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Scrappy Tennell runs away with junior ladies title

Move to LA pays off for Serafini; Le vaults from seventh to earn bronze

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Bradie Tennell won the junior ladies gold medal in a rout at the 2015 U.S. Figure Skating Championships. -Jay Adef

When [Bradie Tennell](#) first set foot on the ice when she was 2 1/2, she knew it was the place she needed to be.

"I just loved it," Tennell said. "Even when I fell, I never cried. I even have a picture of myself from a young age of when I fell, and I just sat there on the ice playing with the snow."

Tennell's love of skating has continued to the present day, and it was on full display Friday afternoon at the [2015 U.S. Figure Skating Championships](#), where she won the junior ladies title.

Skating to music from the movie *Far and Away*, Tennell's score was, appropriately, far and away the best in the field, as she racked up 176.36 points -- 16.36 more than runner-up Olivia Serafini. Vivian Le vaulted

from seventh place after the short to finish third with 148.17 points.

Tennell performed a triple toe-triple toe in the short program but did not attempt a triple-triple combination in the free skate. Still, her program included a double Axel-triple toe, a triple Lutz-double toe and another triple Lutz.

"I really felt pretty confident about how she would skate here," said Denise Myers, who has coached Tennell for nearly seven years and also guided Megan Hyatt to the U.S. junior title in 2006. "Bradie has been skating clean programs at home. I just told her to seize the moment."

Tennell, who trains in the Chicago suburb of Buffalo Grove, finished fourth in this event a year ago. In her one Junior Grand Prix appearance last fall, she placed eighth.

"The word I would use to describe Bradie is 'scrapper,'" Myers said. "This is our sixth national event together, and she keeps getting more confidence and consistency."

Tennell has been enjoying every aspect of being in Greensboro, especially catching glimpses of some of the senior-level skaters in the hotel. Growing up in the Chicago suburbs, she often trained on the same ice as Gracie Gold, who wished her good luck earlier in the week.

"It's been so fun for me," said Tennell, who works with Gold's choreographer, Scott Brown. "I'm not so much starstruck, but it's fun to walk down the hallway of the hotel and see Meryl Davis or Gracie or Courtney Hicks. I watched *Dancing with the Stars*, and now I see Meryl and Charlie [White]."

Meanwhile, runner-up Serafini is accustomed to being around senior skaters on a regular basis. A native of Niskayuna, New York, Serafini moved to Los Angeles this past year to work with Rafael Artunian and his wife, Vera. She trains alongside Ashley Wagner, Adam Rippon and Nathan Chen.

"It's definitely been a huge change," Serafini said. "I was not used to skating with senior-level skaters. I never had anyone to look up to in my old rink. It's been a great motivator for me. I was really happy for Ashley, for how she skated (in the short program). She's been a great role model."

Serafini also had a triple toe-triple toe in her short, but, like Tennell, she did not include one in the free skate. Skating to music from *The Lord of the Rings*, she opened her routine with a triple flip-double toe and then hung onto the landing of a double Axel-triple toe.

Le, meanwhile, opened her program with a huge triple Lutz and fought the landing of the ensuing triple toe. She fell on a double Axel later in the program.

"All I did was try to skate for myself," said Le, who hails from Plano, Texas. "The short program was not the best. [The free skate] wasn't perfect, but I was able to pull back up."

The results of the free skate caused a lot of movement in the standings. In addition to Le moving up, Elena Taylor improved from eighth after the short to fourth overall. On the flip side, Paige Rydberg, who was second after the short, struggled in her free skate to place eighth.



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