

Sports

Dressel books Pan Pacs berth with 100m butterfly victory

First victory of the US Swimming Championships

IRVINE: Caeleb Dressel finally bagged his first victory of the US Swimming Championships on Friday, powering home to win the 100m butterfly in 50.50sec and punch his ticket to the Pan Pacific Championships. Dressel, who joined Michael Phelps as the only swimmers to win seven titles at a single World Championships with a stunning campaign in Budapest last year, also set himself up for next year's Worlds in South Korea, with this meet and Pan Pacs serving as qualifiers for the biggest international meeting before the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The 21-year-old, who signed his first professional sponsorship deal with Speedo this month after departing the amateur US collegiate ranks, had endured a frustrating start to the championships in Irvine, south of Los Angeles. Sixth in the 100m freestyle on Wednesday, he scratched the 200m free and finished second in the 50m butterfly - not good enough to send him to Pan Pacs or Worlds.

"I don't know if nervous or anxious is the correct word to use, just excited," he said of his state of mind heading into the 100m fly. After finishing in front of Jack Conger (51.11) and Michael Andrew (51.68), he was still excited: "Excited to make the team." Dressel said the 100m free was "just a really bad swim" and even said it was "refreshing" after the non-stop winning of last year. All in all, Dressel said, there was no need to panic, or even worry. "I did what I needed to do and right now we're on the team," he said. "That's what this meet is for. There's a lot left in the tank."

Kalisz wins 400 IM

Double medley world champion Chase Kalisz said the same after winning the 400m IM in 4:08.25. Kalisz improved his own season-leading time, but with a personal best of 4:05.90 he wasn't impressed by that. "The time wasn't so great, but that's not what it's about," Kalisz said. "It's about getting on the team and setting yourself up for Tokyo."

Kalisz seized control on the breaststroke leg and powered home ahead of Jay Litherland, who was second in 4:10.21. Ally McHugh sprung an impressive surprise in the women's 400m medley, surging to the front on the final freestyle leg to win in 4:34.80 - third-fastest time in the world this year. McHugh, 21, headed 19-year-old Brooke Forde, who was second in 4:35.02 as world and Olympic relay gold medalists Melanie Margalis and Leah Smith settled for third and fourth. Kelsi Dahlia added the women's 100m fly title to the 50m fly she won on Thursday, clocking 56.83.

Katie McLaughlin, who won relay gold at the 2015 World Championships before a neck injury disrupted her career, was second in 57.51. World record-holder Lilly King sprinted onto the World Championships team with a 50m breaststroke victory in 29.86sec - 42-hundredths of a second off the world mark she set last year. Andrew came back from the 100m fly to win the men's 50m breast in 26.84, but the 19-year-old was shut out of the podium in the 50m backstroke - won by double Olympic backstroke gold medalist Ryan Murphy in an American record of 24.24. — AFP



IRVINE: Caeleb Dressel swims to a first place finish in the Men 100 LC Meter Butterfly Final during day 3 of the Phillips 66 National Swimming Championships at the Woollett Aquatics Center on July 27, 2018. — AFP

Aussie skipper makes history in Clipper race

LONDON: Australian mariner Wendy Tuck became the first female skipper to win the Clipper Round The World yacht race when the 11 month marathon finished where it started in Liverpool yesterday. The 53-year-old—who like the other skippers is a professional yachtswoman but in charge of amateur crews—totalled 143 overall points in her boat Sanya Serenity Coast over the eight leg race covering 40,000 nautical miles in what was the 11th edition of the biennial race. "I hate banging on about women," Tuck told The Daily Telegraph.

"I just do what I do but I am very proud," Tuck added she was experiencing "a bit of shock, disbelief, joy, sadness—you name that emotion, I'm probably feeling it right now". Tuck edged out another female skipper Britain's Nikki Henderson, who made her own history in being at 25 the youngest ever captain in the race, who totaled 139 points. "We didn't get the win but I am so proud of how my team dug deep and kept fighting right until the end," said Henderson, who is the daughter of a Conservative Party lawmaker Anne Milton.

The previous youngest skipper to compete was Alex Thomson, who at the age of 26 led a team to win the Clipper Round The World race in 1998. Thomson finished second in the grueling solo round-the-world Vendee Globe race in January last year. This edition of the race did not pass off without its share of incident and tragedy. In November the Greenings yacht, one of 12 which originally left Liverpool, ran aground off the coast of South Africa forcing the vessel to be withdrawn due to damage.

And in the same month 60-year-old retired English solicitor Simon Speirs was killed when he was swept overboard on the leg from South Africa to Australia while racing on board the GREAT Britain yacht. He had been on the foredeck of the vessel to help change a sail when the incident happened. Speirs became separated from the boat which was in the Southern Ocean, in what were rough seas with 20 knots of wind and gusts at 40. An investigation into why his tether failed to keep him attached to the boat is currently under way. — AFP

Philippines pull out from Jakarta basketball event

MANILA: The Philippines have withdrawn from the basketball tournament at the Asian Games with its governing body saying it needed to focus on its appeal against punishment levied on it for the on-court brawl during a World Cup qualifier this month. Thirteen players from the Australia and Philippines teams, as well as two Filipino coaches, were suspended for their role in the fight during the game in Bulacan on July 2, which was abandoned when the hosts had only one player left on court. The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) also fined the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP), which runs basketball in the country, 250,000 Swiss francs (\$250,000). The SBP said in a statement that the national team and governing body needed time to "regroup" and prepare for the process of appealing the FIBA decision.

"We have reached the conclusion that, with the forging considered and after consulting with the basketball community, the time and chance to participate in the 2018 Asian Games would not be optimal," it continued. "We apologize to the Asian Games organizers, to the fans of the Philippine team, and to the Asian basketball community for this withdrawal." —Reuters

Isner turns tables on Zverev to reach Atlanta semi finals

LOS ANGELES: American John Isner showed why he is playing some of the best tennis of his career on Friday, beating Mischa Zverev 7-5, 4-6, 6-1 in the quarter-finals of the Atlanta Open. Isner needed one hour and 37 minutes on Stadium Court to oust Zverev and reverse a run of defeats to the seventh seeded German. Zverev had won all three of his matches against Isner last year. But the 33-year-old Isner has been rising up the rankings as he levelled their career head-to-head rivalry at 3-3. "It was a weird match. The balls were bouncing everywhere, it was tough to control. I was happy to get through in three sets," Isner said.

The 6-foot-10 Isner is at number nine in the ATP world rankings. He reached a career-best No. 8 last week after making it to the semis of Wimbledon. Isner will next face fourth seed Matthew Ebden, who breezed past Marcos Baghdatis 6-3, 6-2 in one hour, 12 minutes. The Aussie is into his second semi-

final of the season, following a run to the final four at the Libema Open. Isner is now two victories from winning his second title of the year. The match shaped up to be a service battle as both players needed just a break each to split the first two sets.

Isner ended up losing just two points (38/40) on his first serve and this was the fourth straight contest they went to a deciding set. Ebden, 30, has not dropped a set this week, saving the only break point he faced to eliminate Baghdatis. Isner has won three of his four career matches against Ebden, but the Aussie defended his home turf with a four-set victory at this year's Australian Open. In the other quarter-finals, Ryan Harrison outlasted Chung Hyeon 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) and Cameron Norrie was leading 7-5, 3-0 in the second set when Nick Kyrgios retired due to a left hip problem.

Cincinnati Open

Meanwhile, former world number ones Andy Murray and Victoria Azarenka have been handed wild cards to compete at the Cincinnati Open next month, the tournament's organizers have said. Murray pulled out of this year's Wimbledon saying his right hip was still not ready for the demands of a Grand Slam. That was after the Scot made a comeback in June at Queen's Club following almost a year out with the injury that required surgery in



ATLANTA: John Isner returns a forehand to Mischa Zverev of Germany during the BB&T Atlanta Open at Atlantic Station on July 27, 2018. — AFP

Australia in January.

Two-times grand slam winner Azarenka, who won the Cincinnati Open in 2013, will return to the women's draw for the first time since 2016 as she continues her comeback following a prolonged legal battle over the custody of her son Leo last year. "The resumes for Vika and Andy really speak for themselves," tournament Director Andre Silva

told the organizers' website. "I think many tennis fans are eager to see each of them back on the court, and we are pleased to offer them both wild cards to play the Western & Southern Open." A further seven players - three men and four women - will be handed wild cards for the tournament, which begins on Aug 11, around two weeks before the US open starts on Aug 27. — Agencies

'Back to work' as Vettel dominates Grand Prix practice

BUDAPEST: Sebastian Vettel said he was relieved to be "back at work" following a difficult few days after he posted the fastest time for Ferrari in second practice for this weekend's Hungarian Grand Prix. The German bounced back following an embarrassing 'home' exit in last Sunday's German race and the death on Wednesday of Ferrari chairman Sergio Marchionne by outpacing both Red Bulls. "I think it is probably best to get in the car because everybody knows what to do," he said.

"Obviously, it was not easy, but I think today the work has been ok. Having a lot of work in front of you is probably the best thing to get your head away and focus on the job we have to do here. "It is probably quite good to have a race straightaway and focus on the next thing to do." In a car that carried a black diagonal stripe in memory of Marchionne, who died earlier this week, the German delivered consistent speed in stifling heat at the Hungaroring.

He crashed out of last weekend's German Grand Prix after leading until a rainstorm created treacherous conditions in which title rival Lewis Hamilton excelled as he stormed to victory from 14th on the grid. Vettel acknowledged that he had to overcome some emotional and mental strain in recent days. The German, who trails fellow-four-time champion Hamilton by 17 points in the title race, added that he was happy with his day's work. "It has been one of our better Fridays," he said. Vettel clocked a fastest lap in one minute and 16.834 seconds, enough to keep him 0.074 seconds clear of his rivals in a tight session that saw most of the field struggling for grip.

'Without houses and walls'

Max Verstappen was second fastest ahead of his Red Bull team-mate Daniel Ricciardo, Kimi Raikkonen in the second Ferrari and Hamilton, who was fifth ahead of his Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas. Romain



MOGYOROD: Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel steers his car during the qualifying session ahead of the Formula One Hungarian Grand Prix at the Hungaroring circuit in Mogyorod yesterday. — AFP

Grosjean was seventh for Haas ahead of Carlos Sainz of Renault and Pierre Gasly of Toro Rosso and Esteban Ocon of Force India.

Vettel added: "Qualifying is very important here for the start as overtaking is very difficult. Whoever is ahead after the first couple of corners, that will be crucial. "I was happy this afternoon, it was better than the morning and we are ok for one lap. It has been one of our better Fridays." Asked how he felt following his crash last Sunday and the death of Marchionne, he added: "Probably it's good to have a race straightaway and to get my head straight and to focus on the next thing to do. It's a way to cancel it all out and forget it all properly."

Ricciardo was fastest for Red Bull in the morning session, but was frustrated by traffic in the afternoon when many drivers complained of slower cars blocking their runs. Vettel was fastest early on and was succeed-

ed by Bottas, Hamilton, Bottas again and then Verstappen before he resumed on top of the times in the closing period. Red Bull were expected to challenge at the right and twisty circuit that has been compared to Monaco "without houses and walls" but Verstappen said he anticipated a "difficult" weekend.

"The car was good," he said. "But we still lose quite a lot on the straight unfortunately. It's difficult to say at the moment. I think we can improve our car a little bit more, but if it's going to be good enough for pole position—I'm not sure." He added that Mercedes were more competitive than it appeared because their drivers—Hamilton and Bottas—had not been able to record true times. "They couldn't get a lap on the 'ultra' and they both went a bit wide or whatever so I'm expecting them to be there. "Ferrari looks quick. In the long run, Mercedes look competitive as well so it will be very close and it all depends on qualifying." — AFP