

Danish teenager Hojgaard wins tense play-off to take Mauritius Open title

Jones comes through late scare to win second Australian Open

SYDNEY, Dec 8, (RTRS): Sydney-sider Matt Jones won his second Australian Open title in four years on Sunday after a two-under-par 69 in the final round proved just enough for a one-shot victory over major winner Louis Oosthuizen.

There was late drama when Oosthuizen finished with an eagle to draw within a shot of the lead but Jones, despite finding a bunker from the 18th tee, held his nerve to nail a five-foot par putt on the final green and secure the title.

Jones, the overnight leader, ended on 15-under 269 for tournament to raise the Stonehaven Cup for the second time at The Australian Golf Club, where he is a member and also secured his 2015 triumph.

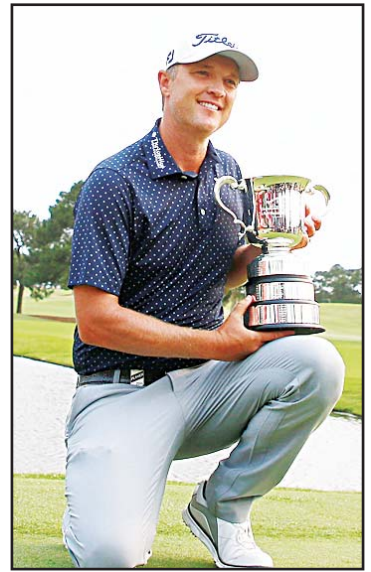
"It's very special when it's your national Open and to do it two times is something that's pretty unbelievable right now," said the Arizona-based 39-year-old.

"It's a great honour and to be on a trophy with Jack (Nicklaus) and Gary (Player) and Greg (Norman) and Adam (Scott), Rory (McIlroy), Jordan (Speith) is something that I'll be able to look back on later in life and be very proud of."

Players had complained of visibility problems and stinging eyes when smoke from the bush-fires raging around Sydney blanketed the course over the first two rounds of the tournament but blustery winds cleared the skies over the weekend.

The wind brings its own problems to the suburban layout but it appears few players are better equipped to deal with them than Jones, who has finished first-second-first on his last three visits home for the Australian Open.

Jones had picked up at least three shots over the back nine in the first three rounds so would have been confident of victory when he turned around



Matt Jones of Australia poses with the Stonehaven Cup after winning the Australian Open Golf Championship at The Australian Golf Club in Sydney on Dec 8. (AP)

at level par with his three-shot overnight lead intact.

He walked hand-in-hand with one of his daughters at one point and the back-nine birdies duly arrived at the 13th and 14th holes with the Australian looking to have sealed the title when he nailed a 30-foot putt for another at the 17th.

It was not going to be that straightforward, however, and Oosthuizen, who had also picked up three birdies on the back nine, triggered a late scare with an eagle three at the last that left Jones needing to par the final hole for victory.

Jones' ball was in a bunker when the roar went up for Oosthuizen's final putt but the Australian was unaware that the South African had picked up an eagle and his second shot ended up in a rough patch of bark.

GOLF

His third shot got him back on the fairway, however, and a well-judged chip onto the green gave him a short putt to clinch his third professional title. South African Oosthuizen, using the tournament to warm up for next week's Presidents Cup in Melbourne, shot a 66 for second place with Aaron Pike (69) and Japan's Takumi Kanaya (71) in third place a further five shots back on nine-under.

Jones, Queensland Pike and amateur world number one Kanaya also earned spots at next year's British Open with Oosthuizen enjoying a lifetime exemption after his 2010 triumph at the major.

England's Paul Casey, the highest-ranked player in the field at world number 14, finished in a share of fifth on eight-under after a final round 72.

In Belle Ombre, Mauritius, Danish teenager Rasmus Hojgaard gave a nerveless display in a tense sudden-death playoff on Sunday to win the Mauritius Open in a three-man shootout.

He made eagle on the third playoff hole, after Italy's Renato Paratore had been eliminated at the first, to edge France's Antoine Rozner and in so doing became the third-youngest winner on the European Tour.

"To win so early in my career is amazing, and I'm already looking forward to the next tournament," he said.

The 18-year-old needed a birdie to make the playoff, finishing on a 19-under four round total of 269.

"I was obviously nervous," he said, "but I had nothing to lose in the playoff, so it was driver all day. Then, for the approach shots, I just kept telling myself to believe in myself and get the number right."

Hojgaard, playing in just his fifth event on the European Tour, had been a shot behind at the start of the final round at the Heritage Golf Club.

At 18 years and 271 days old, only Italian Matteo Manassero – who won twice as a 17-year-old – and New Zealander Danny Lee have won on the European Tour at a younger age.

Williams, Krishna shine

ATK reclaim top spot in ISL, blank NorthEast United 3-0

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 8: Atletico de Kolkata (ATK) reclaimed the top spot in the Indian Super League with a thumping 3-0 win against NorthEast United FC at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium Saturday. Man of the match, David Williams scored in the eleventh minute and two from Roy Krishna in the 35th, and 90+4th minutes ensured the so far undefeated NorthEast get the taste of their first loss this season. With six goals to his credit, Krishna leads the list of goal scorers.

With this win ATK have 14 points from seven matches while the Highlanders, who have 10 points, slipped to fourth.

Star striker Asamoah Gyan had a chance to put NorthEast in front within two minutes when he chested a lob over the defence by

SOCCER

Lalthanga Khawhling but the Ghanaian striker's meek effort was kept out by goalkeeper Arindam Bhattacharya.

Minutes later, the star striker was replaced by Maximiliano Barriero following an injury.

In the 11th minute, a defensive lapse allowed Williams to give ATK the lead. Prabir Das ran down the flank unmarked and latched onto Edu Garcia's through-ball and found Williams at the far post with a cross. The forward out-jumped his marker to head the ball home.

Since then, ATK threatened the hosts with quick counterattacks and doubled the lead before the break. Williams fed Krishna who outpaced the visitors' defence, dropped his shoulder to get past the last defender Wayne Vaz and beat Subhashish Roy.

ATK continued to pose a threat after the change of ends. Minutes into the second half, Krishna missed a chance to score his second goal when Williams set him up in front of the goal. The striker sent his effort wide with an empty net in front.

In the injury time Krishna made

amends and scored his second to put the issue beyond doubt.

NorthEast found it hard to create clear-cut opportunities. Martin Chaves' 30-yarder flew harmlessly over the bar. Khawhling's looping ball into the box found Nikhil Kadam with just the keeper to beat, but the winger failed to control his header.

The two-goal cushion allowed ATK to drop deeper and to make it harder for their opponents, whose lack of final touch meant there was no comeback for the home crowd.



ATK celebrate taking the lead against NorthEast United.

Joshua defeats Ruiz on points, reclaims titles in Saudi Arabia

Charlo stops Hogan in 7th to retain WBC middleweight title



Defending champion Andy Ruiz Jr (left), takes a right cross to the face during his fight against Britain's Anthony Joshua in their World Heavyweight Championship contest at the Diriyah Arena, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia early on Dec 8. (Inset: Joshua celebrates after beating Andy Ruiz Jr on points to win their World Heavyweight Championship contest. (AP)

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Dec 8, (AP): Anthony Joshua jumped up and down in the ring with his massive entourage, celebrating being around \$70 million richer and having three world heavyweight belts back in his possession.

For the British boxing superstar, it was well worth this controversial trip to Saudi Arabia.

In the first heavyweight title fight to be held in the Middle East, Joshua toyed with an out-of-shape Andy Ruiz Jr over 12 uneventful rounds to win a unanimous points decision, reclaim the WBA, WBO and IBF belts, and avenge a stunning upset by his Mexican-American opponent six months ago.

Joshua got his game plan spot on, using his lighter frame to outmaneuver Ruiz and selecting his moments to go on the attack.

BOXING

In the final seconds of a bout fought in the early hours of Sunday in a relatively cool 19°C (66°F) for this part of the world, Joshua was almost running around the ring and Ruiz – exhausted and outfought – was planted in the middle, urging him to come closer.

"I am used to knocking people out," Joshua said, "but last time I got hurt so I gave the man his credit. I said I would correct myself again."

Two judges gave the fight to the Briton 119-110, and the other awarded it to him 119-109.

Ruiz, who weighed in at 283 pounds (128 kilograms) to be the second heaviest boxer to fight for a world heavyweight title, had no complaints.

Whether Joshua agrees to that remains to be seen. There is no rematch clause this time round and Ruiz, short with quick hands, is an awkward opponent.

Joshua proved he had another side to his boxing skills other than a big punch. His career is back on track, for sure, but his reputation might be sullied for other reasons.

The fight was played out to a backdrop of concerns that Saudi Arabia was using this and other big sporting events to divert attention from its human-rights



Jermall Charlo punches Ireland's Dennis Hogan during the third round of the WBC middleweight title boxing match on Dec 7 in New York. (AP)

violations. They include the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi last year in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Joshua has shrugged off concerns that he was being used in what some, like human rights organization Amnesty International, called a "sportswashing" exercise, and he thanked Saudi Arabia for hosting the fight afterward.

Ruiz knocked down Joshua four times on the way to a seventh-round win in New York in June that was regarded as one of the biggest upsets in the history of heavyweight boxing.

There was none of that drama in the rematch, with Ruiz rarely connecting with Joshua. When he did, it was with punches to the back of the head that earned him a ticking-off from the referee.

Ruiz finished the fight with blood across his face, having been caught with a right hook by Joshua in the first round.

There were straight lefts from Joshua in the fourth and ninth that rocked Ruiz back, and a right hook in the

fifth that also hurt the champion.

In New York, Luck of the Irish? Jermall Charlo didn't need luck. He had a power punch and pinpoint accuracy.

"I just threw the shot and I made sure I threw it right on the money," Charlo said after he stopped Dennis Hogan 28 seconds in the seventh round to retain the WBC middleweight title.

Charlo improved to 30-0. Hogan, the fifth-ranked WBC middleweight, dropped to 28-3-1.

Charlo controlled the fight throughout, and his pressure caused Hogan to circle away and only occasionally attempting an offensive flurry. Which led to the finish early in seventh. As Hogan was backing away, Charlo landed a punch flush to the face that caused referee Charlie Fitch to end the fight.

The first occurred in the fourth round, as he connected with an uppercut to the chin which caused the Irishman to do a backward somersault into the ropes. Following a standing eight count, Fitch let the fight continue. Having knocked down Hogan, Charlo began to go on the offensive with heavy punches which stunned the challenger and set up the finish.

The fight headlined a 12-fight card at Barclays Center. Prior to the bout Chris Eubank Jr, a British fighter, made his US debut by becoming the WBA interim middleweight champion. He stopped Matt Korobov 11 seconds into the second round.

As the round started, Kobarov (28-3-1) threw a left that may have grazed Eubank (29-3), who responded with a jab to the shoulder. The fight continued for a few moments before Kobarov asked for time as he pointed to his shoulder. Kobarov was examined by New York State Athletic Commission doctors for a few minutes and his team for a few minutes in the ring before referee Steve Willis ended the fight much to the displeasure of those in attendance, who booted.

Eubank wasn't overly enthused, either. A formal diagnosis of the injury wasn't immediately announced, but Korobov speculated it could have been a pulled muscle.

While Eubank Jr's fight underwhelmed, Ryosuke Iwasa (27-3) became the IBF interim junior featherweight champion with an 11th-round technical knockout of Marlon Tapales (33-3).

Schmidhofer wins Lake Louise downhill, Shiffrin takes 2nd

Feuz defends downhill Birds of Prey title

BEAVER CREEK, Colorado, Dec 8, (AP): For a second straight year, weather forced the relocation of the downhill start to a lower spot on the hill.

Not hard to forecast the favorite from there - Beat Feuz.

The Swiss racer won the Birds of Prey downhill event for the second straight season on a shortened course.

Going forward, he wouldn't mind if the competition started from that location every season.

Feuz was solid up top and nearly flawless the rest of the way to finish the World Cup race in 1 minute, 12.98 seconds on an overcast. Johan Clarey

of France and Vincent Kriechmayr of Austria tied for second. The start was lowered on the hill due to strong wind.

A year ago, it was lowered because of falling snow and visibility.

Feuz joins some elite company in winning back-to-back World Cup downhill competitions in Beaver Creek. Austrian great Hermann Maier and Norwegian standout Aksel Lund Svindal also accomplished the feat.

The 38-year-old Clarey turned in

SKIING

quite a performance as the 19th racer of the day to tie Kriechmayr. His result pushed 39-year-old Hannes Reichelt of Austria off the podium.

No hard feelings, Reichelt said, who was 0.02 seconds away from a podium position.

Clarey has been racing in Beaver Creek since 2003. This was his first podium finish at the venue.

It's the second straight day the Swiss have won at Beaver Creek. Marco Odermatt captured the super-G title Friday.

So, just why does Feuz race so well on this course?

Keep up with Feuz is a good gauge for success. Feuz has won the World Cup downhill title the past two seasons.

Feuz was tied for third in the first downhill of the season in Lake Louise, Alberta, last weekend. That race was won by Thomas Dessen of Germany.



Switzerland's Beat Feuz (below), poses with a handler and a golden eagle after winning the Men's World Cup downhill skiing race on Dec 7 in Beaver Creek, Colorado. (AP)

Dressen didn't have a clean run Saturday and was 19th. More than anything, this was a week for Dessen to make peace with the Birds of Prey course after he crashed last season and tore the ACL in his right knee.

American Ryan Cochran-Siegle was the fastest in a downhill training run ear-

lier in the week. He showed that speed Saturday by finishing sixth for his best World Cup finish.

The current leaderboard for the overall race looks like this: Matthias Mayer of Austria in the lead, Kriechmayr second and Italy's Dominik Paris in third.

In Lake Louise, Alberta, here's a scary thought for her competition: Mikaela Shiffrin is still getting comfortable with the intensity and the speed of the downhill.

That's why podium finishes are still a little surprising even to her.

The American three-time overall World Cup champion finished runner-up to Nicole Schmidhofer of Austria in a downhill race. Schmidhofer cruised through the course in 1 minute, 49.92 seconds to edge Shiffrin by 0.13 seconds. Francesca Marsaglia of Italy wound up third.

Schmidhofer has four career World Cup wins, with three of them arriving at Lake Louise.

Known as a tech specialist, Shiffrin is steadily getting up to speed in the speed events. This was Shiffrin's fourth career World Cup podium finish in the downhill, which includes a Lake Louise win in 2017.

So, does Shiffrin anticipate this kind of downhill success?

Shiffrin currently sits at 62 World Cup wins, which ties her with Austrian great Annemarie Moser-Proell for second-most