

Lee

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Even though the pain in Lee's foot eased — funny how it seemed to get better the more she trained — she arrived in Japan figuring her best shot was at a silver medal. Sure, she'd beaten good friend and reigning Olympic champion Simone Biles during the final day of the

but missed out on gold when she stepped out of bounds twice during her floor routine.

Russian gymnast Angelina Melnikova added bronze to the gold she won in the team final. American and future Oregon State gymnast Jade Carey, who joined the competition after Biles pulled out, finished eighth.

Biles' decision to sit out led to the jarring sig tht of the gyni



routine with three tumbling passes instead of four, hoping better execution would override any potential tenths she surrendered by not doing a fourth pass. Her 13.700 was steady, but it left an opening for Andrade.

The 21-year-old Brazilian, two years removed from a third surgery to repair a torn ACL in her knee, had the best floor score of the contenders during qualifying. Yet she bounded out of bounds with both feet at the end of her first tumbling pass. And her right foot stepped off the white mat and onto the surrounding blue carpet.

Brazil," she said.

The gold, however, remains in possession of the Americans. Lee's victory marked the fifth straight by a U.S. woman, with the past three Olympic champions all being women of color.

Biles and 2012 gold medalist Gabby Douglas are Black. Lee's parents are Hmong, an ethnic group who have historically lived in the mountains of

J.S. Olympic Trials last month, but that was an anomaly, right?

Then Biles opted out of the all-around competition to focus on her mental health following an eight-year run atop the sport.

Everything was on the table. Gold included. Lee took it with a brilliant set on uneven bars, a nervy performance on beam and a floor exercise that made up for in execution what it might have lacked in aggression.

Her total of 57.433 points was just enough to top Andrade, who earned the first gymnastics all-around medal by a Latin American athlete

nast considered the greatest of all time cheering on Lee and the rest of the 24-woman field from the stands with the gold that's been hers for so long now in play for everyone else.

Still. Lee did her best to not think about the stakes. She FaceTimed with her father John — who was paralyzed from the chest down during a freak accident in Minnesota just days before the 2019 national championships — before the meet, just like always. He told her to relax. So she did. Or at least, she tried.

Lee admitted she was getting "in her head" a little bit while

Elizabeth Flores/Star Tribune

Shyenne Lee, left, the older sister of Olympian Sunisa Lee, reacts alongside family and friends as they watch the American clinch gold in the women's gymnastics all-around Thursday in Oakdale, Minnesota.

prepping for her bar routine. the one that's currently the hardest in the world. She didn't exactly look nervous. The 15.300 the judges rewarded her for a series of intricate connections and releases tied Andrade's near-perfect Cheng vault for the highest score of the night.

Yet it wasn't Lee's brilliance

that made the difference but her guts. She nearly came off the balance beam while executing a wolf turn — basically a seated spin - needed to suction cup her toes to the 4-inch slab of wood to stay on. Her score of 13.833 moved her in front of Andrade heading into the floor exercise.

Going first, Lee opted for a

Needing a 13.802 to win, Andrade received a 13.666 instead. Not that she particularly cared. She wasn't even sure she would make it to Tokyo until she won the all-around at the Pan American Championships two months ago. She was in tears as she watched her country's flag raised during an Olympic gymnastics ceremony for the first time.

"This medal represents all

Southeast Asia. Lee's parents emigrated from Laos to Minnesota, which has the largest concentration of Hmong in the U.S. A large group of friends and family gathered in Minneapolis to watch her make history. She hopes the image of a Hmong standing in front of the world and on top of her sport resonates in a community she sometimes feels can be too restrictive.

"I want people to know that you can reach your dreams and you can just do what you want to do," she said. "Because you never know what's going to happen in the end."

Spectators

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On the way to the opening ceremony, thousands lined the street to cheer for the buses, even though they had no idea who was riding inside. They held up signs that read "Welcome to Tokyo," despite public sentiment that has run strongly against the staging of the Games. When drones rose above the stadium, they were oohing and ahhing and taking pictures, just as they would have been watching their beloved Shohei Ono competing in their national pastime, Judo.

Sixty miles to the east, where surfing made its Olympic debut, fans found their way to Tsurigasaki Beach.

Starting on the first day of the three-day tournament, dozens crowded around the plastic orange fence marking the security perimeter, their revelry building throughout the day. Far off in the distance, locals could see the beach and athletes moving into the water, along with coaches, journalists and volunteers at work.

Nobody seemed to mind the



Thibault Camus/AP

Fans watch as Teniel Campbell of Trinidad And Tobago (66), right, Amanda Spratt of Australia (18), and Jiajun Sun of China (61), compete during the women's cycling road race at the Olympics Sunday in Oyama, Japan.

jetties near the surf zone that blocked much of the competition.

Over at Ariake Urban Sports Park, a dazzling stadium setup that would have seated 7,000 spectators for the Olympic debut of skateboarding, 8-yearold Ayane Nakamura was doing ollies on her "Peanuts" skateboard outside the venue.

She had come with her mother, Rie, and camped outside at 7 a.m. in hopes of seeing her hero, Yuto Horigome, and the rest of the men arriving for competition. When the security guards inevitably showed up to shoo away Nakamura and her friend, 8-year-old Sora Yamagishi, the sprightly youngster in the blue Nike skateboarding cap kept slipping away.

Some people scold me several times," Nakamura said, "so I have to hide when I see these people."

Others managed to find vantage points to watch skateboarding, too, and they were richly rewarded. Not only did Horigome win the men's street event, Momiji Nishiya took gold and Funa Nakayama bronze in the women's event.

"I love skateboarding and follow all Japanese top skaters," said Tamura, who works for a Tokyo staffing agency and managed to catch some of the kickflips and railstands through binoculars.

Were fans bummed they couldn't get in the venue? Maybe get a little closer to the athletes?

"To be honest," Tamura said, "I couldn't get a ticket, so I am not that shocked. But in these circumstances, the decision makes sense, although it is sad."

Shogo Miyamoto, a freelancer from Kyoto, also thought the decision to ban spectators was correct. But that hasn't stopped him from trying to breathe in the Olympic atmosphere. He arrived in Tokyo on the second full day of competition and tried to get a glimpse of a few of the venues,

then planned to head down the coast to catch some sailing.

"I wasn't really interested in sports," Miyamoto said. "But the Olympics is something that you wouldn't have in your home country twice in your life. Maybe not even once. That's why I wanted to come and explore the venues."

There are still plenty of opportunities, too, for the most intrepid of fans.

With the right equipment and and a little bit of gumption, golf fans might be able to catch a glimpse of Masters champion Hideki through the trees lining the East Course at Kasumigaseki Country Club. At Odaiba Marine Park, where a few souls braved the rain to watch the triathlon this week, long-distance swimmers will compete in the marathon.

Speaking of marathons, the track and field marathon will take place next week in Odori Park in Sapporo, about 700 miles northeast of Tokyo, where temperatures should be slightly cooler. That could mean sightings of reigning Olympic champion Eliud Kipchoge, Kenya's marathon world record-holder Brigid Kosgei or American four-time Olympian Galen Rupp.

Technically speaking, fans are prohibited from lining the route. But good luck policing 26.2 miles (42.2 kilometers) of road.

Those unwilling to run afoul of the law can catch the final week of cycling, which will shift to the velodrome in Izu for track cycling. Its location in the Shizuoka prefecture, like the mountain bike course and the road race finish at Fuji International Speedway, falls outside the spectator ban, meaning up 1,800 people will be able to squeeze inside.

Good for the fans. Good for the athletes missing their support, too.

"Initially I was quite gutted. Without fans completely would have been different," said Britain's Laura Kenny, a four-time Olympic champion in cycling. "Would they have played crowd noise? Could they have chosen the London crowd? It wouldn't have felt as exciting as it could have been. I'm glad to have some people coming in."