

SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES IN TOKYO



Robert Gauthier/Los Angeles Times-TNS

USA gymnast Simone Biles performs in the Women's Balance Beam at Ariake Gymnastics Centre in Tokyo, Japan on Tuesday, August 3, 2021.

Biles returns, wins bronze on beam

Gymnast earns seventh Olympic medal, tied for most by an American

By Jim Vertuno
Associated Press

TOKYO — Simone Biles returned to the competition at the Tokyo Olympics in style, and will leave with another medal.

What color it is really isn't the point. That she delivered a tense, heart-pounding routine on the balance beam and nailed it with a smile meant everything.

Biles looked calm as she moved, turned and flipped across the beam. It was everyone else watching who held their breath.

"I had nerves but I felt pretty good," she said.

Biles won the bronze medal when she drilled a slightly altered routine in front of a crowd that included IOC President Thomas Bach a week after taking herself out of several competitions to focus on her mental health.

That move by the gymnast regarded the greatest in history had amplified attention on the importance of mental health in sports in general, and among Olympians specifically.

"I was just happy to be able to perform, regardless of the outcome," Biles said. "I did it for me, and I was just proud of myself for being able to compete one more time."

Biles changed her routine a bit while dealing with a mental block surrounding twisting. She used a double-pike dis-

mount — no twisting required — to score a 14.000, which was ultimately good enough for third in the eight-woman final, behind China's Guan Chenchen and Tang Xijing.

Biles earned her seventh career Olympic medal and tied Shannon Miller for the most by an American in gymnastics.

Olympic all-around champion Sunisa Lee of the United States finished fifth. The 18-year-old Lee won three medals in Tokyo, including silver in the team final and bronze on uneven bars.

The U.S. men's basketball team rode the slender shoulders and smooth shooting of Kevin Durant to advance to the medal round with a 95-81 victory over Spain in the quarterfinals.

Durant finished with 29 points. Jayson Tatum scored 13 and Jrue Holiday added 12 for the U.S., which will play either Australia or Argentina in the semifinals on Thursday. The American men have never failed to medal in all 18 of their previous Olympics appearances.

For Durant, only one will do.

"We've just got to finish it. Got to finish it," Durant said. "We're supposed to be here. For us, it's about getting the gold."

It was the fifth time since 2004 that the top two programs in the most recent FIBA world rankings — the U.S. is No. 1

— had met in the Olympic quarterfinals or later, with the Americans winning each time.

Ricky Rubio scored 38 points for Spain, which led by 10 in the second quarter before the U.S. turned the game with a 36-10 run to take control.

FAST AND FURIOUS

Karsten Warholm of Norway found his "perfect" race and smashed his own world record in the 400-meter hurdles, finishing in 45.94 seconds to break the old mark by .76.

One of the most anticipated races on the program ended with some wondering if they'd just watched the greatest Olympic races ever.

Second-place finisher Rai Benjamin of the United States finished in 46.17, also beating the 46.7 record that Warholm set just last month. The third-place finisher, Alison dos Santos of Brazil, finished in 46.72, which would've been a world record five weeks earlier.

"Sometimes in training, my coaches keep telling me this could be possible with the perfect race," Warholm said of the prospect of breaking 46 seconds. "But it was hard to imagine it because it's a big barrier, and it's something you don't even dream about."

He didn't just dream it. He lived it.

In other track and field events, Elaine Thompson-Herah of Jamaica completed her second straight Olympic sprint sweep, finishing the 200 meters in 21.53 seconds, the second-fastest time in history.

Thompson-Herah topped surprise second-place finisher Christine Mboma of Namibia by .48, while American Gabby Thomas took bronze.

This was a star-studded final, defined as much by who didn't finish on the podium as who did.

Thompson-Herah joins another Jamaican, Veronica Campbell-Brown, and Barbel Wookel of the former East Germany as the third back-to-back champions in the 200.

Armand Duplantis of Sweden won the Olympic gold medal in the pole vault. The 21-year-old clinched victory with a height of 6.02 meters and then raised the bar to 6.19 meters in a bid to break his own world record. Duplantis missed all three times when he tried to improve on the world record mark of 6.18 meters he set at Glasgow last year.

Pac-12, Big 12 discussing possible merger

Big 12 tries to regroup after Texas, Oklahoma plan move to SEC

By Ralph D. Russo
AP College Football Writer

The commissioners of the Pac-12 and Big 12 met Tuesday to discuss how the conferences might benefit from working together or maybe even merging.

Two people with knowledge of the meeting said Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby and George Kliavkoff from the Pac-12 were discussing the potential for strategic planning between the two conferences.

The people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the leagues were not immediately sharing details of internal discussions. The Athletic was first to report the meeting.

The Big 12 is trying to regroup after being stunned by Texas and Oklahoma's decision to move to the Southeastern Conference. For now, the move is scheduled for 2025, but the Big 12 has to start looking at how to move forward without their flagship programs immediately.

The remaining eight Big 12 schools — Texas Tech, TCU, Baylor, Kansas, Kansas State, Iowa State, Oklahoma State and West Virginia — are facing a huge drop in the value of their next television contract without

Texas and Oklahoma in the conference.

The Big 12's current TV deal runs out in 2025. Bowlsby told Texas lawmakers at a hearing in Austin on Monday that losing Texas and Oklahoma could slash the conference's television revenue by about 50%. He said the TV deals accounted for about \$280 million in revenue distributed to the schools.

The Pac-12's current television deal is similar in value to the Big 12's and expires in 2024.

Kliavkoff, a former MGM executive who took over as Pac-12 commissioner on July 1, has said the conference is in no rush to add members to a 12-member league that includes Southern California, Oregon, Stanford and Washington.

A full merger of the Big 12 and Pac-12 would create a 20-team conference with schools in every major U.S. time zone.

The conferences could also consider an scheduling agreement or alliance that creates regular nonconference matchups in high-profile sports of football and basketball as a way of potentially increasing the value of each league's next TV deals, one of the people familiar with the meeting told AP.

Thompson-Herah sweeps gold in sprints again

By Eddie Pells
AP National Writer

TOKYO — It was billed as a star-studded race that anyone could win.

So long as that person's name was Elaine.

Elaine Thompson-Herah blew away a much-decorated field in the 200 meters Tuesday night, Aug. 3. The latest sprint star from Usain Bolt's island country of Jamaica completed her second straight Olympic sprint sweep in 21.53 seconds, the second-fastest time in history.

"It means a lot to me to be in that history, to be in that work-hard book," said Thompson-Herah, who spent much of 2021 ailing with an Achilles injury and didn't reach top form until she got to Japan.

It marked the second time in four nights that

Thompson-Herah has won a sprint and recorded a time that fell short of only the late Florence Griffith Joyner's hallowed, 33-year-old world records. The 200 record is 21.34.

In the 100 meters, Thompson-Herah started pointing at the clock a few steps before the finish line and finished in 10.61, which was good for the Olympic record but not Flo Jo's overall mark of 10.49.

In the 200, Thompson-Herah ran hard all the way through and stuck her tongue out as she pushed her chest forward at the line. No questions this time about what would've happened if she'd left it all on the track.

Both finishes, of course, equaled gold medals, and now Thompson-Herah will have at least four when she gets back to Jamaica. There's a chance for a

fifth if she competes in the women's 4x100-meter relay this weekend.

"By the Olympic finish, I'll probably see what I've done," said the 29-year-old, who grew up in Banana Ground on the southern side of the island. "At this moment, I'm just a normal girl."

She topped surprise second-place finisher Christine Mboma of Namibia by .48, while American Gabby Thomas took bronze.

Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, who beat Thompson-Herah at both distances in Jamaica's national championships, finished fourth to barely miss out on her eighth Olympic medal.

Shaune Miller-Uibo, who focused on the 200 after winning gold at 400 meters in Rio, came in last after pulling up with a twinge in her hamstring.

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