

SPORTS

Vlhova beats Shiffrin for 4th WCup slalom win of season

Liensberger in 3rd

ZAGREB, Croatia, Jan 4, (AP): Slovakian skier Petra Vlhova won a women's World Cup slalom in tough race conditions on Tuesday for her fourth win in five races this season.

Mikaela Shiffrin finished five-tenths of a second behind in second place upon her return to competition following a positive COVID-19 test and missing two races last week.



Shiffrin

Shiffrin, who was only cleared to race on Monday, was the only racer to finish within two seconds of Vlhova's winning time. Slalom world champion Katharina Liensberger was 2.11 behind in third. It was Vlhova's third straight win in the traditional first slalom race of the calendar year, which Shiffrin had won four times between 2013 and 2019.

SKIING

"It was really tough because conditions were not so perfect," said Vlhova, who has won 11 of the last 17 World Cup slaloms. "Also, Zagreb is really long, so when you are entering the last pitch, you start to feel your legs, so you have to, like, breathe again and re-start again."

Vlhova extended her lead over Shiffrin in the discipline standings to 140 points having also won in Lienz six days ago, one of the two races Shiffrin missed while quarantining. The American remained in the overall lead, 115 points ahead of her Slovakian rival.

"I feel big confidence," Vlhova said. "It's not easy winning in a row, there is lot of pressure from outside."



Slovakia's Petra Vlhova speeds down the course during the first run of an alpine ski, women's World Cup slalom in Zagreb, Croatia, on Jan. 4. (AP)

Rangnick loses for 1st time as Wolves win

MANCHESTER, England, Jan 4, (AP): Ralf Rangnick fell to his first loss as Manchester United manager after Joao Moutinho's 82nd-minute strike earned Wolverhampton a 1-0 win in the English Premier League and a first victory at Old Trafford since 1980.

Outplayed for much of the game, United's players looked like they would survive for a point until Moutinho met a defensive headed clearance by controlling the ball at the edge of the area and driving in a volley that rolled just inside the post.

This was the toughest test of Rangnick's opening six matches in charge and United at times couldn't get near Wolves, whose passing and move-

ment was sharper in its first game in two weeks following COVID-19 issues in the squad. Wolves had 19



Manchester United's Marcus Rashford (right), challenges for the ball with Wolverhampton Wanderers' Adama Traore during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Wolverhampton Wanderers at Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, England, on Jan 3. (AP)

shots in total, with the 15 in the first half the most by a visiting team at Old Trafford since the league's statistic supplier, Opta, began recording stats in 2003.

There were murmurings of discontent from the home fans, too, with some jeering Rangnick's decision to substitute Mason Greenwood just before the hour.

United stayed in seventh place, 22 points off leader Manchester City and four off the top four after the most worrying display yet under the 63-year-old Rangnick.

The German coach has had a benign start on paper, with three of his four previous league opponents being the bottom three of Norwich, Newcastle and Burnley. Wolves was the first team from the top half to play Rangnick's United and there was a gulf in class and team shape.

Osaka opens season with win

Defending champions Russia claim group 'lead' at ATP Cup

SYDNEY, Jan 4, (AP): Daniil Medvedev and Roman Safiullin won their singles matches before combining to win the doubles Tuesday to give defending champion Russia a sweep of Australia and first place in Group B at the ATP Cup.

Russia is 2-0 in the tournament but still has to beat Italy on Thursday in a rematch between last year's finalists to ensure it advances to the semifinals.

Safiullin opened the night session with a 7-6 (6), 6-4 win over James Duckworth. Medvedev beat Alex De Minaur 6-4, 6-2 to secure Russia's victory before the doubles.

Italy rebounded from its upset loss to Australia last Sunday to sweep France, with Yannik Sinner beating Arthur Rinderknech 6-3, 7-6 (3) and Matteo Berrettini defeating Ugo Humbert 6-4, 7-6 (6) in the singles matches.



Daniil Medvedev of Russia serves against Australia's Alex de Minaur during their match at the ATP Cup tennis tournament in Sydney, on Jan 4. (AP)

TENNIS

For Berrettini, it was a confidence-boosting win following a loss to de Minaur over the weekend. Humbert was coming off an upset win over US Open champion Medvedev.

All four teams in Group C have 1-1 records after Germany beat the United States and Canada rallied to beat Britain.

Jan-Lennard Struff withstood 34 aces in a 7-6 (7), 4-6, 7-5 win over John Isner to give Germany the lead and Alexander Zverev sealed his team's victory, on his fifth match point, with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Taylor Fritz.

Isner and Fritz combined for a 6-0, 6-3 win over Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz in the doubles, earning the Americans a point that could prove important in determine the group winners.

Germany lost to Britain 2-1 in its tournament opener, and the Americans swept Canada 3-0.

In the night session, Dan Evans gave Britain an early lead over Canada by beating Denis Shapovalov 6-4, 6-4, but Felix Auger-Aliassime defeated Cameron Norrie 7-6 (4), 6-3 and then combined with Shapovalov to beat Jamie Murray and Joe Salisbury 6-4, 6-1 in the deciding doubles match.

The group winner will be decided Thursday when Germany plays Canada and the United States faces Britain.

The four group winners in the 16-team tournament advance to the semifinals on Friday and Saturday, with the final scheduled for Sunday.

Meanwhile, Naomi Osaka is back in a place where she's won two of her four Grand Slam singles titles and the former No. 1-ranked player is feeling good vibes after her time off trying to rediscover her love for the game.

The Australian Open champion opened her 2022 season with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 win over Alize Cornet in one of the Summer Set of tournaments in Melbourne.

Osaka returned to Rod Laver Arena for the first time since winning the Australian Open title in February. It was also her first tour-level match since a third-round loss to Leylah Fernandez at the US Open in September.

Jessica Pegula, the top seed in the other women's Summer Set tournament in Melbourne, Facundo Bagnis beat former No. 1 Andy Murray 6-3, 5-7, 6-3, saving 11 of 13 break points. He will next play third-seeded Grigor Dimitrov. Murray, a five-time finalist at the Australian Open, received a wild-card entry to play at the season's opening major.

PSG blank Vannes 4-0

Sevilla beat Cádiz to reduce Madrid's lead

BARCELONA, Spain, Jan 4, (AP): Sevilla cut into Real Madrid's lead of the Spanish league after winning at Cádiz 1-0, while Oihan Sancet scored a hat trick for Athletic Bilbao.

Lucas Ocampos' second-half goal helped pull Sevilla to within five points of the front-runner. Sevilla also has one more game to play than Madrid.

Madrid gave Sevilla the chance to tighten the title race after Carlo Ancelotti's side lost at Getafe on Sunday, a defeat that ended an unbeaten run of 15 games across all competitions.

Joan Jordán hit the post early for Sevilla, which was missing several players.

SOCCER

Sevilla opened up an eight-point gap over Real Betis in third place. Atlético Madrid is another point back in fourth, followed by Barcelona trailing by one more point.

Cádiz was in second-to-last place. Bilbao may have found the solution to its troubles finishing off its scoring chances.

Sancet, an attacking midfielder, netted three times to lead a 3-1 victory at Osasuna. His treble came after he scored his first goal of the season in the last round in a 2-1 loss to Real Madrid.

Villarreal demolished last-placed Levante 5-0 thanks to Gerard Moreno's brace.

Villarreal, which struggled earlier in the season, has won six straight across all competitions.

Levante remained winless in all 19 league games, and eight points from safety.

In Paris, Kylian Mbappe scored a second-half hat trick as French Cup holder Paris Saint-Germain won at fourth-tier Vannes 4-0 to reach the last 16.

Goalkeeper Clement Petrel made a couple of smart saves before PSG central defender Presnel Kimpembe stooped to score a powerful header from a Nuno Mendes corner in the 28th minute.

Mbappe was kept quiet by the Vannes defense in the first half on a rainy night in the Brittany region of northwestern France.

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