

## Schauffele's title hopes slip away, ties for 2nd with Lee

## Healthy again, Koepka eagles 17, rallies to win Phoenix Open

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona, Feb 8, (AP): At the lowest points in an 18-month struggle with left knee and hip injuries, Brooks Koepka wondered if he'd ever be back at all, let alone recapture the magic that carried him to four major championships.

"It's been a wild ride for the last year and a half and very frustrating," Koepka said. "I've had moments where I didn't know if I was going to be the same, if I could even come back."

## GOLF

He looked as good as ever on the back nine in the Waste Management Phoenix Open, rallying for a victory that didn't seem possible not that long ago.

"I went through it mentally," Koepka said. "I think that's probably the toughest thing, where you don't know if you're ever going to be the same competitor that you were. You go through some real dark places, and it's not a fun place to be."



Brooks Koepka poses with the trophy after winning a PGA golf tournament on Feb 7, in Scottsdale, Arizona. (AP)

It was sunny and fun Sunday in the desert, especially on the 17th hole. That's where he chipped in from 32 yards for his second eagle

## Opposition remains strong to Tokyo Games after Mori remarks

TOKYO, Feb 8, (AP): Public opposition remains strong in Japan to holding the postponed Tokyo Olympics following derogatory remarks about women made last week by the head of the local organizing committee.

A telephone survey over the weekend by Japanese news agency Kyodo showed just over 82% believe the games should be canceled or postponed again. The results are consistent with polls in recent months showing the strong opposition.

Organizers and the IOC have said the games cannot be postponed again and will be canceled if they can't be held. Only 14.5% in the Kyodo poll said the Olympics should go on as planned and open on July 23.

The poll also showed nearly 60% saying that Yoshiro Mori is "not qualified" to be the president of the organizing committee. Mori last week suggested women talk too much in meetings. He immediately received widespread condemnation, and his

remarks also generated an on-line petition that questioned his fitness for the job.

It stopped short of demanding he resign. The 83-year-old Mori, a former prime minister, apologized for the remarks and said he did not intend to resign. His stance was backed by the Switzerland-based International Olympic Committee and local organizers, which are beset with myriad problems trying to pull off the Olympics in the middle of a pandemic.

of the day to break a tie for the lead. A routine par on the 18th gave him a one-stroke victory.

Five strokes behind Jordan Spieth and Xander Schauffele entering the round, Koepka shot a 6-under 65 to finish at 19-under 265. He also won in 2015 at TPC Scottsdale for the first of his eight PGA Tour titles.

On the 334-yard 17th, Koepka hit a fairway

wood 305 yards to the fairway short and left of the green, then holed out to the largest roar of the day from the crowd limited to 5,000 a day.

The crowd was a fraction of the usual size but the most on tour during the COVID-19 pandemic. Coming off a career-worst three straight missed cuts, Koepka rebounded from a bogey on the second with a 24-foot eagle putt on the

par-5 third and birdied Nos. 13-15.

Schauffele birdied the par-4 18th for a 71 to tie for second with Kyoung-Hoon Lee (68). The fourth-ranked Schauffele tied for second last week at Torrey Pines.

Lee birdied 17 to pull within one of Koepka, but drove into the right rough on the par-4 18th and had his 34-foot birdie try slide by on the high side.

## Djokovic has routine win, but crowd is something different

Serena races through 1st round at Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Australia, Feb 8, (AP): It's been so long since he had a sizeable crowd to play for, the showman in Novak Djokovic just had to come out.

Top-ranked Djokovic began his Australian Open title defense with a clinical, 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 victory over Jeremy Chardy in the closing act of the day 1 program on Rod Laver Arena.

## TENNIS

"Makes my heart full to see the crowd in the stadium again," Djokovic said in post-match interview at the 15,000-seat arena, which was about one-third full. "This is the most people I've seen on the tennis court in 12 months. I really ... I really, really appreciate your support in coming out tonight."

He bristled at the suggestion that he'd been frustrated during quarantine, focusing again on the fans.

"I'm just really glad we are free. We're playing tennis," he said. "I'm really glad we're back in Australia. It's a happy place for us. Happy Slam."

The total crowd Monday at Melbourne Park was 17,922, including day and night sessions in three zones separated to enhance social-distancing



United States' Serena Williams waves after defeating Germany's Laura Siegemund during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, on Feb 8. (AP)



Serbia's Novak Djokovic makes a forehand return to France's Jeremy Chardy during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, on Feb 8. (AP)

measures. It was well down on the 64,387 fans that crammed onto the grounds on Day 1 of last year's Australian Open, but way more than any other major since then.

After an austere year for tennis during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a unanimous refrain from players across the day, starting with Naomi Osaka in the opening match on Rod Laver, to Serena and Venus Williams, and to mercurial local favorite Nick Kyrgios, who closed the day on the so-called Peoples' court. Thanks for coming.

While Djokovic spoke of his "love affair" with the main show court, where he has won eight Australian titles, Kyrgios was closing the day's program out on the third arena stadium - where polite applause is always secondary to whoops and whistles - with a 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 win over Frederico Silva.

After his first Grand Slam match in a year, Kyrgios told the crowd "it felt normal, to be honest, you guys were going nuts. It was good to see. Let's hope we can continue it."

There's no love lost between Djokovic and Kyrgios, who have been trading verbal barbs for months and added to them this week.

Day 1 concluded with a look at the future of tennis, and 21-year-old, No. 11-seeded Denis Shapovalov finally beat 19-year-old Jannik Sinner 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 in a marathon lasting almost four hours on Margaret Court Arena. It ended at 12:49 a.m. local time.

Since losing to Rafael Nadal in the quarterfinals of last year's French Open, Sinner has collected his first two ATP titles - the second of those was the Great Ocean Road Open on Sunday.

The state government is allowing up to 30,000 people per day into Melbourne Park, about 50% of capacity. There were no fans allowed at the U.S. Open, only about 1,000 per day were allowed at Roland Garros and Wimbledon was canceled.

But with the Australian Open starting three weeks later than usual - now it's outside the summer holidays - and some people still nervous about going out in crowds following a harsh Melbourne lockdown last year, it was a predictably cautious start.

That wasn't the case at all for Serena Williams, who arrived ready to race to start her bid for a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam singles title.

In a colorful one-legged catsuit she

said was inspired by former Olympic champion Florence Griffith Joyner, Williams dropped her opening serve but rebounded to win 10 consecutive games and beat Laura Siegemund 6-1, 6-1.

Speed was of the essence also for No. 2-ranked Simona Halep and No. 3 Osaka, who each only dropped three games.

U.S. Open champion Osaka beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 6-2, and two-time major winner Halep had a 6-2, 6-1 win over Australian wildcard entry Lizette Cabrera.

## Hamilton signs 1-year deal to stay at Mercedes

BRACKLEY, England, Feb 8, (AP): Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton will stay with Mercedes for a ninth season after signing a one-year deal, the team said Monday.

Since joining Mercedes for the 2013 season, Hamilton has won six world championship titles - moving him level with Michael Schumacher on a record seven for his career.

"Our team has achieved incredible things together and we look forward to

## Leach dismisses Sharma

India reach 39-1 vs England, need another 381 for victory

CHENNAI, India, Feb 8, (AP): India needs another 381 runs for an unlikely victory against England after reaching 39-1 at stumps on day four of the first test on Monday.

England opted to back its bowlers to finish India off in 90 overs on the final day, after deciding against buying extra time in the game with an earlier declaration.

England captain Joe Root decided not to intervene in his side's second innings, allowing them to bat into the final hour and pile up a lead of 419 - setting up what would be a world record chase - in a bid to take an unlikely India win out of the equation.

Jack Leach's dismissal of Rohit Sharma gave the tourists a further shot in the arm and nine further breakthroughs are needed in the final three sessions to cap what would be a memorable away success.

## CRICKET

Earlier, Root declined to enforce the follow-on despite dismissing the hosts for 337, a deficit of 241 runs, preferring to give his bowlers a rest and stretch the advantage.

He went on to top-score with 40 as his side were bowled out for 178 but his apparent conservatism was always likely to cause some debate. It doubtless loomed large in his mind that the record chase in India came against England at this ground.

In 2008, Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men scored 387 for the loss of only four wickets, while Virat Kohli's side are just a couple of weeks on from their audacious pursuit against Australia at The Gabba.

India had started the day on 257 for six, with Washington Sundar and Ashwin turning an already frustrating stand of 32 from the previous evening into a substantial one worth 80.

It took the introduction of Leach to end their stand, with the left-arm making a breakthrough despite unimpressive figures of nought

for 100 to dismiss both Ashwin and Shabbaz Nadeem. Washington had batted well for 85 not out but ran out of partners.

James Anderson wrapped things up, bouncing out Ishant Sharma before Ben Stokes held a difficult catch at slip to remove Jasprit Bumrah.

Despite easily clearing the 200-run threshold, Root was never likely to send India back in to bat, preferring to let his bowlers have a break from the heat.

That meant Rory Burns and Dom Sibley faced the thankless prospect of two overs before lunch, a slim window of opportunity that Ashwin accepted. He clipped Burns' outside edge with the first ball of the innings and wheeled away in joy as Cheteshwar Pujara held on at slip.

There was no shortage of incentives to score quickly but the reality was harder, with Dan Lawrence and Sibley restricted to 34 between them in 84 balls. Ashwin set Sibley up nicely, drawing him forward outside off stump and drawing an inside edge that pinged to leg-slip.



In this March 17, 2019 file photo, Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain waves as the drivers' parade begins ahead of the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

building on our success even further, while continuously looking to improve, both on and off the track," said Hamilton, who has won 74 races with Mercedes.

## MOTOR RACING

As part of his new deal, Mercedes and Hamilton have established a charitable foundation in a commitment to "supporting greater diversity and inclusion in all

its forms in motorsport," the team said.

"I am grateful that Mercedes has been extremely supportive of my call to address this issue," Hamilton said.

Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff said the two parties took time to agree to a new deal because of the effects of the pandemic. "We have always been aligned with Lewis that we would continue," Wolff said, "but the very unusual year we had in 2020 meant it took some time to finish the process."

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