



Senegal's President Macky Sall, 5th left, poses with the national football team after they arrived back at the airport in Dakar, Senegal. Senegal won their first African Cup Sunday by beating Egypt 4-2 in a penalty shootout with Sadio Mane scoring the decisive penalty. (AP)

# Sports

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Nathan Chen of the United States, competes during the men's short program figure skating competition at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. (AP)

American 6 points clear of Kagiyama

## Chen delivers a record short program to begin Oly pursuit

BEIJING, Feb 8, (AP) — Nathan Chen had just shattered the world record for a figure skating short program, even throwing a defiant fist in a rare display of emotion, when he was asked how he'd spend the next 48 hours before his long-awaited Olympic coronation.

"I've been here a while," the 22-year-old American star replied with a shrug Tuesday. "I've got some clothes to wash. Some other things to clean around my room. Just ordinary chores, really. Nothing crazy."

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He left the crazy — the downright stunning — on the ice of Beijing's historic Capital Indoor Stadium.

Wearing a confident smirk, Chen avenged his poor short program from four years ago at the Pyeongchang Games in the biggest way possible. He opened with a perfect quad flip, breezed through his often-vexing triple axel, then drilled his quad flip-triple toe loop combination before skating to



Luiz Adriano of Brazil's Palmeiras, (right), and Ayman Ashraf of Al Ahly jump for the ball during the Club World Cup semifinal soccer match between Palmeiras and Al Ahly SC in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Palmeiras won 2-0 (AP)

a stop and delivering a right haymaker at the air.

His score was 113.97 points, nearly two more than the previous world record set by rival Yuzuru Hanyu, and six points clear of second-place Yuma Kagiyama headed into Thursday's free skate.

"I was just elated," said Chen, who helped the U.S. win team silver earlier this week. "At the last Olympics, both of the short programs didn't go the way I wanted. To finally get an opportunity to skate the programs I wanted feels really good."

Kagiyama drilled a pair of quads and a triple axel during his own dynamic short program to finish with 108.12 points, while fellow Japanese skater Shoma Uno — the reigning Olympic silver medalist — was third with 105.90 points.

As for their longtime idol, Hanyu bailed out of his planned opening quad salchow and received no points for the jump, a massive mistake that cost the two-time defending Olympic champion a shot at a third gold medal. Hanyu finished in eighth place with 95.15 points, a deficit so great that not even his planned quad axel in the free skate can make it up.

"I feel really shocked," said Hanyu, adding his skate may have hit a hole in the ice, "but I have one more chance."

The showdown between Chen and Hanyu had been building toward Tuesday for the past four years, ever since what Chen called a "disastrous" short program in Pyeongchang took him out of medal contention before he felt he had arrived.

Rather than taking a break afterward, Chen doubled down, working tirelessly with longtime coach Rafael Arutyunyan while simultaneously working toward his degree from Yale. He sharpened every aspect of his figure skating, from technical marks to his artistry, and he began to put together programs that nobody else had the nerve to try.

The short program he nailed in Beijing, with a base value of 36.27 points, was the hardest ever tried in competition.

## Mayer makes it three golds in three 'straight' Olympics

Italy edge Norway in mixed doubles curling final

BEIJING, Feb 8, (AP) — Matthias Mayer stuck his poles into the snow, pushed off with his massive legs and attempted to head down the mountain. At least that's where he thought he was going — until one of the Austrian skier's poles got held up, with the countdown clock ominously winding down.

Certainly not the ideal way for the defending champion to begin an Olympic super-G — where the difference between first and second would be only a few hundredths of a second.

Mayer, however, quickly shook it off, and was on his way toward becoming the first man to win gold medals in Alpine skiing at three straight Olympics.

That unflappable ability to focus on the task at hand without being distracted by all the other things that can happen during a ski race is one of the big reasons why Mayer is so successful when it counts most.

For Mayer, you see, it's all just a game.

Mayer also won the super-G at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games and the downhill at the 2014 Sochi Olympics, which makes him what they call back home in Austria a "Dreifach-Olympiasieger" — three-time Olympic champion.

Italian racer Christof Innerhofer, who came into the Olympics as one of the most experienced speed skiers on the professional circuit, failed to finish both the downhill and super-G. But he was impressed by what he saw, and

keeps seeing, from Mayer.

After his stutter at the start, Mayer was only sixth-fastest through the first checkpoint on The Rock course. But he mastered the narrow and technical layout the rest of the way down and finished a mere 0.04 seconds ahead of the next starter, first-time medalist Ryan Cochran-Siegle of the United States.

World Cup super-G leader Aleksander Aamodt Kilde of Norway finished third, 0.42 behind Mayer, for his first Olympic medal.

Kilde was seventh to start and was ecstatic when he crossed the line and saw he had beaten the time set by the previous leader — Alexis Pinturault — by

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one second.

Overall World Cup leader Marco Odermatt of Switzerland was among the favorites in the super-G but he lost control on a turn and went out shortly before the end of the course.

Quentin Fillon Maillet of France won decisively in the 20-kilometer individual biathlon, adding a gold medal to the silver he won in the mixed relay over the weekend.

Fillon Maillet has dominated the biathlon world lately. He's had 10 World Cup podium finishes this season. Half of those were wins.

He missed two of 20 targets Tuesday and finished the course in 48 minutes, 47.4 seconds. Anton Smolksi of Belarus shot clean, hitting all 20 of his targets, but came in 14.8 seconds behind the Frenchman.

Defending individual Olympic champion Johannes Thingnes Boe of Norway also missed two targets and took the bronze medal.

Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo of Norway defended his Olympic cross-country sprint title, leading the final for the entire race and punching the air when he crossed the finish line.

Klaebo won the race in 2 minutes, 58.06 seconds. Frederico Pellegrino of Italy took silver, .26 seconds behind. Russian skier Alexander Terenteva earned bronze, 1.31 behind.

## Weddle gives Rams spark

WASHINGTON, Feb 8, (AP) — As the coach of his son's 12-and-under Pop Warner team in the San Diego area, Eric Weddle had a message for the young players to not take the opportunity to win a championship for granted.

"I just reminded them that I played 20 something years straight of tackle football, organized football at every level and never won a championship," he said Monday. "If we did it, which we did, you will always have that memory, no matter how long you play, that this group of guys won a championship. It's very special when you think about it because it doesn't happen often."

That youth team won. Weddle, remarkably, is now aiming for a second title, one with much larger stakes than a Pop Warner league. He came back last month for a playoff run with the Los Angeles Rams following a two-year retirement and can end his career with the Super Bowl title that eluded him during his first 13-year stint in the NFL.

Weddle joined the team days before their playoff opener against the Cardinals. Weddle played just 19 snaps that first game before ramping it up with 61 defensive snaps the following week

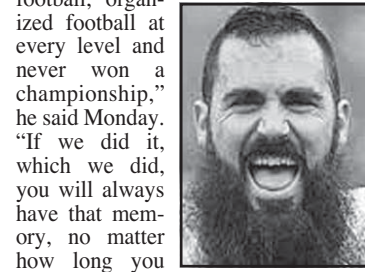
against Tampa Bay. Then came all 51 in the NFC title game against San Francisco when he had a team-high nine tackles, including a key one for a loss that helped turn the game in the fourth quarter.

### Oly Medals Table

BEIJING, Feb 8, (AP) — Winter Olympic Games medals table on Tuesday.

	G	S	B	T
Sweden	4	1	1	6
Norway	3	1	4	8
Netherlands	3	3	1	7
Germany	3	2	0	5
China	3	2	0	5
ROC	2	3	5	10
Italy	2	4	1	7
Austria	2	3	2	7
Slovenia	2	1	2	5
Canada	1	1	4	6
France	1	4	0	5
Japan	1	1	2	4
Switzerland	1	0	2	3
Australia	1	0	1	2
Czech Republic	1	0	0	1
New Zealand	1	0	0	1
United States	0	4	1	5
Hungary	0	0	2	2
Belarus	0	1	0	1
Finland	0	0	1	1
Poland	0	0	1	1
South Korea	0	0	1	1

Note: Table reads as gold, silver, bronze and total.



Weddle



Quentin Fillon Maillet of France leaps on the podium after winning the men's 20-kilometer individual race at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Zhangjiakou, China. (AP)

American-born Eileen Gu of China cranked out the first 1620 of her career on her final jump, stunning France's Tess Ledeux and earning the first of what she hopes will be three gold medals in women's freestyle big air.

Nicknamed the "Snow Princess," Gu is a medal favorite in big air, slope-style and halfpipe. Her first stab at gold came down to the last round.

Ledeux is the only other woman to ever land a 1620 — 4 1/2 spins — in competition, and she stomped one out with a slight wobble on the landing in Round 1.

Ledeux won silver and Mathilde Gremaud of Switzerland won bronze.

Natalie Geisenberger is the first three-time Olympic champion in women's luge.

The German great won the gold medal Tuesday at the Beijing Games, her third consecutive title. Germany's Anna Berreiter was second and Tatiana Ivanova of the Russian Olympic Committee was third.

Berreiter was a half-second back of Geisenberger. Ivanova was a full second back. In luge, those time gaps are massive.

That speaks to how dominant Geisenberger was. No woman in luge history has more Olympic golds, or World Cup race victories than Geisenberger.

Second-seeded Benjamin Karl of Austria held off Tim Mastnak of Slovenia for the gold.

Russian athlete Vic Wild picked up the bronze as the No. 9 seed in the bracketed field.

Wild, who is from the United States and was granted Russian citizenship in 2012, won gold in the event at the 2014 Sochi Games.

Ester Ledecka of the Czech Republic defended her Olympic snowboard parallel giant slalom title with a quick final run on a sun-splashed course.

Four years ago in South Korea, Ledecka became the first competitor to win gold in two different sports at the same Winter Games. She has a chance to accomplish the feat once again in China. The women's super-G ski race is scheduled for Friday at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center.

In the gold-medal race, the top-seeded Ledecka opened an early lead on Daniela Ulbing, putting pressure on the Austrian snowboarder along the side-by-side course at the Genting Snow Park. Ulbing made a mistake up top and later veered off course. Gloria Kotnik of Slovenia earned the bronze.

Kjeld Nuis of the Netherlands became the first speedskater since 1994 to successfully defend his Olympic title in the men's 1,500 meters, edging countryman Thomas Krol.

Krol, the reigning world champion, broke the 20-year-old Olympic record in his race. Nuis went even faster in the very next pair, crossing the line with a blistering time of 1 minute, 43.21 seconds.

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## Pellegrini makes Betis contenders again

MADRID, Feb 8, (AP) — Being a fan of Spanish club Real Betis fan wasn't much fun not long ago.

While city rivals Sevilla stayed near the top in the Spanish league and won multiple Europa League titles, Betis struggled just to remain in the first division.

Then came coach Manuel Pellegrini, and it didn't take long before Betis' fans started having reason to cheer again. The experienced Chilean coach quickly turned the club's fortunes with his attack-minded formations and entertaining soccer.

Two seasons after being threatened by relegation and finishing 15th in the Spanish league, Betis fight near the top of the standings and are alive in the Europa League and the Copa del Rey.

Betis visit Rayo Vallecano in the first leg of the Copa semifinals on Wednesday, looking to return to the final for the first time since their last title in any competition in 2005.

"There is merit for us to be contending in all three competitions," Pellegrini said. "But it also brings difficulties and we have to be able to keep adapting."

Betis had won four in a row — outscoring opponents 14-2 — before losing to Villarreal 2-0 at home in the league on Sunday, when some regular starters were rested by Pellegrini.

Pellegrini has been able to restore a winning mentality to a Betis squad that have players such as Nabil Fekir, Borja Iglesias, Sergio Canales, Joaquín Sánchez, Juanmi, Marc Bartra

and Héctor Bellerín.

The coach was hired in 2020. The 68-year-old Pellegrini, a former player who is also a civil engineer, was familiar to La Liga having previously coached Villarreal, Málaga and Real Madrid. Villarreal became one of the best teams in Europe under his command in the 2000s, reaching the Champions League semifinals in 2006. They finished second in the league under Pellegrini in 2008. Elsewhere, he won the English Premier League with Manchester City in 2014.

He had a somewhat rough start at Betis but the team made a strong run near the end of his first season to finish sixth and secure a spot in the Europa League. This season, Betis

### SOCCER

has advanced to the Europa knockout round from a group including Celtic, Bayer Leverkusen and Ferencváros. It will next face Zenit St. Petersburg.

In La Liga, Betis have won 12 of 23 matches to lie third place behind Sevilla and leaders Real Madrid. They have the league's second-best attack with 41 goals, behind the 48 from Madrid.

Athletic Bilbao host Valencia in the first leg of the other semifinal, with the Basque Country team trying to reach their third straight final.



Matthias Mayer of Austria makes a turn during the men's super-G at the 2022 Winter Olympics in the Yanqing district of Beijing. (AP)