

Russian Mishina and Galliamov win pairs free skating

Shcherbakova seals Russia's first World Team Trophy victory

OSAKA, Japan, April 18, (AP): World champion Anna Shcherbakova won the women's free skate to seal Russia's first-ever victory at the figure skating World Team Trophy.

First after the short program, the 17-year-old Shcherbakova opened with a quadruple flip and followed with a triple flip-triple toe loop combination en route to a score of 160.58 points.

Japan's Kaori Sakamoto moved up to

FIGURE SKATING

second place with 150.29 points after an impressive Matrix routine that included five triple jumps.

Russia's Elizaveta Tuktamysheva was third with 146.23 points.

The result of the women's free skate ensured Russia, with 125 points, would win its first World Team Trophy. The United States - the defending champion - was second with 110 followed by Japan with 107.

Britain, Canada, Italy advance to 2022 qualifying in BJK Cup

KRALJEVO, Serbia, April 18, (AP): Britain, Canada, Italy and Ukraine were among the eight countries that reached the qualifying round of the 2022 Billie Jean King Cup with victories.

These were the first matches in the women's tennis team competition since its name was changed from Fed Cup last year.

Only the United States and Japan have won previous World Team Trophy competitions, first held in 2009. Team USA has four victories and Japan has two.

The biennial World Team Trophy features the six best figure skating teams from the 2020-21 season.

"To finally be in first place means a lot to us," Tuktamysheva said. "This is a little practice (for) the Olympic Games. It is important to have World Team Trophy before the Olympic Games, now we know what to do."

U.S. national champion Bradie Tennell delivered a solid performance but under-rotated a few jumps. She placed fourth with

133.19 points. Compatriot Karen Chen finished sixth with 127.24 points.

Teams from Japan, the United States, Canada, France, Russia and Italy competed. Italy was fourth with 72 points followed by France with 67 and Canada with 57.

Anastasia Mishina and Aleksandr Galliamov of Russia won the pairs free skating with 151.59 points. Alexa Knierim and Brandon Frazier of the United States were second with 133.63 points followed by Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara of Japan with 130.83.

Each country sends two men, two women, one pair and one ice dancing entry. The

points are combined across the four disciplines with the highest point total winning.

A limited number of fans were allowed into Maruzen Intec Arena even though Osaka is experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases.

On Saturday, Japan's second-largest city recorded over 1,161 cases, the third highest daily tally.

With less than a year to go until the Beijing Olympics, many of the world's top skaters are in Osaka, eager to get in another competition after several International Skating Union events were canceled due to the pandemic.



Russia's Anna Shcherbakova performs during the women's free skating program of the ISU World Team Trophy figure skating competition in Osaka, western Japan, on April 17. (AP)

Ko wins Lotte Championship with tournament-record 28-under 260



Lydia Ko, of New Zealand, hits from the 13th tee during the final round of the Lotte Championship golf tournament, on April 17, in Kapolei, Hawaii. Inset: Ko holds the Lotte Championship trophy after winning the golf tournament. (AP)

Korda struggles

KAPOLEI, Hawaii, April 18, (AP): Lydia Ko is golfing like she is a kid again. In other words, she's tough to beat.

No one came close at this week's Lotte Championship. Ko torched Kapolei Golf Club and tournament records in the process. A final-round 65 Saturday left her at 28-under 260 and seven shots ahead of everybody.

It brought back vivid memories of the teenager from New Zealand who became the youngest golfer - female or male - to rise to No. 1 the world in 2015. She is the LPGA's youngest-ever winner, major winner, Rookie and Player of the Year.

Ko, who turns 24 next Saturday, won 14 times in her first 81 starts, including twice as an amateur in 2012 and '13. But she had only won once since - three years ago - until Saturday.

GOLF

"When it doesn't happen you do doubt," Ko said. "If I said I didn't doubt myself at all it would be a lie. I wondered if I'd ever be back in the winners circle, but obviously I'm grateful for all that's happened in my career so far."

"It's been a fun week in Hawaii and to be back in this position is obviously super cool."

Ko came up three strokes shy of the LPGA record of 31 under. That was set by Sei Young Kim, who finished tied with Inbee Park. 22-year-old Nelly Korda and Irish rookie Leona Maguire at 267.

Park and Kim, both from South Korea, are ranked 2-3 in the world and Korda is fourth. Kim beat Park in a Lotte playoff six years ago, while Maguire was in the midst of a brilliant college career at Duke.

Park, who vacationed in Hawaii as a child, now has five Top-Five finishes at Lotte, but no wins. With her 63, she shared low-round honors Saturday with Jenny Shin.

Shin tied for sixth another two shots back with Wei-Ling Hsu, Sarah Schmelzel, reigning US Women's Open champ A Lim Kim and 19-year-old Yuka Saso, making her sixth LPGA start.

Mumbai roars back to beat Hyderabad

Queensland clinches Australian first-class cricket title over NSW

BRISBANE, Australia, April 18, (AP): Queensland has won its ninth Sheffield Shield first-class cricket title in Australia, outclassing New South Wales by an innings and 33 runs in the final at Allan Border Field.

The Bulls clinched victory before lunch on the fourth day of the scheduled five-day match after leg spinner Mitch Swepson (3-68) helped bowl out New South Wales for 213 in the visitors' second innings.

Queensland celebrated after fast bowler Brendan Doggett (3-37) claimed the final wicket to fall, snaring Australian fast bowler Josh Hazlewood caught behind for three.

Fellow pace bowler Xavier Bartlett was also impressive for Queensland

with 3-42.

Defending champion New South Wales resumed on Sunday at 140-5 still trailing by 106 runs. The visitors were under pressure after test No. 3 Marnus Labuschagne completed his score of 192 runs on Saturday to lift Queensland to a first-innings total of 389 and a 246-run overall lead.

The Blues sustained just their second loss in 14 games against Queensland despite boasting a world-class bowling attack of Mitchell Starc, Hazlewood and off-spinner Nathan Lyon.

Indian Premier League duties meant New South Wales was without Australian test players Steve Smith, Pat Cummins, David Warner and Moises Henriques.

CHENNAI, India, April 18, (AP): Sunrisers Hyderabad failed in its chase for the third straight time in the Indian Premier League as defending champion Mumbai Indians won by 13 runs.

Jonny Bairstow made a brisk 43 off 22 deliveries and fellow opener David Warner scored a 34-ball 36 before Hyderabad collapsed to 137 all out in 19.4 overs, losing its last eight wickets for 47 runs.

Leg-spinner Rahul Chahar claimed 3-19 and Trent Boult provided Mumbai a perfect finish with 3-28.

Earlier, Kieron Pollard's unbeaten 35 off 22 lifted Mumbai's total to 150-5 as the West Indian power-hitter struck two sixes off the last two deliveries from fast bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar (0-45). "Great effort from the bowling unit, we knew it was not going to be easy," Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma said. "The pitch is getting slower and slower, bowlers are always in the game till 20 overs."

Hyderabad looked in control after Bairstow had quickly bludgeoned four sixes and three boundaries. Hyderabad enjoyed an opening stand of 67 runs before Bairstow was out in unusual fashion in the eighth over.

The Englishman dragged his back foot onto his stumps and was out hit-wicket while trying to pull left-arm spinner Krunal Pandya.

CRICKET

Mumbai stood out in the fielding too with Krunal's brother, Hardik, running out Warner in the 12th over and he also hit the stumps to leave Abdul Samad stranded in the 18th over.

Earlier, Sharma scored 32 after he became the first IPL captain this season to bat first after winning the toss. Sharma provided a decent start of 55 runs off 39 balls with Quinton de Kock (40), but Hyderabad pulled back through its Afghanistan spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman (2-29) and Rashid Khan (0-22). Mujeeb had de Kock caught at deep mid-wicket in the 14th over and Bairstow held onto a brilliant legside catch to dismiss Ishan Kishan. But Pollard's brisk knock in the end proved enough for Mumbai to cruise to its second win in the tournament after losing the opening game to Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Chiefs edge Crusaders 26-25

Brumbies & Force win weekend Super Rugby Australia matches

SYDNEY, April 18, (AP): The ACT Brumbies beat the Melbourne Rebels 26-20 and the Western Force edged New South Wales 31-30 in weekend Super Rugby Australia matches.

The Brumbies led the Rebels 19-7 at halftime. The bonus point earned by the Rebels kept the Melbourne side in the hunt for a playoff spot ahead of next week's matches.

In Perth, the Western Force also kept their playoff hopes alive when Argentinian flyhalf Domingo Miotti kicked a penalty after the final siren to lift his side to its one-point victory over the Waratahs.

The Waratahs were on track for their first win of the season after fly-half Ben Donaldson kicked his sixth goal of the night to give the visitors a 30-21 lead. But Jordan Olowofela scored a try in the 72nd minute and a clutch Miotti conversion from the sideline reduced the margin to two points.

RUGBY

The Waratahs lost a lineout with just seconds remaining to give the Force one final chance of victory. The Force unleashed phase after phase after the final siren in a bid to find the winning points, and they got their chance when the Waratahs were penalized for offside.

Miotti stepped up and calmly slotted the 21-meter penalty from straight in front of the posts.

The first-place Queensland Reds had a weekend bye.

In Hamilton, New Zealand, Fullback Damian McKenzie kicked a penalty with two minutes remaining to give the Hamilton-based Chiefs a 26-25 win over the Christchurch-based Crusaders in Super Rugby Aotearoa.

The Crusaders still hold a seven-point lead over the Chiefs in the championship table. But the four-time defending champion Crusaders have had two losses and a narrow overtime win in their last three games and the Chiefs, with four-straight wins, are heading into the playoffs with more momentum.

In a seesaw match, the Crusaders led 25-23 after a penalty to flyhalf Richie Mo'unga in the 66th minute.

The Chiefs, who lost all of their matches last season under British and Irish Lions coach Warren Gatland, have found new confidence this year under caretaker Clayton McMillan.



In this photo provided by the NHRA, Brittany Force drives in Top Fuel qualifying on April 17, 2021, in the DENSO Spark Plugs NHRA Four-Wide Nationals drag races at The Strip at Las Vegas Motor Speedway in Las Vegas. (AP)

Brittany Force in top spot in Top Fuel qualifying in Vegas

LAS VEGAS, April 18, (AP): Brittany Force took the No. 1 spot in Top Fuel qualifying in the DENSO Spark Plugs NHRA Four-Wide Nationals at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

Force had a final qualifying run of 3.732-seconds at 320.66 mph in her dragster for her first No. 1 qualifier of the year and 21st of her career. The former world champion sat out most of last season because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"It just shows this team has picked up right where we left off," Force said. "We had a long time being away from the races, and coming back to Gainesville (last month), we found our routine pretty quickly. Coming here and taking this No. 1 qualifier (spot), we're pumped."

They showed that confidence by calmly rallying to regain the lead with McKenzie's late penalty, which capped his personal 16-point haul.

The Chiefs then won a vital turnover and a lineout in the last seconds of the match to shut out the Crusaders.

The Crusaders scored the first try of the match through center Leicester Fainga'anuku and held a 7-0 lead before McKenzie kicked three penalties to give the Chiefs a 9-7 advantage after 26 minutes.

Mo'unga kicked a penalty, then along with captain Scott Barrett created a try for fullback Will Jordan that gave the Crusaders a 17-9 halftime lead.

In a thrilling second half, center Alex Nankivell scored in the 47th minute to cut the lead to one point. The Crusaders re-established a six-point lead with a try to hooker Codie Taylor after a rolling maul in the 53rd minute.

The Chiefs enjoyed a period of dominance out of which winger Jonah Lowe scored a try to put them ahead 23-22 until Mo'unga's penalty gave the Crusaders a short-lived lead.

While the Crusaders still lead the championship, their recent form makes them seem anything but invincible. Their regular offside play has been more heavily penalized this year than in the past and Mo'unga's form as a playmaker has been mixed.

The Dunedin-based Highlanders were clinging to the hope of a playoffs place until Friday when they beat the Auckland-based Blues 35-29. They now have a much stronger role in the playoffs race.

The exceptional Highlanders' head coach Tony Brown has the leanest roster in Super Rugby Aotearoa but already has engineered wins over the Crusaders and the Blues, who started the season among the title favorites.

Under Brown, the Highlanders appear likely to become a major force in the future as they develop their young lineup.

The Blues, in contrast, are headed for another season of underachievement after losing three of their last four games. Their inability to secure a world-class coach who can draw the best from a star-studded roster has led to years of poor performances and another false dawn this season which began with promise.

They've also seen regular slumps in the form of leading players such as the All Black brothers Rieko and Akira Ioane.

DRAG RACING

the second race of the NHRA Camping World Drag Racing Series season. Eliminations are Sunday.

Hight made it a clean sweep in nitro qualifying for John Force Racing, earning his 69th No. 1 qualifier thanks to a run of 3.882 at 331.85 in his Camaro.