

Sports

# Russians dominate as Kolyada wins Grand Prix on debut

French pair, first ice-dance team to break 200-point barrier



BEIJING: First place winner Alina Zagitova of Russia (Center), second place winner Wakaba Higuchi of Japan (L) and third place winner Elena Radionova of Russia (R) show their medals. — AFP



BEIJING: First place winner Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron of France (Center), second place winner Madison Chock and Evan Bates of the US (L) and third place winner Ekaterina Bobrova and Dmitri Soloviev of Russia (R) show their medals during an award ceremony at the Cup of China ISU Grand Prix. — AFP

BEIJING: Russia dominated the figure skating Cup of China as 15-year-old Alina Zagitova won gold on her grand prix debut and Mikhail Kolyada triumphed in the men's competition yesterday in Beijing. The French pair Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron meanwhile became the first ice-dance team to break the 200-point barrier as they blazed their way to a record victory.

The starlet Zagitova's victory is all the more significant with February's Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea looming large. The 2017 World Junior Champion catapulted from fourth to first in the ladies

free skate in the Chinese capital, the third of six events in the ISU Grand Prix series.

Second overall was Japan's Wakaba Higuchi (212.52 points) and another Russian, Elena Radionova, took bronze (206.82). Performing to "Don Quixote", Zagitova nailed a triple Lutz-triple loop combination on her way to a score of 144.44 points and total 213.88.

"To win the gold medal in my first grand prix means a lot to me, but I need to continue to work and I cannot rest on my laurels," the teenager said. "I was not pleased with my short programme (69.44 on Friday) but I was pleased with the free skate as I did every-

thing." Kolyada made it a double Russian gold with his total of 279.38 points, with home Chinese hope Jin Boyang taking silver (264.48) and the American Max Aaron — who came first in the free skate-bronze (259.69). The 22-year-old Kolyada, who dazzled in his short programme on Friday, held on to his overnight lead to seal a maiden grand prix victory. There was a major surprise in the disappointing form of Spain's two-time world champion Javier Fernandez, who finished well off the podium, down in a modest sixth.

Two-time world champions Papadakis and Cizeron were untouchable over the two days, racking up a per-

sonal-best score of 119.33 points on the night and a record 200.43 in total. The Americans Madison Chock and Evan Bates took a distant silver and Russia's Ekaterina Bobrova and Dmitri Soloviev won bronze.

"It was a great performance for us and we are happy with how we performed and with our score," Papadakis said after their faultless skate to Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata". "This is our third time in China and we have always skated well here, it feels like a lucky place for us." The ISU Grand Prix series consists of six events and climaxes at the final in Nagoya, Japan in December. — AFP

## Felipe Massa to retire from F1 at end of season

LONDON: Formula One driver Felipe Massa will retire at the end of the season. The 36-year-old Brazilian was originally going to retire from the Williams team last season, but changed his mind after Valtteri Bottas suddenly left Williams to join Mercedes.

Massa has 11 wins and 41 podiums from 268 races. His last race is at the Abu Dhabi GP on Nov. 26, and he will bid goodbye to home fans at the Brazilian Grand Prix next week at Interlagos. "I have now enjoyed four great years with the team, but my career in Formula One will finally come to an end this season," Massa said yesterday in a team statement. "I take so many great memories with me as I prepare for my final two races in Brazil and Abu Dhabi, and although they will be emo-

tional, I am looking forward to ending on a high note."

Massa was in tears last year as he walked around the track in Brazil carrying the national flag, thinking that it was his farewell. But after Bottas was drafted in as an emergency replacement for retired world champion Nico Rosberg at Mercedes, he stayed on another year. This time it really will be his last home race.

He is in 11th place in the standings this season with a best finish of sixth, at the season-opening Australian GP and then in Bahrain two races later.

Massa, one of the most well-liked drivers on the circuit, overcame a serious head injury sustained at the Hungarian GP in July 2009. He never won the F1 title, missing out in 2008 in the cruelest fashion. After winning the season ending GP in Brazil, he thought the title was his and his Ferrari team began celebrating wildly. But Lewis Hamilton moved up to fifth place on the last lap and beat him to the title by one point.

Massa was third in the 2006 championship, also for Ferrari, behind teammate Michael Schumacher and champion Fernando Alonso. But since that dramatic defeat in 2008 he has never been close again. Williams did not announce who will replace Massa next season to drive alongside 19-year-old Canadian Lance Stroll,



Felipe Massa

who is 10th in the standings.

But Polish driver Robert Kubica is touted as a possible replacement for Massa, in what would be a sensational return to F1 after his right hand was partially severed during a rally race in 2011. — AP

## Participants to receive numbers from Nov 23 at Walkathon center

KUWAIT: The registration for National Bank of Kuwait's (NBK) November 23rd Annual Walkathon continues online through NBKWalkathon.com.

Applicants can then receive their assigned T-shirt and number at the NBK's registration point beside the Scientific Center on the Gulf Road in Salmiya starting from Thursday, November 23. The number for each participant will contain a step-counting chip.

"The participation in NBK's Walkathon is increasing year after year, and we are extremely thrilled to take our involvement with this exciting event to a new level. NBK walkathon webpage continues to receive participants till 22nd of November 2017," said Talal Al Turki, NBK Public Relations Team Leader.

Al Turki added "NBK's 2017 Walkathon that will be held on 9th December 2017 aims to encourage each individual to believe in their ability towards making a change 'We're Stronger... With Every Step'".

NBK will award more than 100 participants in the 23rd Annual Walkathon alongside the grand draw for two new Renault cars from Al Babbain Group. Ten winners will be selected from each of the 10 categories of participants. For the first time this year, NBK initiated a new racing category for participants aged 60 years old and above to encourage a healthier lifestyle among all members of the society.

It's worth mentioning that, the walk for both the female and male participants will start from the Green Island on the Gulf Road to the Shuwaikh Beach Park, parallel to the Gulf Road, next to KPC building for a distance of 11 Km.



Talal Al Turki

Drapac team folding in September after a seven-million-dollar funding shortfall in their 2018 budget.

A deal was finally struck with EF Education with the team 'hours away' from disappearing and Vaughters believes a franchise-based system, together with greater financial fairness, would ensure stability and create more fan appeal. "Over the past four, five years there has always been at least one or two World Tour teams that have collapsed. It's something that cycling, as a sport, needs to address," Vaughters told Reuters at the Rouleur Classic cycling exhibition in London after the launch of the team's new kit.

"Structurally there is a problem that needs to be corrected. Fans of Manchester United or the Denver Broncos don't worry about them just going away. It's not something that fans are used to or can understand.

"There are a number of different ways to go about it. One is cost control, or financial fairness, which is what I



call it. The other is creating a structure where franchises are guaranteed the biggest races such as the Tour de France. "If there is a guaranteed entry into those races in the lifetime of the business, then at that point you have created a limited market, you have created scarcity and when you create scarcity sponsors come in and gravitate towards that scarcity."

"What we have now is if you come up with 20 million pounds you can start your own team, there is no scarcity of the commodity," added Vaughters. "It's just a matter of who can scrounge up the money, whether they come up from a very disreputable source or a reputable source, it doesn't matter."

Things became so desperate for Cannondale-Drapac that Vaughters Tweeted in August: "At the risk of colossal spam, if anyone out there has a lead on some financial support for our team, email: press@slipstreamsports.com." — Reuters

## Kurt Busch, 4 other drivers top 200 mph in Texas qualifying

FORT WORTH: Kurt Busch went faster than anyone has ever gone in NASCAR Cup qualifying on a 1 1/2-mile track. While out of championship contention and uncertain who he will drive for next season, he is still trying to win races.

"The sensation of speed is, it's unbelievable," Busch said. Busch averaged a record 200.915 mph on his only lap in the final round of qualifying Friday at Texas Motor Speedway. The Stewart-Haas driver was in one of the five cars that broke the 200-mph mark, with Denny Hamlin qualifying second and the highest of the remaining championship contenders.

"Development, that's the biggest thing. That's just the biggest thing," Hamlin said, when asked about the high qualifying speeds. "And trust me, I don't know of any driver that is comfortable running at the speed where running right now. Kevin Harvick walked by and as soon as that was over, he said, 'I'm glad that is over.' It's crazy speed."

The top five all surpassed the previous qualifying record at the track, Tony Stewart's 200.111 mph before the fall race three years ago. Hamlin qualified at 200.617 mph, with the others going over 200 mph on the high-banked track being Harvick (200.372 mph), Erik Jones (200.326 mph) and Kyle Busch (200.252 mph). Hamlin, Harvick and Kyle Busch, the only driver locked into a title shot at Homestead, are all championship contenders.

Martin Truex Jr., leading in points, qualified seventh at 199.431 mph, directly ahead of fellow title contenders Ryan Blaney (199.380 mph), Jimmie Johnson (198.727 mph) and Brad Keselowski (198.478 mph) in the eighth through 10th spots.

The only championship contender starting outside the top 10 was Chase Elliott, who was among seven drivers who didn't make any qualifying laps after not making it through tech inspection in time. He will start 34th today.

Harvick obviously made it through inspection, though it was a rush to get through the first round of the three-stage qualifying. "This is a little bit of a nerve-racking lap because it is so fast," Harvick said. "For me, my heart rate has been up since I started because of the anxiety of getting in the car late, not having time to prep yourself getting in and calm down and then you get in there and it is just lap after lap, but it worked out fine."

Kurt Busch said he saw old friend Friday who had his two sons with him. The two boys were in awe of the surroundings on pit road when Busch winked at them and gave a prophetic word. "I said, 'It's going to be over 200 miles per hour today.' And they were like 'woah' and then I was able to back it up," Busch said. "So I feel impressed." — AP

## Vaughters wants guaranteed Tour spots for team franchises

LONDON: World Tour cycling teams should become franchises with guaranteed entry into the sport's top races to avoid financial meltdowns, according to Cannondale EF Education First-Drapac chief Jonathan Vaughters. American former professional Vaughters fought a desperate battle to stop his Cannondale-