

Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu stepping away from competitive skating

By Koji Ueda
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Two-time Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan is stepping away from competitive figure skating, the athlete said last month.

Hanyu seemed to leave the door open to a possible return of some sort. However, most of his focus seemed to be on skating professionally in exhibitions.

"This never ends," Hanyu said. "I'm not retiring or anything. I'm going to be better and I will work hard in my performances in a way that will make you think I am worth watching."

"I don't like the word 'retirement' so I don't really want to use it."

Hanyu won back-to-back gold medals at the 2014 Sochi Games and the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics. But he finished fourth in Beijing five months ago and had been noncommittal until a recent press conference at a Tokyo hotel.

"I'm not going to participate in competitions from now on," he said. "Of all the things I've done so far, I think I've gotten what I should have in terms of results from competitions. I also feel that I will no longer seek these kind of



evaluations." The 27-year-old Japanese skater is also a two-time world champion, and a four-time Grand Prix Final champion. But he failed in an attempt in Beijing to become the first to land a quad axel in competition.

He indicated he could continue to try to land the quad axel.

"I don't feel particularly sad," Hanyu said. "I would like to do my best from here

on out and I think that there will be more opportunities to see my skating in various ways — not just in the limited space of competitions."

Hanyu has little left to prove. He has been the world's most watched skater for a decade and the sport's standard for excellence. He was the first Asian man to win gold in Olympic figure skating.

His road to Beijing was fraught with

SKATING STRATEGY. Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan performs during a figure skating gala at the 2022 Winter Olympics, on February 20, 2022, in Beijing. Two-time Olympic champion Hanyu is stepping away from competitive figure skating. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip, File)

injury. Hanyu acknowledged having a difficult time finding the same motivation for Beijing that carried him to his two Olympic gold medals.

Ever since 2010, when he was seen toting a box of tissues with Winnie the Pooh on it, his legion of supporters have showered the ice with hundreds of stuffed Pooh bears rather than traditional flowers whenever he competes.

They nearly covered the ice in a blanket of yellow when Hanyu triumphed at the PyeongChang Games.

There were only a few thousand fans allowed inside the tightly controlled Olympic venue in Beijing to watch Hanyu, and they were prohibited from throwing anything on the ice, a safeguard imposed by organizers to minimize the potential spread of COVID-19. Instead, they massed outside the gate of the arena, hundreds of them standing in the cold February sun, waiting with their Poohs for Hanyu's bus to drive by and bid him farewell.

Hall of Famers in push for baseball in cricket-mad region

BRISBANE, Australia (AP) — Two Hall of Fame baseball players are leading a push to bring the sport that made them famous to India, Pakistan, and the Middle East. Former New York Yankees pitcher Mariano Rivera and ex-Cincinnati Reds shortstop Barry Larkin are the familiar faces behind the United International Baseball League (UIBL). The UIBL plans to bring professional baseball to an area of the world more associated with another bat-on-ball sport — cricket.

The league will begin with an inaugural showcase tournament in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) in February next year. Further plans for the location of teams and their personnel are still in the works.

The League said in a statement that the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East region are home to two billion people "and more than 900 million of those people are fans of cricket."

"While baseball exists in small pockets across south Asia and the Gulf ... there is

an absence of professional leagues and a void of deep, grassroots player development expertise and infrastructure," the statement added. "The UIBL team is looking to change that."

The Panama-born Rivera spent his entire career with the Yankees over 19 seasons from 1995 to 2013, primarily as a relief pitcher and closer. He made 13 All-Star Game appearances, won five World Series, is MLB's all-time leader in saves with 652, and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2019.

"I'm very grateful to be a part of the UIBL's exciting mission to inspire two billion new fans to fall in love with baseball," Rivera said. "We believe there is an amazing opportunity to educate, inspire, and entertain those cricket fans, and open their hearts to an exciting and culturally relevant form of baseball."

The Cincinnati-born Larkin was a career-long Reds player in his hometown. He won an MVP award, a World Series title,

was selected to 12 All-Star teams, and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2012.

Larkin said teaching prospective baseball talent the basics was a strong part of the new league's mission.

"We truly believe that player development has to start at the grassroots level," Larkin said. "I've spent the last 20 years of my life focused on helping young people learn the fundamentals of our great game, as well as the fundamentals of great leadership. That's the beauty of baseball — when you teach it the right way with the right conviction, you can help young people succeed on and off the field."

The new league said that while baseball's fan base has an average age of 57 years old, cricket fans are among the world's youngest sports fans, with an average age of 34. Nowhere is cricket more popular than in India and Pakistan.

The UIBL said it has plans to "innovate and evolve" baseball "to help capture and engage this younger, more diverse

demographic." Without going into specific details, it also said the league will "introduce rule changes, create original game-play concepts, and bring to life a more immersive viewing experience for fans at the stadium and home."

The inaugural showcase tournament to be played solely in Dubai next February will include four franchises representing different parts of the world. The league said franchises, managers, coaches, and rosters will be announced at a later date.


Baseball will have to compete for attention with a new franchise Twenty20 cricket league launching around the same time in the UAE, based on the model of the lucrative Indian Premier League.


Star cricketers from around the world are likely to join the six-team International League T20. The league has links to India, where cricket's shortest and most exciting format took off in 2008 when the IPL was formed. The IPL's five-year broadcasting rights are now worth \$6+ billion.


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 Call or check with your local pharmacy.

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 COVID questions? Call 211 or 1-866-698-6155 (TTY: dial 711)



Visit multco.us/covid19 for the latest updates

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7	4			6			
	8	3	2	1			
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	1	8			2	3	
9		4					
			4	2	6	8	
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Difficulty level: Hard #95746

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue's puzzle

Puzzle #62732 (Medium)

All solutions available at www.sudoku.com.

6	4	5	2	7	9	1	3	8
8	2	3	5	6	1	4	9	7
1	7	9	4	8	3	5	2	6
7	3	1	8	2	6	9	5	4
2	9	4	3	5	7	6	8	1
5	8	6	9	1	4	3	7	2
9	1	8	6	3	2	7	4	5
3	6	2	7	4	5	8	1	9
4	5	7	1	9	8	2	6	3