

2018 Winter Olympics

U.S. speedskaters eager to put Sochi debacle behind them

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — Perhaps no team has more to prove at the Pyeongchang Olympics than the U.S. speedskaters.

Limited to one medal four years ago, they are eager to bounce back and show why their sport has produced the most medals for the U.S. in the Winter Games.

Going 0 for 12 in long track and 1 for 8 in short track in Sochi was a "disaster," long track skater Mitch Whitmore said.

It's certainly a memory the Americans haven't forgotten, either.

"The thought is definitely in the back of my mind, you don't want that to happen again," Brittany Bowe said. "You just have to bring it back to, 'Have I done everything I can to prepare myself the best way I can?' I can answer that, yes."

That's quite a change from 2014, when the Americans debuted a high-tech skin suit they thought would lead to more gold, silver and bronze.

Instead, it was an unqualified failure. Skaters complained the suit was too tight and they were stuck dealing with sizing issues on the day of their races. To compound their woes, the Americans trained outdoors at altitude leading up to the games when the venue in Sochi was indoors at sea level.

"The team morale was really weird," Joey Mantia said. "There was just a weird vibe in the village among our team."

This time, things are completely different.

"Basically, our entire staff has handed us all the tools we need to get medals," said Mantia, a favorite for gold in the mass start event. "It's just up to us now. There's no more blaming it on anyone else."



AP Photo/John Locher

Shani Davis of the United States, far right, trains during a speed skating training session prior to the 2018 Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea on Friday.

Last year, the Americans traveled to the Gangneung Oval, where they will race this week, and measured ice temperature and thickness and air conditions. They took that information back home and used it to reproduce those conditions at the Pettit National Ice Center in Milwaukee, where the long track Olympic trials and a pre-Olympic camp were held.

"We felt this was the best strategy to ensure we have peak performance at the right time," said Shane Domer, sports science director for US Speedskating.

They will find out starting Saturday when long track begins

with the women's 3,000 meters. Short track starts with the men's 1,500-meter final, along with qualifying in other events.

The U.S. team isn't totally free of distraction, however.

Five-time Olympian Shani Davis tweeted that the process in which luger Erin Hamlin beat him out in a coin flip as the U.S. flag bearer for Friday's opening ceremony was handled "dishonorably." The final vote by their fellow athletes ended in a 4-4 tie, leading to the coin flip.

Davis' tweet included a mention of Black History Month, raising the question of whether he thought race

played a role in the decision. Davis is black, Hamlin is white.

Davis didn't talk with reporters after practice Friday.

While attention was diverted by the tweet, the rest of the U.S. team practiced in skin suits made by Under Armour — the same company responsible for their suits in Sochi.

The polyurethane material is thinner and stretch was built in to allow freedom of movement in the shoulders. The sleeves and legs have slightly different material that helps air flow over the skaters' arms and legs.

Olympics TV Schedule

Table listing TV schedules for Saturday, including NBC, NBCSN, and USA channels, with times and event names like Snowboarding, Figure Skating, and Curling.

Four years ago, the material was thicker and the seam pattern didn't allow for easy movement.

"We're confident that these things perform well and these guys have done some amazing times in these suits, so we know they're battle-tested as well," Domer said. "It's the fastest (suits) we've ever tested."

Mentally, the Americans feel confident in the suits they've been wearing for over a year.

"Long track is a huge mental sport, if you believe in what you're racing in, that's a big step in the right direction," Mantia said. "We're all really happy with what the suits are and that's not going to be a factor in these games."

Pro Basketball

Lillard scores 50, Blazers beat Kings 118-100

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Damian Lillard scored 22 of his season-high 50 points in the third quarter, and the Portland Trail Blazers beat the Sacramento Kings 118-100 on Friday night.

Lillard scored at will, making 16 of 26 shots — including eight 3-pointers — and all 10 of his free-throw attempts. He reached the half-century mark by the end of the third period and sat the entire fourth.

Lillard, who also had six assists, joined teammate CJ McCollum and Houston's James Harden as the only players to score 50 points through three quarters this season.

Maurice Harkless added 15 points, McCollum scored 13 and Ed Davis had five points and 14 rebounds for Portland, which made 15 3-pointers. The Blazers were coming off an overtime win in Charlotte on Thursday that snapped a three-game losing streak.

Lillard, Portland's lone All-Star this season, scored 15 points during a 17-0 run that closed out the third quarter and put the Blazers up 92-74. He made two 3s during the run and silenced the crowd when he drove the left side of the lane and flipped the ball in with his right hand.

Sacramento made five consecutive 3s in the fourth quarter, four by Buddy Hield, and pulled within 107-94 with 4:45 left. Shabazz Napier made a



AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli

Portland Trail Blazers guard Damian Lillard goes to the basket as Sacramento Kings guard De'Aaron Fox, rear, watches during the second half of an NBA basketball game Friday in Sacramento, Calif.

3-pointer for Portland to stop the Kings' surge.

Willie Cauley-Stein had 19 points and six rebounds, and Zach Randolph added 17 points and nine boards for Sacramento.

Lillard had 14 points and made three of Portland's six 3-pointers in the first quarter. Evan Turner hit an off-balance 11-footer to end the period and put the

Blazers up 33-31.

After Randolph's layup over Nurkic pulled Sacramento within 49-47 in the second, Lillard scored nine consecutive points and then added a 17-foot step-back jumper with 1.7 seconds left to put Portland up 62-52 at halftime.

UP NEXT Blazers: Host Utah on Sunday. Kings: Visit Minnesota on Sunday.

Women's College Basketball

Hebard scores 30 as Ducks slide past Washington

SEATTLE (AP) — Ruthy Hebard dominated on the interior while scoring 14 of her career-high 30 points in the third quarter, and No. 9 Oregon pulled away for a 76-63 win over Washington on Friday night.

The Ducks (22-4, 11-2 Pac-12) rebounded from last Sunday's home loss to No. 17 Stanford and overmatched the Huskies on the inside. With the Ducks struggling to hit from the perimeter in the first half, Oregon went almost exclusively to Hebard to start the third quarter. She responded by making 6 of 7 shots in the quarter and helping Oregon build an 18-point lead. The Ducks' lead reached 28 in the final minutes.

Hebard made 13 of 15 shots overall, most of them within a couple feet of the basket. The 6-foot-4 sophomore was part of an Oregon front line that outscored Washington 46-18 in the paint and made up for a quiet night by Sabrina Ionescu, the leading scorer in the Pac-12 at 19.9 points per game.

Ionescu was 2 of 6 shooting and finished with 10 points. Oregon has won four of the past five matchups against its rivals to the north.

Washington (7-17, 1-12) lost its fifth straight and simply didn't have the size to counter Oregon in the paint. Amber Melgoza led the Huskies with 21 points and Mai-Loni Henson added 16.

Hebard topped her career high set last season when she had 29 points against UCLA. She added 14 rebounds as Oregon outrebounded Washington 44-30.

Washington made things interesting for a half, rallying from an early deficit to take a 22-19 lead on Melgoza's three-point play early in the second quarter. Washington led 25-20 minutes later on Hannah Johnson's 3-pointer, but Oregon closed the half on a 13-2 run and led 33-27 at the break.

Oregon blew the game open in the third quarter, outscoring Washington 27-15.

Pac-12 Oregon 76 vs Washington 63

SCOREBOARD

Large table containing local sports news, prep basketball, swimming, wrestling, college basketball, women's college basketball, and various scores for NBA, NHL, and other leagues.