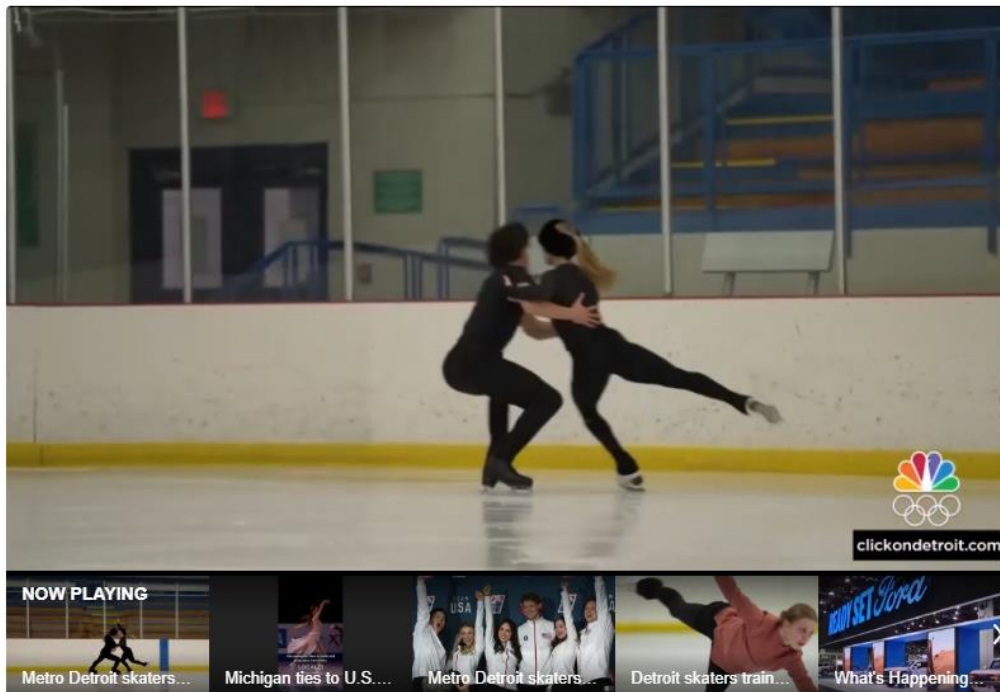


## Metro Detroit skaters set sights on Olympics at 2026 U.S. Figure Skating Championships

Like the old saying, “if you love what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life”



### LOCAL NEWS

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**NOVI, Mich.** – Before Olympic dreams dance at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in St. Louis this week, [Metro Detroiters](#) Emilea Zingas and Vadym Kolesnik sharpen each other in [Novi](#).

“It looks effortless, but to make that mastery, it takes time,” Zingas said. “It takes energy, it takes effort, it takes a lot of dedication and a lot of commitment.”

Training under the watchful eye of figure skating legend Igor Shpilband, the duo sets its sights on one of three spots on Team USA for the Winter Olympics, which will be awarded by Sunday, Jan. 11, 2026.

“You feel such satisfaction after the day is done and you’ve done your job,” Zingas added. “We want to keep doing our job every single day because we see the results and we see the progress.”

They say if you love what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life.

As Zingas discovered growing up, sometimes the best way to figure out what to do is by learning what *not to do*.

“I was a hockey player first,” the 23-year-old [Grosse Pointe Farms](#) native admitted with a laugh. “I started in Mini Mites, was not a fan, and I don’t think I was very good at it. I was just using the stick to push people over and then trying to take it myself. So, yeah, not really something I was naturally gifted at.”

Zingas switched sports with her older sister, Elana, who went on to captain hockey teams at Cornell University.

A love story with figure skating soon began, first as a singles competitor representing her grandfather’s native Cyprus, then as a partner for Ukrainian-born Vadim Kolesnik.

“I came here when I was 15 years old,” Kolesnik recalled. “I just wanted to have a tryout here with Igor because he’s one of the best coaches, not just in modern times, probably in history. He is the one who made figure skating, ice dance specifically, so good in the U.S. Ever since, it’s been like a dream for me.”

After sorting out visa challenges following a visit home to Kharkiv, Kolesnik became an American citizen in August of 2025.

His story personifies the American dream.

Together, they share the Olympic dream, built on a foundation of sacrifice and perseverance.

“These high-pressure events, you have to be on your A-game 24-7, every practice, after practice,” Zingas said before another training session leading up to nationals. “We had a lot of physical limitations last season due to injuries and ongoing health struggles. And in the offseason, Vadym had an operation to fix one of those injuries, and I was able to recover 100 percent. We came together after six or seven weeks off the ice, and we just

decided, if we want to have a shot for the Olympic team, we're going to need to work harder than we have ever worked."

Hard work pays off.

Highlights of the tandem's season included a fourth-place finish at U.S. Nationals one year ago—just one point off the podium—and second place at the Cup of China.

Making the Olympic Games is an accomplishment that would transcend borders.

"It would mean the world to us," Zingas said. "We don't have anything to lose when we take the ice. We want to prove ourselves, and we want that dream so badly. Ultimately, we do this because we love it and because we enjoy the process of being here every single day, skating with each other, sharing those emotions on the ice."

Kolesnik agrees, ready at age 24 to take 2026 by storm.

"I'm just living my dream every single day," he said. "There's nothing I would rather do than be here, skate with Emilea, and do my best on the ice. We're not going to stop until we get it."



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