

SPORTS

Kang starts LPGA Tour with win as Swafford victorious again at AmEx

Pieters captures biggest career victory in Abu Dhabi

ORLANDO, Fla., Jan 24, (AP): Danielle Kang wasted no time making sure she didn't have another winless season. She capped off a strong weekend at Lake Nona by closing with a 4-under 68 for a three-shot victory in the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions.

Kang ran off five birdies in a seven-hole stretch in the middle of her round to post the low score of a blustery, cool Sunday in Florida.

She finished at 16-under 272, three shots clear of Brooke Henderson of Canada, who shot 70.

Kang was the lone player to break 70 on both weekend days (69-68), and the only player to shoot in the 60s all four

GOLF

rounds.

For all her birdies, Kang's most important hole might have been a bogey on the 16th. She pulled her approach nearly into a penalty area and had to play away from the hole on a difficult bunker shot. She then two-putt from about 90 feet, converting a bogey putt from 10 feet.

Gaby Lopez had a 72 to finish third. Nelly Korda, the 54-hole leader and No. 1 player in women's golf, closed with a 75 to tie for fourth.

Former MLB pitcher Derek Lowe beat Annika Sorenstam to win the celebrity division.

In La Quinta, Calif., Hudson Swafford won The American Express for the second time in five years, breaking a late tie with an eagle and closing with an 8-under 64 for a two-shot victory.

Starting the final round on the PGA West Stadium Course, Swafford followed his eagle with a birdie on the par-3 17th to win by two over Tom Hoge.

Tied for the lead with Brian Harman and former British



Danielle Kang poses next to the championship trophy on the 18th green after winning the Tournament of Champions LPGA golf tournament on Jan 23, in Orlando, Fla. (AP)

Open champion Francesco Molinari at 20 under, Swafford pulled ahead with a second shot to 8 feet for eagle on the par-5 16th. He then ran in a 20-foot birdie putt on the 17th, and closed with an 8-foot par.

Molinari, playing for the first time in two months, bogeyed the 18th for a 68 and finished four shots behind.

Swafford finished at 23-under 265 in the three-course event for his third PGA Tour title. He also won in the desert in 2017 and took the 2020 Corales Puntacana Resort & Club Championship in the Dominican Republic.

Hoge shot a 68. The 32-year-old from Fargo, North Dakota, missed a chance to win his first title in his 201st career start.

Lee Hodges, the 26-year-old from Alabama who shared the 54-hole lead with Paul Barjon, had a 70 and tied for third. Barjon shot 73 and finished 10th.

Patrick Cantlay, the FedEx Cup champion and 36-hole lead, was only 4 under on the weekend and finished ninth.

In Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Thomas Pieters claimed the sixth and biggest European tour title of his career when he closed with an even-par 72 for a one-shot victory in the Abu Dhabi Championship.

Pieters had 16 pars in the final round, choosing not to go for the green on the par-5 18th when he realized he had a two-shot lead. He finished at 10-under 278, one ahead of Rafa Cabrera Bello (70) and Shubhankar Sharma (71).

Viktor Hovland, going for his third win in his last four starts, shot 72 and finished two shots behind along with Victor Dubuisson (69).

Scott Jamieson, who was bidding for a wire-to-wire victory after leading at the end of each of the first three rounds, fell out of contention with a 77 and tied for 10th.

Rory McIlroy moved to within two of the lead, courtesy of Steven Alker with a par on the par-four ninth and a birdie on 13. He finished with three bogeys over the last five holes for a 69 to tie for 12th.

In Kaupulehu, Hawaii, Miguel Angel Jimenez birdied the par-4 18th hole in regulation for a 6-under 66 and then beat Steven Alker with a par on the second playoff hole to win the season-opening Mitsubishi Electric Championship at Hualalai for the third time.

Alker also closed with a birdie for a 66 to join Jimenez at 17-under 199. Alker had a birdie putt on the first playoff for the win. He missed, and then failed to save par from a bunker on the second extra hole in a tournament that finished Saturday.

In La Romana, Dominican Republic, Aaron Jarvis of the Cayman Islands made birdie on the final hole Sunday for a 3-under 69 and a one-shot victory in a tense ending to the Latin America Amateur Championship. The victory means Jarvis, a 19-year-old UNLV freshman, earns a spot in the Masters and the British Open at St. Andrews. He also is exempt into the final stage of U.S. Open qualifying.

Olympic Roundup

Goggia eyes return

44 Australians heading to Beijing for Winter Games

SYDNEY, Jan 24, (AP): Australia will send 44 athletes to the Winter Olympics beginning Feb. 4 in Beijing - 23 women and 21 men in 10 disciplines.

The Australian Olympic Committee said Monday that snowboarder Scotty James and mogul skier Britt Cox will compete at their fourth Olympics, joining just six other Australians to compete at four or more Winter Games.

Another 12 athletes will compete at their third Olympics, 10 athletes return for their second while 20 athletes will make their Olympic debut.

With an average age of 25.43, the team features four teenagers, with snowboarder Valentino Guseli the youngest at 16.

Freestyle skiing, which incorporates moguls, aeriels, free ski and ski cross, is the largest team with 13 athletes, followed by snowboard with 11.

Tahli Gill and Dean Hewitt will make history as Australia's first Olympic curlers in the mixed event, while Bree Walker will contest the women's monobob as it makes its Olympic debut.

Sophie Ash (moguls) and Gabi Ash (aeriels) will also become the first Australian sisters to compete on the same Winter Olympics team.



Goggia

Sofia Goggia is going to need to recover in a hurry from a series of injuries following another crash on Sunday if she's going to be able to defend her Olympic downhill title next month.

Goggia would have been an overwhelming favorite for another gold - or two: she's also a force in super-G. But she sprained her left knee, partially tore a cruciate ligament and suffered a "minor fracture" of the fibula bone in her leg - plus some tendon damage - when she did the splits at high speed then tumbled down the mountain during a World Cup super-G in Cortina d'Ampezzo, the Italian ski team said after a medical evaluation in Milan.

Competing in the giant slalom at the Beijing Olympics will be a giant step for 17-year-old Kiana Kryeziu and her country of Kosovo.

Kryeziu is the first female athlete from Kosovo at the Winter Games after she met the qualifying standard during races held in Italy.

"I really didn't expect it would happen this early," Kryeziu told The Associated Press. "It was one of my biggest goals. It was one of my dreams and now all is becoming reality."

For decades, Beijing resident Zhou Yunjie kept mum about his teenage years behind the puck.

That all changed after Beijing won the right to host the 2022 Winter Olympics, sparking a government-backed boom in enthusiasm for winter sports across the country. The Games are due to begin on Feb. 4.

Now, the 60-year-old is back on the ice, proudly suiting up with his old teammates for friendly competitions and retellings of their time competing for Beijing in the late 1970s.

Slava Voynov and Artem Anisimov are among the former NHL players named to Russia's roster for the upcoming Beijing Olympics.

The Russians are the defending champions after winning gold in Pyeongchang four years ago when the NHL also did not send players. They should be the favorite once again in another Winter Games without the world's best players, even with Pavel Datsyuk and Ilya Kovalchuk not returning.

The Russian Hockey Federation named its 25-man roster Sunday that features seven players back from the 2018 team. Among the returnees are KHL leading scorer Vadim Shipachyov and ex-NHL players Mikhail Grigorenko, Nikita Gusev and Nikita Nesterov.

Kuwait's handball team lose to Iran in Asian Champ'ship

RIYADH, Jan 24, (KUNA): The Kuwait men's handball team lost on Monday in front of its Iranian counterpart, scoring 26 against 27 in its second match in Group B in the main round of the 20th Asian Men's Handball Championship.

In the first group competitions, the Qatari team defeated Uzbekistan by scoring 46 to 15.

Later today, the Saudi team will meet its Korean counterpart in the first group competitions, while Bahrain and Iraq will meet in the second group.

The competitions will continue until the 31st of this month for the World Championship 2023 Poland - Sweden hosted by Saudi Arabia.

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