

KORDA WINS LPGA MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR: Jessica Korda won the LPGA Malaysia yesterday for her fourth tour title, closing with a 6-under 65 in sweltering conditions at Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club for a four-stroke victory.

After winning twice last season, the 22-year-old American entered the week with only one top-10 finish this year, a tie for second in January in Florida in the season-opening event.

"I think it was just a long time coming," Korda said. "I knew that I was getting really close and just needed to stay patient."

She made five birdies in a seven-hole stretch that ended on the 10th, dropped a stroke on the par-4 11th and sealed it with birdies on the par-3 15th and 17th. Second-ranked Lydia Ko, No. 3 Stacy Lewis and 2014 winner Shanshan Feng tied for second. "I was weirdly calm today," Korda said. "I knew what I needed to do. I needed to take care of myself. If somebody was going to make a hot start, that's just the way it was going to be. I was going to continue playing my game." She cried on the 18th green after her final putt.

"I think just struggling and being at your lowest and then feeling this and just going through these emotions, just incredible gratitude and just being so humbled by everything," Korda said. "All the support that I've had, the people that have stuck with me this year, didn't stop believing in me even when I did a little bit. I think just all that hit me a little bit."

The long-hitter failed to qualify for the Solheim Cup team and was passed over as

a captain's pick. "Stepping back and looking at it, yeah, I was disappointed I wasn't on the team, but I know I played my way off the team and there was no chance that I could have helped," Korda said. "I was really glad with the way that everything happened. I got to go to the Czech Republic for a couple days after Evian and sit down with my grandparents and my cousin. Honestly, the last three weeks have been such a great time in my life."

Korda finished at 18-under 266 and earned \$300,000. She opened with rounds of 69, 67 and 65 to take a two-stroke lead into the final day. The weekend 65s are her two best scores this year.

"Jess played unbelievable today. Nobody was going to beat her," Lewis said. "When you have a two-shot lead and shoot 6 under, it's pretty hard to beat."

Korda's father, Petr, won the 1998 Australian Open tennis tournament. "I didn't actually get to talk to my dad," Korda said. "It went straight to voicemail, but I did get a series of text messages."

Ko finished with a 66. The 18-year-old New Zealander was coming off consecutive victories in Canada and France, where she became the youngest major champion.

Feng also had a 66, and Lewis shot 67. "I think I did a lot of good stuff this week and a lot of good things to build on," Lewis said. The event was the first of five straight in Asia. The LPGA KEB Hana Bank Championship is next week in South Korea, followed by stops in Taiwan, China and Japan.—AP



MALAYSIA: Jessica Korda of the United States poses with her trophy after winning the LPGA Malaysia golf tournament at Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club. —AP

WAWRINKA BAGS JAPAN OPEN

TOKYO: Switzerland's French Open champion Stan Wawrinka captured his fourth title this year when he beat his good friend Benoit Paire 6-2, 6-4 in the final of the Japan Open yesterday.

Wawrinka, in the best form of his life, needed just 65 minutes to win the one-sided final at the Ariake Colosseum, the venue that will stage the tennis competition at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The final was played with the roof closed because of the threat of rain and Wawrinka quickly gained control. He wrapped up the opening set after just 26 minutes with three service breaks.

The second set was much tighter, Wawrinka had to fight off two break points in the third game but he seized his only opportunity, in the 10th game, to complete a straight-sets win.

"I feel great, it's been a really good week for me to win a title again, something always special," said Wawrinka. "You don't win a title every week. It's always difficult when I play a good friend like Benoit. I knew before the match he was struggling a bit physically, but I saw the doctor who told me Benoit was ready to play."

"I played my best game today. I felt the ball well and was aggressive. I am very happy to have the trophy tonight." The win gave Wawrinka his 11th career title, the majority of which have come since he won the 2014 Australian Open. His win in Japan was the 30-year-old's fourth this year after he won in Chennai and Rotterdam and at the French Open.

Paire was appearing in just his fourth ATP career final and his second this year after winning the Swedish Open in July.

The Frenchman, who played Sunday's final with his left ankle heavily strapped, upset Japan's Kei Nishikori in the semi-finals but was no match for Wawrinka.

"It was not easy, when I woke up this morning I could not walk. I was not sure if I could play today," said Paire. "One hour before the match it was very painful, so I asked: 'What can we do?' I spoke with the doctor and physiotherapist and we made something for my foot. 'I couldn't feel anything in my foot, but I tried to do all I could to play the match and win. It's harsh, but I could not defend on points. Stan played a very good match and congratulations to him. It's back luck for me.'—Reuters



TOKYO: Stan Wawrinka of Switzerland holds up the championship trophy after defeating Benoit Paire of France in the championship match of the Japan Open. —AP



SOCHI: Mercedes AMG Petronas F1 Team's British driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates with his trophy after winning the Russian Formula One Grand Prix at the Sochi Autodrom circuit yesterday. —AFP

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

SOCHI: Lewis Hamilton won a dramatic Russian Formula One Grand Prix yesterday to take a huge step towards his third world championship after Mercedes team mate Nico Rosberg retired early on with throttle failure. The win was Hamilton's ninth of the season, and the 42nd of his career, and the Briton's untroubled afternoon was a stark contrast to his German team mate's woes.

Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel finished runner-up at the Olympic Park circuit to overtake Rosberg as Hamilton's closest rival, 66 points adrift of the Briton with four races and a maximum 100 points remaining. If results go Hamilton's way, he can secure his second successive title in Austin, Texas, in two weeks' time. Hamilton, who also won the inaugural Russian Grand Prix last year and has now surpassed the tally of victories racked up by the late triple champion Ayrton Senna, now has 302 points to Vettel's 236 and Rosberg on 229.

"It looked like we were going to have a race and I was thinking this is great and we were going to put on a good show," said Hamilton, after collecting the winners' trophy from Russian president Vladimir Putin. "Nico made a mistake at turn one and went wide. I overtook him and after that, or maybe even before, he started to have some problems. It is very unfortunate for the team."

"Those last five laps I was just taking it in. I don't know how many times I'll be in this position again," added the champion.

Mexican Sergio Perez finished third for Force India, in a race with two safety car interludes following crashes, after Finnish drivers Valtteri Bottas and Kimi Raikkonen collided while battling for the final podium place.

Raikkonen finished fifth for Ferrari, a result that kept Mercedes waiting for their second successive constructors' championship.

However, the Finn faced a stewards enquiry into the collision, with the possibility of a penalty for ramming the rear of Bottas's Williams.

OPENING LAP

The safety car was deployed after Perez's team mate Nico Hulkenberg spun on the opening lap and was hit by the Sauber of Marcus Ericsson with Max Verstappen's Toro Rosso also caught up in the action. Rosberg had led from pole, holding off Hamilton through the opening corners, but was forced to retire in the pits on the seventh of 53 laps.

"F1 is pretty incredible sometimes how tough it is," the German told the BBC. "After a great start, leading the race and feeling confident. Straight after the safety car the pedal broke. It was quite dangerous. Definitely not a

nice way to end the day."

Hamilton had already taken over the lead as Rosberg wrestled with the problem but his advantage was whittled away when Frenchman Romain Grosjean crashed heavily on lap 12 and brought out the safety car again. Perez had thought his podium hopes had gone when Bottas and Raikkonen, on fresher tyres, passed him in the closing laps but the collision put him right back for his first top three finish of the season. "One lap before the end it seemed like everything went away from us. I was very unhappy with myself but in the end I thought 'I gave it all,'" said the Mexican.

"I did plenty of laps with my tyres and had massive degradation. On the last lap when it came it was just amazing."

Brazilian Felipe Massa finished fourth for Williams while Russian Daniil Kvyat was sixth for Red Bull, ahead of Sauber's Brazilian Felipe Nasr and Venezuelan Pastor Maldonado in a Lotus. In a boost for struggling McLaren, Jenson Button and Fernando Alonso finished ninth and 10th respectively. Spanish rookie Carlos Sainz, who was in hospital only a day earlier after crashing his Toro Rosso in practice, had been heading for his best result after running as high as sixth but retired eight laps from the end. —Reuters

DJOKOVIC CRUSHES NADAL

WINS CHINA OPEN FOR SIXTH TIME

BEIJING: World number one Novak Djokovic continued his recent dominance over Rafa Nadal when he beat the Spaniard in the final of the China Open to win the tournament for the sixth time yesterday.

The Serbian showed no mercy against the Spaniard, who was hampered by a foot problem in the second set, as he cruised to a 6-2 6-2 victory at the National Tennis Centre in the Chinese capital.

"I played a great tournament overall and continued playing well today," Djokovic said at the trophy presentation. "This definitely has been my most successful tournament in my career. I have won the Australian Open five times but Beijing has been a lucky place for me."

"I keep on coming back here and have very positive memories." Djokovic has now beaten Nadal in seven of their last eight meetings, dating back to the 2013 China Open, and is on the verge of levelling their head-to-head record.

The pair have played each other 45 times with Nadal, who has struggled with his form and niggling injuries in the past year, hanging on to a 23-22 advantage.

The world number eight took a medical timeout early in the second set when he hurt his right ankle but continued on, despite appearing to be in discomfort.

"I hope Rafa's foot is fine and he's able to play next week (in Shanghai)," Djokovic said. "It's always a pleasure to play against him on a big stage. 'We've played, I think 45 times against each other and we keep on going. Hopefully, we can have many more encounters.' Djokovic was already well on top and in complete control when Nadal hurt his foot. He broke Nadal's opening service game and fought off two break points on his own serve in the sixth game.

He broke Nadal again and took out the first set in 41 minutes, then ran away from his ailing opponent in the second. Djokovic has never been beaten at the China Open, winning 29 matches in a row, and six titles in total. The 28-year-old has now 56 career titles, eight of them this year, including the Australian Open, Wimbledon and US Open grand slam crowns.

"I have to say congratulations to Novak, he's having one of the best seasons in the history of our sport," Nadal said. "For me, it's also been a very positive week."

"I've been improving every single match and all the matches are good practice for me and especially the victories (because they) are a lot of positive energy for next year."—Reuters



BEIJING: Novak Djokovic of Serbia (right) and Rafael Nadal of Spain hold with their trophies after their men's singles final match in the China Open tennis tournament. —AP

MUGURUZA TRIUMPHS IN CHINA

BEIJING: Spain's Garbine Muguruza, one of the rising stars of women's tennis, beat Switzerland's Timea Bacsinszky to win the China Open yesterday, her biggest title to date.

Muguruza won a hard-fought final 7-5, 6-4 to capture her first Premier Mandatory title and climb to fourth in the world rankings.

It was just the 22-year-old's second WTA title, after she won her first at last year's Hobart International, and made up for the frustration of losing her two previous finals this year, at Wimbledon in July and Wuhan last week.

"For me, to be able to come and win the tournament after losing in the finals of Wuhan last week is a great achievement," she said at the trophy presentation.

"It's amazing, and I can't wait to come back and defend my title next year." Muguruza turned 22 a few days ago and became the youngest player to win a title at this level or higher since a 21-year-old Petra Kvitova cap-

tured the WTA Finals crown in Istanbul in 2011.

Bacsinszky, twice a winner in Mexico this year, provided Muguruza with a stern test, leading 5-2 in the opening set and 2-0 in the second. But Muguruza rallied back each time to close out the match in straight sets. "It's the third time I'm losing against you," Bacsinszky told her conqueror.

"It's tough for me, but it's okay, I'm going to work harder now. Thank you for making me work harder." Bacsinszky will move into the top 10 when the new rankings are released on Monday and paid tribute to her coach Dimitri Zavialoff, who also used to coach Switzerland's reigning French Open champion Stan Wawrinka.

"I actually want to dedicate this tournament to someone, an emotional Bacsinszky said. "I came from really, really far away, I almost retired two years ago, and this man over there, my coach, Dimitri, thank you for helping me every day."—Reuters