

SUMMER OLYMPICS

Canada upsets U.S. women's soccer

By Anne M. Peterson

Associated Press

KASHIMA, Japan — Carli Lloyd, clutch in so many critical moments for the U.S. women's soccer team, failed to connect against Canada on Monday night, Aug. 2, and the Americans won't play for a fifth Olympic gold medal.

Lloyd's look in the 86th minute with the United States trailing by a goal hit the crossbar as Canada won 1-0 and dropped the Americans into the bronze medal match. It is the second straight Olympics that the U.S. failed to reach the gold medal game.

The Americans were bounced from the 2016 Rio Games by Sweden in the quarterfinals.

As Canada celebrated wildly at Ibaraki Kashima Stadium, Lloyd knelt to the turf with her head in her hands.

"That wasn't good enough," said Lloyd, the oldest player on the U.S. team at 39 and playing in what was likely her last major tournament with the national team.



Robert Gauthier/Los Angeles Times-TNS

Team United States forward Carli Lloyd (10) leaves her teammates to pace the field after losing a semifinal match against Canada at Ibaraki Kashima Stadium.

The U.S. lost starting goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher when she came down awkwardly after going up for the ball around the 20th minute. Trainers attended to her for some five minutes as backup Adrianna Franch warmed up on the sideline.

Naeher tried to stay in the game, but was replaced by Franch in the 30th minute.

Canada pounced in the 74th minute on Jessie Fleming's penalty kick, which gave Canada its first win against the United

States since 2001.

Fleming booted her PK past a diving Franch and took off toward the sideline, sliding on her knees before teammates swarmed around her.

The U.S. will play for the bronze on Thursday in Kashima against either Sweden or Australia.

Canada will play for the gold Friday at Tokyo's Olympic Stadium against the winner of Sweden-Australia. Canada features Quinn, a midfielder who will become the first openly

transgender athlete to win an Olympic medal.

Quinn won bronze in 2016 before coming out as transgender.

It is the second straight Olympics that the Americans, the two-time defending World Cup champions, will not play for the gold medal. The team was uncharacteristically uneven in Japan, starting with a 3-0 loss to Sweden that snapped a 44-game unbeaten streak.

The Americans bounced back to beat New Zealand but then came a scoreless draw with Australia in the group stage. A 4-2 penalty shootout against the Netherlands on Friday advanced the U.S. to the semifinals.

The loss of goalkeeper Naeher clearly hurt the U.S. She was key to the victory over the Dutch in the quarterfinals, with a penalty save during regulation and two more in the deciding shootout. After the semifinal loss, she was on crutches.

The previous time the U.S. played neighbor Canada in the Olympics

was 2012 in a controversial semifinal match that went to overtime. Canadian star Christine Sinclair scored three goals, but the United States won it 4-3 on Alex Morgan's header in the 123rd minute.

The controversy stemmed from questionable calls, including a rare six-second violation against Canadian goalkeeper Erin McLeod late in regulation. That touched off the sequence that resulted in the tying goal.

"For those of us that were part of the 2012 team, it's nice to get a little revenge in an Olympic semifinal," Sinclair said.

After her celebrating teammates had started to leave the field, Sinclair laid down on the field in relief.

"I was just sitting there thinking how proud I am of this team," she said. "It's a very unique group. It's a special group and I'm so proud to be a part of it."

The Canadians have won the bronze medal in the past two Olympics.

"I think this is my first loss ever to Canada," Me-

gan Rapinoe said. "It sucks not to be able to compete for a gold medal, which is what we wanted. Not a great performance, either. That's the most frustrating thing."

U.S. coach Vlatko Andonovski has been creative with his lineups throughout the tournament. On Monday, Lynn Williams, originally an alternate, started her second straight game. Lloyd, Rapinoe and Samantha Mewis were on the bench to start.

Lloyd actually had two attempts against Canada. She fired off a shot in the 65th minute that forced Canadian goalkeeper Stephanie Labbe to leap to push it over the crossbar. A short time later, Labbe stopped Julie Ertz's header off a corner from Rapinoe as the United States increased the pressure.

"Definitely had a bit of a momentum shift there in the second half, and came on strong," Labbe said. "I think for us it was about staying tight defensively and that's something we've done all tournament."

Biles deserves our support, not criticism



COREY KIRK

est problem could lead to serious injury. Known as the "twisties," Biles defined what it feels like in a recent Instagram post.

"Literally can not tell up from down," she wrote. "It's the craziest feeling ever. Not having an inch of control over your body."

Dealing with the immense pressure of trying to meet the same level of success from five years ago, having an unfortunate part in one of the biggest sexual assault cases in professional sports history with US Gymnastics, and being in the most unique Olympics scenario due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are all issues that could have played a part in Biles' condition.

So pulling herself out of competition not only was to keep her safe, but to give her teammates their best chance at winning a medal, and to ultimately take care of herself in the long run. Though some naysayers will cite Kerri Strug, the American gymnast who back in 1996 continued to compete after injuring her ankle, our expectations of Olympians have become much more respectful, and reasonable. Biles was able to prevent so much chaos from ever happening by

stepping away, to potentially save the remaining part of her career where someone like Strug wasn't able to after suffering her injury.

Support for Biles has drowned out the critics, with fans, celebrities, fellow athletes and former Olympians saying they understand why Biles decided to withdraw.

"I was 14 y/o w/ a tibial stress fracture, left alone w/ no cervical spine exam after this fall. I competed in the Olympic floor final minutes later. @Simone_Biles decision demonstrates that we have a say in our own health—"a say" I NEVER felt I had as an Olympian," former American gymnast and best-selling author Dominique Moceanu said on Twitter, sharing a balance beam fall she suffered back during the 1996 Olympics.

It's just so much pressure," fellow Olympic gymnast Aly Raisman told Today. "There's only so much she can take. She's human — sometimes people forget that." Raisman said she was "devastated" to learn Biles had dropped out of the competition but was most concerned about whether Biles is OK.

"Simone is human,"

Raisman reiterated. "She has pains like all of us, she has stress like all of us. It's insane how much pressure is on her."

One thing for certain, those branding Biles as a quitter need to listen to Biles, who made it clear that her problems started only after she arrived in Tokyo.

"No, this was not happening before I left

the USA," she wrote on Instagram. "It randomly started happening after prelims competition the VERY next morning. By that time NO an alternate was not allowed to be placed in my position for all your 'know it alls.' We have four on a team for a reason. I chose to not continue team competition in jeopardizing losing a medal (of any color) for

the girls/US. Also, for my own safety and health. For anyone saying I quit, I didn't quit. My mind and body are simply not in sync. I don't think you realize how dangerous this is on a hard/competition surface. Nor do I have to explain why I put health first. Physical health is mental health."

Corey Kirk is sports editor for the Baker City Herald.

Biles to compete in balance beam

By Will Graves

Associated Press

TOKYO — Simone Biles is back.

The 2016 Olympic gymnastics champion will return to competition in the balance beam final on Tuesday, Aug. 3, a little over a week after stepping away from the meet to focus on her mental health.

"We are so excited to confirm that you will see two U.S. athletes in the balance beam final tomorrow — Suni Lee AND Simone Biles!! Can't wait to watch you both!" USA Gymnastics said in a statement.

The 24-year-old Biles won bronze on beam in Rio de Janeiro

five years ago and qualified for the eight-woman final at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre on the first weekend of the Games.

She removed herself from the team final on July 27 after a shaky performance on vault during the first rotation. She watched from the sidelines as her three American teammates completed the meet without her; the U.S. took silver behind the team known as the Russian Olympic Committee.

The six-time Olympic medalist later said she was dealing with issues surrounding air awareness, referred to as "the twisties" in her sport.

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