

Sports



SAITAMA: Winner Nathan Chen of the US (C), silver medalists Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan (L) and bronze medalists Vincent Zhou of the US (R) pose with their medals during the men's free skating competition of the ISU World Figure Skating Championships in Saitama yesterday. — AFP



SAITAMA: ISU World Figure Skating Championships Ice Dance winner Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron of France pose with their national flag during the victory ceremony in Saitama, northern suburb of Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

# Chen defends title with record-setting skate, Japan's Hanyu takes second

## Papadakis and Cizeron of France dance to fourth championship

SAITAMA: America's Nathan Chen successfully defended his world figure skating title yesterday with a spectacular, record-setting free skate in a nail-biting contest with hometown favourite and Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan.

Chen built on a strong lead in the short programme with a dynamic free skate that included four clean quadruple jumps and had the crowd at Saitama Super Arena, just north of Tokyo, clapping along by the end.

The 19-year-old Chen broke the world record for both the free skate and total points, set moments before by Hanyu, surging to victory with 216.02 and a total of 323.42. "As soon as I stepped on the ice, I felt that energy already there. He (Hanyu) has been pushing the sport making the sport so enjoyable, so competitive, and that definitely made me so much better of a skater," said Chen.

Hanyu, 24 and competing in Japan for the first time in several years, brought the house down with a routine that began with a clean quadruple loop and hit two more clean quads, with a quad Salchow under-rotated.

In a routine that was haunting and energetic, Hanyu, who had not competed for four months due to an ankle injury, racked up 206.10 points in the free skate and 300.97 in total, breaking the record he set in a Helsinki Grand Prix event in 2018.

Yet it was only enough for silver. "I had one mistake in my free programme but I am pleased I could perform well at the world championships," said Hanyu, whose fans cheered ecstatically when he landed his jumps. Hanyu, who is known as a perfectionist, added that he was far from satisfied with the result. "I really want to win. I think I did my best, but the problem is that in figure skating competition con-

sists of two days, and I am losing in both," he said.

"I am a really competitive person and want to compete with a strong opponent. I respect Nathan in this sense." American 18-year-old Vincent Zhou finished third with a dynamic and powerful routine that helped him rise a place from the short programme, claiming 186.99 points for a total of 281.16.

"It wasn't perfect but I am more than happy with that. It felt unbelievable doing that out there," he said.

### FOURTH CHAMPIONSHIP

Unstoppable French ice dance duo of Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron took their fourth world championship crown and set a new world record with a sensual routine that won a standing ovation.

The two, who were narrowly edged out of gold at the Pyeongchang Olympics after Papadakis's costume came

unfastened in the short dance, surged to victory at the Saitama Super Arena after tango-ing to a substantial lead in the rhythm dance short skate. With a new scoring system in place this season, Papadakis and Cizeron seemed to mirror each other through a series of spins and gravity-defying lifts and finished with 134.23 in the free dance and 222.65 altogether.

They ended up roughly 10 points ahead of their nearest rivals and eclipsed their own world record set at this year's European Championships after a season dogged by back problems for Cizeron.

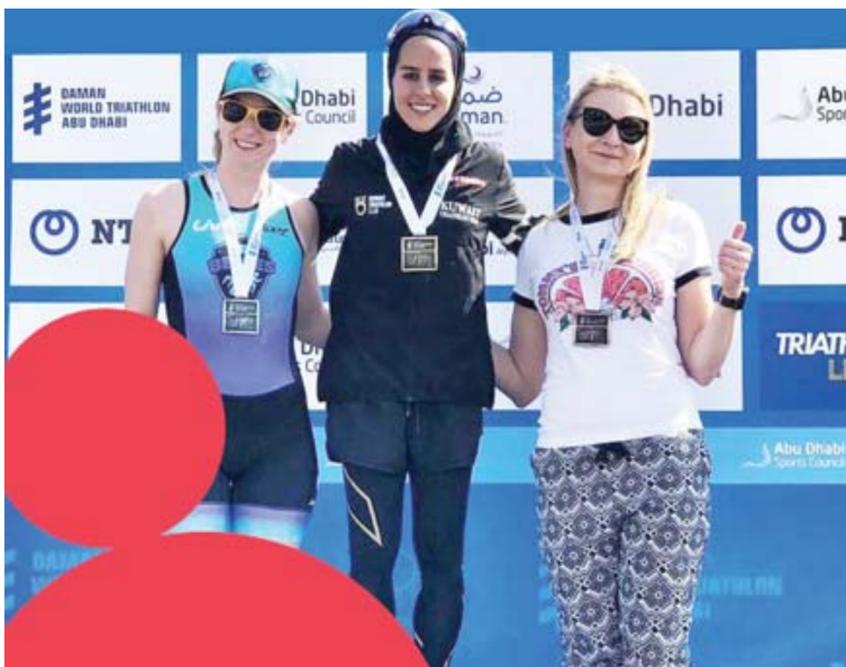
"We were exactly here five years ago in Saitama (for the World Championships) and remember the whole experience from those five years. It is incredible," said Papadakis. Russians Victoria Sinitsina and Nikita Katsalalov finished second ahead of Americans Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue. — Reuters

## Ooredoo's ambassador Al-Jeraiwi wins Abu Dhabi World Triathlon

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait's brand ambassador, triathlete Najla Al-Jeraiwi, won first place in the Abu Dhabi World Triathlon which was held in Abu Dhabi, which included a very competitive race between the world's best triathletes. The Abu Dhabi World Triathlon is the largest and most inclusive triathlon in the Middle East. The 2019 elite race boasted the strongest field in Abu Dhabi's history, with the best-of-the-best lining up race for precious Olympic qualifying points. Also, for the first time Najla Al-Jeraiwi took 15 Kuwaiti juniors to compete in the international Olympic kids' race.

In a press statement, Ooredoo Kuwait lauded the achievement, noting that her victory brings pride to all the youth of Kuwait. The sponsorship of athlete Al-Jeraiwi comes in alignment with the company's core values of caring, connecting, and challenging. It further underscores the company's commitment to empowering women.

Al-Jeraiwi has a long track record of key achievements. She won the gold medal in the Sierra Nevada Triathlon, in the Spanish district of Granada last June. She won the bronze medal in the African Triathlon Union Cup - the Pan Arab Competition, held in Sharm Al Sheikh last March. She was the first Arab female triathlete representative in the 17th Asian Games, South Korea and the first GCC representative in UCI Road World Championships 2016. She was also the runner-up in the ATU African Triathlon & Pan Arab championship and the GCC cycling champion in both Time Trial and Road race. Al-Jeraiwi is currently the



national champion of Kuwait in both triathlon and cycling. She has come in the top 3 in multiple regional triathlons.

Supporting youth and empowering women is among Ooredoo's top priorities through its CSR strategy. The company signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs in 2017 to support youth projects and initia-

tives. Ooredoo is continuously working with the different entities in both private and public sectors to enrich youth experience in a variety of fields. The company's commitment to supporting youth is deep-rooted within the core values in Ooredoo Kuwait. Ooredoo is especially proud of the young athletes that it sponsors, such as Kuwaiti champions Abdulaziz Al-Rashed and Rakan Al-Hasawi.

## Pacquiao polls Twitter on who to fight next

MANILA: Philippine boxing legend Manny Pacquiao took to social media to poll millions of fans on who they think should be his next opponent, having brushed off calls to hang up his gloves after turning 40.

"Who should I fight next?" the world's only eight-division champion asked in a Twitter survey that drew 27,380 votes after five hours and listed Floyd Mayweather, Keith Thurman, Danny Garcia and Shawn Porter as the choices.

The poll, also linked to Pacquiao's Facebook wall, has 18 more hours to run. It did not indicate how the voting had gone so far. Pacquiao, who has 2.51 million followers on Twitter and 11.76 million on Facebook, is known to have been angling for a rematch with Mayweather, who beat the Filipino on points in the world's richest prize fight in 2015.

Pacquiao's decisive victory over American fighter Adrien Broner in January was supposed to have opened the door to that route. But the unbeaten Mayweather, officially retired, has been non-committal. Many Facebook users urged Pacquiao, who has 61 wins including 39 knockouts against seven losses and two draws in a 24-year career, to fight Mayweather. "Floyd of course then retire," Carlos De Luna Lagunasad added.

But another fan urged the 40-year-old to face International Boxing Federation welterweight champion Errol Spence, who easily beat challenger Garcia in a match between two previously undefeated boxers yesterday. "Show this young guys why u r a living legend," Meg Osh Tin Oniqa said. — AFP

## Top-ranked Park, Liu share LPGA Founders Cup lead

LOS ANGELES: China's Liu Yu made the most of her early morning start, firing an eight-under par 64 on Friday to join world number one Park Sung-hyun atop the leaderboard of the LPGA Founders Cup. Liu matched France's Celine Boutier—a former teammate at Duke University—for low round of the tournament to seize a share of the halfway lead on 12-under par 132.

South Korea's Park posted her second straight 66 at Wildfire Golf Club in Phoenix, Arizona. She and Liu were two strokes clear of a group of eight players on 10-under 134 that included overnight leader Boutier as well as former world number one Lydia Ko of New Zealand.

They were joined by Americans Angel Yin and Cheyenne Knight, Sweden's Linnea Strom. That group is headlined by top-15 players Amy Yang of South Korea and Lydia Ko of New Zealand. It also includes Boutier, Americans Angel Yin and Cheyenne Knight, Sweden's Linnea Strom, Denmark's Nanna Koerstz Madsen and South Korean Hur Mi-jung.

Defending champion Park In-bee of South Korea

headed a group of five players on 135. Liu was in the first group off the tee at 10, bouncing back from an opening bogey with three straight birdies. She followed another bogey at 14 with birdies at 15 and 18, and birdied five holes coming in.

"Just everything kind of clicked all together," said Liu, who admitted that it's not something she would expect to happen every day. "When a day like this comes, I just am glad I was able to take advantage of it," she said, adding that the chilly temperatures that greeted her group slowed her early.

"My putting definitely helped me a lot on the front nine," she said. "On the back nine the weather warmed up and I was hitting it close and I was able to capitalize on those short- and mid-range birdie putts."

Park also teed off on 10 and after playing her first nine holes in two-under. She came alive over her final nine, with birdies at five of six holes that included a run of four straight from the first through the fourth.

A bogey at the ninth prevented her from holding the solo 36-hole lead. "Overall I'm really happy with the play today, especially putting was really good and the shots were better than yesterday," Park said.

Strom was eyeing a share of the lead with nine birdies and no bogeys through 17 holes before a double bogey at 18. Boutier, who fired eight birdies without a bogey on Thursday, was as low as 13 under after three birdies and an eagle at the par-five 15th. But she fell back with a bogey at 16 and a double bogey at the last. — AFP

## Defending champ Paul Casey holds share of Valspar halfway lead

MIAMI: Defending champion Paul Casey fired a five-under par 66 to grab a share of the 36-hole lead alongside American Austin Cook at the US PGA Tour Valspar Championship on Friday.

England's Casey and Cook each stood on six-under 136 after two rounds at the Innisbrook Resort Copperhead course in Palm Harbor, Florida.

England's Luke Donald, South Korean Im Sung-jae and American Scott Stallings were a stroke back on 137. Donald had five birdies and four bogeys in his one-under 70, surrendering a one-shot lead with two bogeys in his last four holes. Im posted a 67 and Stallings a 68.

Casey, who edged Tiger Woods and Patrick Reed by a stroke last year for the crown, began on the back nine and promptly birdied three of his first four holes, sinking a 10-foot putt at 10 and landing his

third shot inches from the cup before a tap-in at the par-5 11th.

Casey scored on the other par-5 holes as well, sinking a three-foot birdie putt at 14, a six-footer at the first before holing a 27-footer for eagle at the fifth. "I feel really good about (my game) because last week was rubbish," said Casey, who was stung by a missed cut at the Players Championship at TPC Sawgrass.

"I struggle a little bit around Sawgrass and that frustrated me, annoyed me, coming in here trying to defend my title, which I would love to do because I never defended a professional title, I've defended amateur titles, English Amateurs and PAC 12 titles, I would love to do that here.

"So I worked very, very hard on the game and for whatever reason it's slowed things down. Quietly the transition at the top of the swing," Casey said. "Nice to turn it around after last week to suddenly be not in control of this event but I'm near the top, which is good."

Casey's lone bogey came on his closing ninth hole, finding bunkers with his first two shots and missing a six-footer for par. "Disappointing on nine," Casey said. "But everybody's going to make bogeys. If you can just minimize those, it puts you in a good position." — AFP