's a great Rafael Nadal quote in the last *Sports Illustrated* that says, 'If you practice your whole life at high intensity, it's easier to stay there when the big moments arrive.' I really used that to motivate me."

Miner, sixth after the short program, put all his hard work and attention to detail to the test and came away with a career-best performance that included eight triples in his free skate to *Casablanca*. His score of 156.36 points and overall total of 224.35 elevated him into second place, with three skaters left to perform.

Abbott and Mroz followed Miner. Both hit bumps in the road with their free skates. Abbott fell on a downgraded triple Lutz and struggled with a triple loop combination. He also lost points on a spin that received a level one. He finished .19 points behind Miner.

"I was feeling good through the first half of my program," Abbott said. "Then I had a weird pick on my Lutz and a bad landing, and I guess that was enough to put me in fourth."

Abbott has struggled with boot problems all season, sticking with last season's pair throughout the Grand Prix season. He has been in his current boots for about a month.

"I haven't felt comfortable with my skates, but I really felt I could be solid today," he said. "I

came to do two solid performances and I did one and a half, and that was not enough."

Mroz fell out of medal contention early in his program after failing to execute his opening quad toe.

"Things were tight today," said Mroz, who finished ninth in the free skate and seventh overall. "I was trying to give my best effort and fight through everything. Having the quad toe in the beginning being downgraded and crappy doesn't help. There was a lot of force going on rather than just being effortless."

That left the door open for Bradley to win his first U.S. title since claiming the junior crown in 1999. But it wouldn't be easy.

Bradley turned out of the first two jumps, a quad toe and a quad toe combination, in his comical program to a Mozart medley.

He recovered with a triple Axel and triple Lutz, but his defining moment came in the second half of the program when he gutted out a triple Axel-triple toe combination that earned 14.15 points. Although just fourth in the free skate, his combined score of 231.90 beat Dornbush by 6.34 points.

"It wasn't the way I pictured it," Bradley said. "Nothing was pretty, but I loved it because I had to be gritty. It's just unreal." □