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Fraser-Pryce, Felix seal golds at Worlds

China's Liu shrug off steamy heat, humidity to lead Chinese sweep of medals



DOHA: Jamaica's Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce finishes first ahead of Britain's Dina Asher-Smith, Ivory Coast's Marie-Josée Ta Lou and Jamaica's Elaine Thompson in the Women's 100m final at the 2019 IAAF World Athletics Championships at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha. — AFP

DOHA: Jamaican sprint queen Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce surged to an unprecedented fourth 100m crown and US legend Allyson Felix broke Usain Bolt's gold medal record tally as the returning new mothers lit up the World Championships here Sunday.

Fraser-Pryce and Felix, both racing in their first major championships since taking time off from the sport to have children, lit up a pulsating day three of competition even if the action was played out inside a near-empty Khalifa Stadium.

The 32-year-old Fraser-Pryce, who skipped the 2017 championships to give birth to her first child, delivered a barnstorming run to take the 100m in 10.71sec. Britain's Dina Asher-Smith took silver with a time of 10.83sec while Ivory Coast's Marie-Josée Ta Lou claimed bronze in 10.90sec.

"To be standing here as world champion again after having my baby, I am elated," said Fraser-Pryce. "The females keep showing up. We love to put on a performance and for me I am just really happy to come away with the win."

Fraser-Pryce was in control from the gun, rocketing out of the blocks and taking the lead in the opening 20 metres. From that point there was only going to be one winner, and the veteran Jamaican swept over the line majestically to add to the world titles won in 2009, 2013 and 2015 before setting off on a victory lap carrying her two-year-old son Zion.

The two-time Olympic champion's dominant display was the highlight of a day three which also saw US track queen Felix win a record 12th World Championship gold medal. Felix only returned to the sport in July after a 13-month layoff which saw her give birth to her daughter Camryn by emergency C-section last November.

The 33-year-old, who failed to qualify for the individual 400m event in Doha, took gold in the 4x400m mixed relay as the United States motored to victory in a world record time of 3min 09.34sec. Felix's 12th gold medal broke Jamaican legend Bolt's record tally of 11 World Championship gold medals.

Overall, Felix now has an incredible 26 medals, a

dazzling haul that also includes six Olympic golds. Felix, competing in her ninth straight world championships, has accumulated more World Championship and Olympic honours than any other track and field athlete in history.

"So special, to have my daughter here watching means the world to me," Felix said afterwards. "It's been a crazy year for me." Felix later paid tribute to the support of Fraser-Pryce as she worked her way back to fitness this season.

"We've talked a lot this year and been there for each other," Felix said. "She's been an amazing support. I'm just thrilled to see her back on top and better than ever, and I hope that is an inspiration to others. I know that she's an inspiration to me."

There was another victory for a returning mother in the final event of the day, the women's 20km race walk, where China's 2016 Olympic champion Liu Hong won gold. Liu, 32, who took a maternity break from 2017-2018, shrugged off steamy heat and humidity to lead a Chinese sweep of the medals in 1hr 32min 53sec and

secure her third world title. Qieyang Shenjie took silver in 1:33:10 while compatriot Yang Liuqing won bronze in 1:33:17.

Elsewhere Sunday, triple jump king Christian Taylor completed a superb hat-trick of World Championship titles after surviving near elimination in a nerve-jangling final. The two-time Olympic champion and now four-time world champion clinched gold with a leap of 17.92m. That was good enough to fend off the challenge of compatriot Will Claye, who took silver with a best jump of 17.74m. Burkina Faso's Hugues Fabrice Zango claimed bronze with a jump of 17.66m.

Taylor, the world champion in 2011, 2015 and 2017, had flirted with elimination at the start of the final after fouling his first two jumps. In the women's pole vault, Anzhelika Sidorova — competing under the Authorised Neutral Athlete banner due to the IAAF ban on Russia over the doping scandal — won with a vault of 4.95 metres. America's Sandi Morris took silver with 4.90m while Greece's Olympic champion Katerina Stefanidi took bronze. — AFP

Bianca Andreescu 'on a roll' after 14th win on the spin

BEIJING: Bianca Andreescu said that she has "forgotten how it feels to lose" after the US Open champion reeled off her 14th victory in a row yesterday in Beijing. The 19-year-old Canadian beat Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus 6-2, 2-6, 6-1 in the China Open first round despite a second-set wobble.

But Simona Halep became the first major casualty in the Chinese capital, beaten by Russia's Ekaterina

Alexandrova with the Romanian struggling once more with a back injury. Andreescu's run of victories has brought her the US Open and her home Canadian Open in recent weeks, propelling her into the limelight.

"I wanted to just keep the momentum going," said the teenager, after her first match since stunning Serena Williams in the final at Flushing Meadows in early September. "I'm on a roll right now, hopefully I can just keep it up because I think it gives me a lot of confidence," added the world number six, who qualified for the season-ending WTA Finals.

"I don't want to sound cocky or anything, but I kind of forgot how it feels to lose, which I think is a good thing," Andreescu looked all set to carry on her blistering form against Sasnovich and emphatically captured the first set.

But she struggled with her serve in the second, totting up six double faults and was in danger of losing her cool in the Beijing heat and haze. Normal order was restored in the deciding set, Andreescu breaking Sasnovich's first service game and then holding her own to take a 3-0 lead and an advantage she refused to surrender.

In round two the Canadian plays Elise Mertens, the world number 23 from Belgium. Andreescu said that her stunning victory at the US Open had yet to fully sink in, even three weeks on. "But I think I've learnt a lot from the past couple of weeks, during the tournament, even after the tournament with all the media, all that," she said. "I think I'm managing it really well. I think that's why I feel good coming into this tournament." Reigning Wimbledon champion Halep lost 6-2, 6-3 in 64 minutes to bring her China Open to an early

end. Halep, fifth in the world, was far from her best as she went down meekly to Russia's 38th-ranked Alexandrova in the second round.

The 28-year-old Halep was forced out of last week's Wuhan Open because of her troublesome back, which she says has plagued her for more than a decade.

"I didn't recover well after my first match so it was very tough for me to play and she played really well," Halep said. "The injury from Wuhan is getting worse so I have to go home and take an MRI (scan), take a break and do some treatment." China Open title-holder Caroline Wozniacki swatted aside Lauren Davis of the United States, 6-1, 6-3, to give her the perfect start. In the men's draw, second seed Alexander Zverev of Germany was a comfortable 6-3, 6-2 winner over the American Frances Tiafoe. — AFP