

ECONOMIC WARNING

Central bank issues inflation alert > p13

LEADING MAN

Director explains switch to new movie audience > LIFE, PAGE 19



ACE STUDENTS

US college to study Chinese card game > WORLD, PAGE 22



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Gabby vaults to new heights

By CLARE FALLON in London Reuters

Smiling 16-year-old Gabby Douglas took the Olympic Games by storm on Thursday when she won the gymnastics all-around gold medal ahead of Russian Victoria Komova.

Komova was reduced to tears for the second time in three days when American Douglas pipped her to the title by 0.259 of a point after producing the day's best performances on the vault and the beam.

Aliya Mustafina, who with Komova was disappointed to take team silver behind the Americans on Tuesday, clung on for bronze despite a fall from the beam. She and Douglas' compatriot, Aly Raisman, finished with the same total but the Russian won the medal on the tiebreak rule.

Douglas, dubbed the "Flying Squirrel" for the shape she produces on the bars, was watched from the stands by teammate and world champion Jordyn Wieber, who had come into the Games touted as the favorite for Thursday's honors but failed to qualify for the final.

Rules and regulations seem to be plaguing the Americans here. Wieber finished fourth in qualifying for the all-around but missed the cut since each nation is allowed only two women in the final.

As Douglas and Raisman ranked above her in the preliminaries, Wieber was demoted to the role of spectator at the North Greenwich Arena.

Raisman lost out on bronze despite finishing off with the second-best floor routine of the evening under the rule which separates equally placed contestants by totting up the totals of their three best apparatus.

Douglas, though, was beyond the reach of such concerns, leading from the first of the four rotations when she was the opener on the vault.

A slight hop sideways on landing could have cost her, but all her rivals fluffed their landings, with Komova stumbling sideways right off the mat.

SEE "VAULT" PAGE 4

TWO RECORDS, NO GOLD

Chinese duo smashes world mark twice, but ends up with silver after violation in final against Germany



China's Gong Jinjie (right) leads Guo Shang during the women's track team sprint event on Thursday. They won silver while German riders Miriam Welte and Kristina Vogel claimed gold.

By AGENCIES in London

German riders Miriam Welte and Kristina Vogel ended up with gold in the Olympic women's track cycling team sprint on Thursday after original winner China was relegated to second for a takeover infringement having earlier broken two world records.

Hosts and medal hopeful Britain had been disqualified in the first round for another illegal changeover.



Gong Jinjie and Guo Shuang sped round the London Olympic velodrome like lightning in the qualifying and first round, notching world best times of 32.447 and 32.422 seconds.

They were slower in the final, but it was still good enough to beat Germany until officials stepped in some minutes after the end of the race to say Guo had made a mistake on the changeover.

"It's weird. We told ourselves after the finish, 'Silver is the silver. Not bad', Vogel said.

"It's the first time a women's sprinter from Germany wins the gold. I just cannot describe that. We thought that luck could not come to us," she said.

"The Chinese are so fast. After they disqualified, I said to Guo: 'This wasn't the way we wanted to win. I am so sorry for that', Welte said.

"But rule is the rule. We did not make mistake in the change and won that. When we were told to win the gold. We looked at each other (and just could not believe that)."

"I feel regretful. Things were changed in a very short time but it's sport and you have to accept it," Gong Jinjie said.

"We knew that rule before the preparation. I did very well in the first two rounds and also broke the world record. I made the small mistake in the final because the speed was just too fast.

"The world record showed our strength in this event. We made a mistake but the world record will not be denied. We still have confidence and will fight one as such an incident will be a driven force for our following events," Guo said.

Australia took bronze by beating Ukraine and by the time of the medals ceremony, the Chinese duo had calmed down and accepted the warm applause of the slightly bemused crowd before Germany's gold medals were handed out.

Britain was not afforded the luxury of being dropped a position as Victoria Pendleton and Jessica Varnish were disqualified altogether in the first round for individual Olympic champion Pendleton's error in taking the lead over too soon.

"We're talking about one hundredth of a second of a mistake there," Pendleton told reporters.

"Jess moved up a fraction too early and I just saw the door and went for it, because that's my cue to try to squeeze underneath her as quickly as possible.

"It's one of those things that happens."

Also on Thursday, Britain retained its men's Olympic track cycling team sprint title when they beat France again in world record time giving Chris Hoy his fifth Games gold medal.

Philip Hindes, Jason Kenny and Hoy were ahead from the start and clocked 42.600 sec to slash 0.147 off the record they had set in the first round.

REUTERS—CHINA DAILY

Table tennis players seek net gains from star trainers

'Young guns' get advice from old hands for Olympic showdown

By SUN XIAOCHEN in London sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

Table tennis "young guns" are getting a helping hand from more experienced "shooters" who know what it is like to face an Olympic showdown.

If you want to be the best, you have to play with the best and table tennis, with its rapid-fire action, proves the point more than most, according to elite practice partners who have been putting the Olympic players through their paces.

Ma Lin, Chen Qi and Guo Yan have more Olympic med-

als and world titles than most countries and they head a team of nine trainers giving the Olympians a harder time than most opponents they will face across the net.

This helps make China the best team in the world, Wang Hao, the Beijing Olympic men's singles runner-up told China Daily after his 4-1 third-round victory over Austrian veteran Werner Schlager on Monday.

"We always have a group coming to major tournaments together. Anyone not playing will serve as a practice partner to help us get

used to competition."

Thanks to a deep talent pool, practice partners can emulate the style of potential opponents.

The World No 1, Zhang Jike, has been practicing with Chen since the team arrived at its pre-Olympic camp at Leeds University one week before the Games.

Chen, left-handed, boasts strong forehand loops and reminds Zhang of one of his main rivals, German fourth seed Timo Boll, also a left-hander who deploys top-spin loops.

China's other singles favorite, world No 2 Wang, has been getting a taste of what it will be like to face semifinal opponent Chuang Chih-yuan of Chinese Taipei. Teammate Ma Long has the same aggres-

sive right-hand drive.

In preparation for a potential match with a rare "chop" player, the training team has two "choppers" — Liu Yi and Fan Ying — for the men and women to warm up against.

Just about everything is on the training menu.

"We can see a lot of 'opponents' on our own team," said Zhang, the reigning world champion.

Meanwhile, the B team's experience could be crucial for some first-time Olympians.

The 24-year-old Zhang, who is making his Olympic debut, credited Ma for sharing his big-game experience and tips on opponents.

SEE "GAMES" PAGE 2



Table tennis veteran Ma Lin catches the action on Monday in London.

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In this issue

NEWS 2,8,9,11,12
OLYMPICS 3-6
COMMENT 7
COVER STORY 10
BUSINESS 13-17
LIFE 18-21
WORLD 22-24

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