

LORENZO ON JAPAN POLE, DE ANGELIS IN HOSPITAL

JAPAN: San Marino rider Alex de Angelis was airlifted to hospital after a heavy crash during final practice at the Japanese MotoGP yesterday before a dramatic qualifying session saw Jorge Lorenzo grab pole from title rival Valentino Rossi.

The 31-year-old de Angelis was conscious and breathing before being taken to hospital, with his Ioda Racing ART Team Aprilia later issuing a statement saying the rider had fractured five vertebrae and three ribs. "Alex De Angelis, who does not remember because of the head injury dynamics of his accident, will be transferred to Italy during the next week," the team said after the rider had undergone a CAT scan.

Ioda added de Angelis had not suffered any spinal cord injury. The rider crashed midway through FP4 leading to the session being red-flagged at the Motegi circuit and was taken by helicopter to the Dokkyo Hospital in Mibu.

No television footage of the incident was shown, with de Angelis riding one of the least competitive bikes on the grid and having only scored two points this year following a spate of retirements. The incident led to a delay in a breathless qualifying session where Lorenzo edged Yamaha team mate Rossi to take pole position by just 0.081 seconds.

Lorenzo trails Rossi by 14 points in the championship with only four races to go this season but looks set to cut that deficit on a track he has shown his fondness for by coming out top in all the sessions this week.

The Spaniard used a two-stop strategy, after some front end issues on his first run, to record a best time of 1 min 43.790 seconds to deny the Italian, who had gone top moments before with his best lap.

It was Lorenzo's fourth pole of the year and Yamaha's first one-two qualifying performance of the season. "I made the maximum and it is a good lap time," double MotoGP champion Lorenzo told reporters. Rossi, bidding for his seventh MotoGP world title, was optimistic he could better Lorenzo come race day.

"I was confident for the qualifying. I did a good strategy (and) I was in the right place. I am very positive looking forward for tomorrow. I can be competitive with Jorge," he said. Defending champion Marc Marquez was third for Honda in 1:44.216 to round out the front row.

The Ducati duo of Andrea Dovizioso and Andrea Iannone finished fourth and fifth for Sunday's race with Marquez's Honda team mate Dani Pedrosa completing the second row.—Reuters



TOKYO: Spain's Jorge Lorenzo steers his Yamaha during a free practice session for the MotoGP Japanese Motorcycle Grand Prix. —AP

SPIETH ON FIRE, US STAY AHEAD IN PRESIDENTS CUP

INCHEON: It was a day of great escapes and blown opportunities for the Internationals on day three of the Presidents Cup, while Jordan Spieth delivered a birdie blitz to help keep the United States a point in front with just today's singles matches to come.

The International team looked set to get their noses in front at the biennial event for the first time in a decade but squandered several solid leads and split the eight points on offer to end Saturday trailing 9.5 to 8.5.

They will have their work cut out to get the seven points they need from Sunday's 12 singles to win the Presidents Cup for the first time since 1998. No team has ever won the Cup after going into the singles matches trailing.

History is not the only obstacle they will have to overcome world number one Spieth has finally caught fire. After partnering Dustin Johnson to a narrow morning win over Jason Day and Charl Schwartzel, Spieth returned in the afternoon with Patrick Reed to defeat the same International pair in the four-balls, sealing the match 3&2 in near darkness.

"I would call it unplayable," said Spieth, who holed eight birdies in the 16 holes played. "If it was a tied match, we would not have played the 16th hole. It was too dark. Phil Mickelson, who sat out the morning action, teamed up with trusted partner Zach Johnson in the afternoon to defeat Adam Scott and Anirban Lahiri 3&2.

"The entire Presidents Cup is going to come down to tomorrow's singles matches," said Mickelson, who needed a captain's pick to make the team but has claimed 2.5 points from his three matches.

BELLY RUB

The US players had been rubbing Mickelson's belly for luck during the early foursomes but Bubba Watson should perhaps have rubbed a bit harder.

After snapping his driver on the practice range and needing a replacement rushed

to him out on the course, the left-hander muffed a five-foot putt on 18 that would have sealed a foursomes win with partner JB Holmes over Scott and Marc Leishman.

The US pair then became the fourth straight victims of Louis Oosthuizen and Branden Grace, who continue to complement each other on and off the course.

"Whenever someone made a mistake, the other one was there," said Oosthuizen. "I wasn't sharp this afternoon. I had a few good shots but Branden was unbelievable."

Australian Scott, in his seventh Presidents Cup, endured another woeful day on the greens, finding precious little encouragement after switching from a cross-handed to a 'claw' grip with the conventional putter.

Scott has had to abandon his preferred broomstick-style putter with a ban on 'anchoring' coming into effect in January.

South Korean Bae Sang-moon, meanwhile, put on a putting masterclass as he and Hideki Matsuyama halved their foursomes match with Bill Haas and Matt Kuchar before hammering Jimmy Walker and Chris Kirk 6&5 in the afternoon.

Bae holed three birdie putts in a row at one point from a combined distance of 50 feet as the Asian duo went nine under through their 13 holes.

Such was their dominance that Walker and Kirk thought the match was over at 12, taking off their hats and offering handshakes of congratulations, much to the bewilderment of the opposition. Their stay of execution was short-lived, however, as they ran out of holes with a halve at 13.

The International team are chasing just their second win at the biennial event while the United States are going for their ninth victory in 11 editions of the Cup, which is being played in Asia for the first time this year.

PGA Tour Commissioner Tim Finchem announced earlier on Saturday that the 2019 Presidents Cup would be returning to Melbourne, where it was staged in 1998 and 2011.—Reuters



INCHEON: United States' Jordan Spieth plays a shot during the Presidents Cup golf tournament at the Jack Nicklaus Golf Club Korea. —AP



NEWCASTLE: New Zealand's captain Kieran Read wins the ball in a line out Rugby World Cup Pool C match between New Zealand and Tonga at St James' Park. —AP

ALL BLACKS WIN AHEAD OF BUSY WEEKEND TO DECIDE Q-FINALS

LONDON: New Zealand centre Ma'a Nonu scored a late try against Tonga on Friday in his 100th test, helping his team to a thumping victory and top spot in Pool C ahead of a hectic weekend when the Rugby World Cup quarter-finals will be determined.

The 47-9 win in Newcastle ended any faint hopes the gritty Pacific islanders had of making it out of their group, although there was never any real threat to the holders.

As in previous wins over Namibia and Georgia, the New Zealanders veered at times between carelessness and brilliance, especially in the first half.

"They put us under a lot of pressure," captain Kieran Read said after the game. "Our work up front needs to probably improve. We'll regroup, but we're glad to be where we are."

The win also guarantees Argentina progress to the quarter-finals even before they play Namibia today. In the quarter-finals, New Zealand will meet either France or Ireland, who face each other today in a key Pool D encounter.

Although both have qualified for the knockout stages, they will be desperate to prevail and avoid the mighty All Blacks in eight days' time.

For Ireland coach Joe Schmidt, the prospect of an extra day's break is the real prize at stake in the physical slog of a Rugby World Cup, even more than avoiding the tournament favourites.

"The greatest reason is to get another day before we have to play again to be honest. It just allows a little bit more breathing space to be slightly better prepared and slightly better recovered," he told reporters on Friday.

"That would be the major reason, because I don't think anyone, based on their performances so far, could underestimate the Argentinian team, and not just the personnel they've got but the collective they've demonstrated on the pitch."

Pool B looks even more tense, with Scotland having to beat a dangerous Samoa side on Saturday to ensure a place against either Wales or Australia.

"For a lot of us this is going to be the biggest match of our careers," Scotland number eight David Denton said as the team welcome back flyhalf Finn Russell.

Were Samoa to win, Japan would be well placed to go through if they beat the United States on Sunday, in what would be their first

appearance in the knockout phase of a Rugby World Cup four years before they host the event.

It would be a timely boost for the Brave Blossoms, whose stunning defeat of rugby powerhouse South Africa has been one of the highlights of this year's competition so far.

"We've got to go out there and play our best rugby, play with physical and mental intensity," Japan coach Eddie Jones said after victory over Samoa.

Australia against Wales at Twickenham on Saturday will decide which team top Pool A and avoid twice champions South Africa in the last eight as well as a potential semi-final against the All Blacks.

"We aren't having to desperately win the game to reach the quarter-finals. But win this group and potentially the route through to the quarters, semis and finals is easier than the other side," Wales coach Warren Gatland said.

For eliminated hosts England, the tortuous build-up to Saturday's dead rubber against Uruguay drew to a close as coach Stuart Lancaster was forced to play down a training ground bust-up between his assistant Mike Catt and flyhalf Danny Cipriani.—Reuters

KORDA FIRES TO THE FRONT

KUALA LUMPUR: American Jessica Korda shrugged off her woeful recent form to fire an impressive six-under-par 65 and take a two-shot lead after a humid third round of the high-calibre \$2 million LPGA Malaysia yesterday.

The 22-year-old daughter of former Australian Open tennis champion Petr Korda fired a bogey-free round at the Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club to sit two clear of compatriot and world number three Stacy Lewis, who also struck a blemish-free 65.

Overnight leader Jang Ha-na of South Korea was in a tie for the lead with Korda but a costly double bogey five on the 14th, following some putting trouble, halted her momentum as she settled for a level par 71 to sit at 10-under.

World number two Lydia Ko was a shot back on nine-under after a topsy-turvy afternoon playing with Korda. The New Zealander fired three birdies and an eagle in her 68 but said she "hadn't been hitting the ball that solidly" of late.

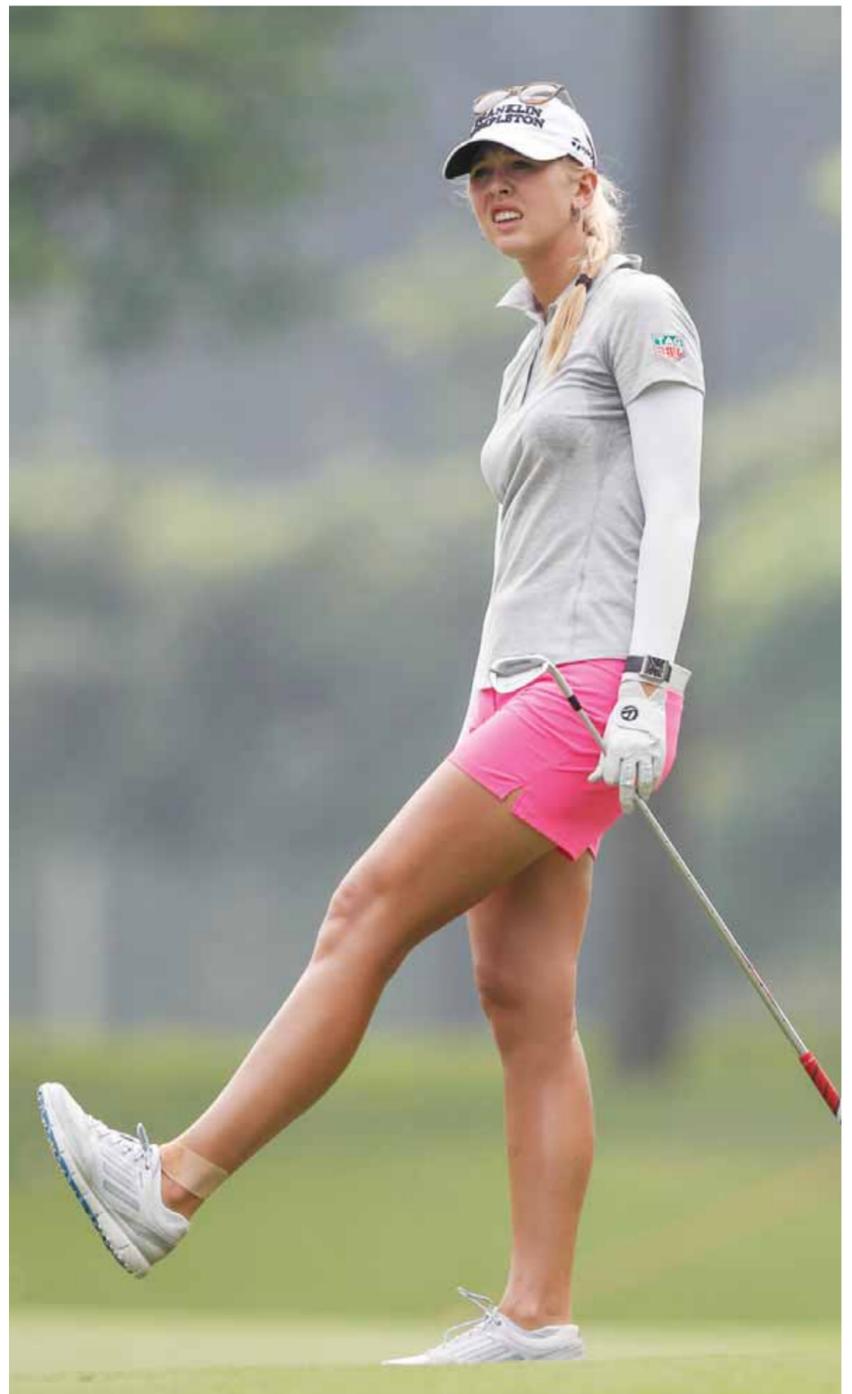
Her form had been far better than Korda's, though, with the American making just one cut in six events prior to Malaysia and recording only one top 10 this year.

But after three good rounds in an overcast but strenuously humid Kuala Lumpur she will go in search of her fourth LPGA title on Sunday.

"It's been a tough year this year but to put at least three good rounds together has been super nice and super refreshing," Korda said.

Korda will still have her work cut out to take the title with Ko among a high profile chasing pack that includes world number seven and defending champion Feng Shanshan of China, who struck a second straight 69 to also finish on nine-under.

Former world number one Yani Tseng of Taiwan was back on eight-under, alongside the current top ranked women's golfer Park In-bee of South Korea after both shot 71s.—Reuters



KUALA LUMPUR: Jessica Korda of the United States reacts after her shot on the ninth hole during the third round of the LPGA Malaysia golf tournament. —AP