

Asians in American sports • Asian Americans in world sports

At the Olympics, winning silver and bronze is still a victory

By Mike Street

Special to The Asian Reporter

The Winter Olympics have closed in PyeongChang, South Korea, and as always, the media paid far too much attention to the gold-medal winners. We forget that merely reaching the Olympics is an accomplishment. In addition, many of the silver- and bronze-medal winners have amazing stories of their own, tales of redemption and first-time victories that are just as sweet as those from the people standing on the top step of the winner's podium.

Take the 500-meter men's short-track speedskating final, for example. China's Wu Dajing had been untouchable throughout the earlier rounds, never trailing and setting a world record reaching the final race. He was equally unbeatable in the final, breaking his own world record less than an hour after setting it. It was China's first-ever men's short-track gold medal, and it was well deserved.

Finishing behind Dajing were Hwang Dae-Heon and Lim Hyo-Jun of South Korea. While this loss might have seemed like a disappointment for them, it served as redemption for Hwang, who had skated with Lim in the 1500-meter speed-skating finals earlier. And for Lim, who won gold in that race, the 500m bronze was further acknowledgement of his rising talent.

In the 1500m event, Hwang and Lim stayed in the middle of a huge pack of nine skaters in the early laps before both surged to the front with nine laps remaining. Sjinkie Knegt, a top-ranked Dutch skater, took the lead back a few laps later, but Lim passed him to retake the lead with three laps to go. In the process, however, Hwang collided with a skater trailing him, sweeping them both into the boards and out of the race.

Lim emerged with the 1500m gold, but he helped Hwang redeem himself in the 500-meter event. After Dajing surged to the front in that race, the two South Korean skaters battled for second and third, trailed closely by the formidable Samuel Girard of Canada, who won gold in the 1000m event a few days earlier. Lim



AP Photo/Gregory Bull



AP Photo/Charlie Riedel

slid into second place early on, but Hwang soon overtook him, leaving Lim to hold off Girard for the rest of the race as Hwang earned his first Olympic medal.

It was the 18-year-old Hwang's first Olympics, but he is expected to collect much more hardware in the future. Named the 2017 Rookie of the Year by the Korean Skating Union, Hwang has already won three World Cup speed-skating events this season. And at age 21, Lim Hyo-Jun has won three World Cup events this season to add to his two medals at this year's Olympics. We will see more from these young Asian skaters in World Cup events

to come.

In the snowboarding halfpipe event, everyone talked about gold-medal winners Shaun White and Asian-American Chloe Kim. Kim's strong scores had clinched the victory for her even before her spectacular final run, while White won gold only after laying down an incredible final run of his own.

But in a sport often dominated by westerners, the silver medals in those events were won by two significant Asian athletes: China's Jiayu Liu on the women's side and Japan's Ayumu Hirano on the men's side.

Hirano is well-known among international snowboarders, so his silver medal was not surprising. After all, only Shaun White's 97.75 score could beat Hirano's awesome 95.25-point performance, and both runs featured back-to-back 1440s, or four mid-air spins. Hirano acknowledged White's performance was "the best he'd ever seen" as he fell one step short of the top of the podium for the second straight Olympics.

Despite this apparent disappointment, Hirano has nonetheless had an inspiring

Hey Yeong-mi: South Korean businesses join curling craze

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crushed heavyweights Canada and Sweden before beating Japan 8-7 in the semifinals. It fell to Sweden 8-3 in the finals. By then, the team members, with their success and quirky nicknames based on their favorite breakfast foods, had become a sensation.

AMAZING ACCOMPLISHMENTS. There were many stories of success among silver and bronze medallists at the PyeongChang Olympics. After injuries hampered performances in the 2010 and 2014 Olympics, snowboarder Jiayu Liu of China (top photo, left) earned a silver medal. In short-track speedskating, Hwang Dae-Heon and Lim Hyo-Jun of South Korea (bottom photo, left and right), won silver and bronze medals, respectively.

year. Less than a year ago, he was competing at the 2017 U.S. Open when a bad fall against the hard edge of the halfpipe led to a sprained knee ligament and liver damage. He was told that he came within one centimeter of a potentially fatal blow.

After a three-month rehabilitation, Hirano resumed training and won first place at two World Cup events and second at a third event. At the 2018 X-Games in January, Hirano nailed consecutive 1440s followed by consecutive 1260s (three-and-a-half midair spins) to win a gold medal. So, while silver may have seemed like a disappointment to Hirano, the 19-year-old will have many more chances at redemption, especially considering Shaun White won his gold at age 31.

Similarly, Jiayu Liu's silver medal was China's first medal of this Olympics, but she has long blazed a snowboarding trail for her fellow Chinese athletes. Liu won the 2005 national championship at age 13, then won the World Cup championship just three years later.

While Liu went to both the 2010 and 2014 Olympics, injuries hampered her performances, and she finished off the medal podium both times. Despite falling short of the gold in 2018, Liu knows winning second place is just as inspiring. "For Chinese people, having someone on the podium for the Olympics is an honor," she said after her win. "It will be a huge push for Chinese snowboard."

There were many other stories of success among silver and bronze medallists at the PyeongChang Olympics. In the aerial freestyle skiing event, China's Zhang Xin and Kong Fanyu won their first Olympic medals when they took second and third behind Hanna Huskova of Belarus. And Maia and Alex Shibutani, the Asian-American brother-and-sister ice dancing "Shib Sibs," won bronze medals in 2018, a huge improvement over their ninth-place Olympic debut in 2014.

It's popular in American sports to say things like "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing" or "Second place is the first loser." But in a superlative competition such as the Olympics, winning silver and bronze is a huge accomplishment. This year's Olympics not only showed us many such achievements, it also gave us a glimpse of the star Asian athletes of the future.

Michelle Wie wins LPGA's Women's World Championship in Singapore

SINGAPORE (AP) — Michelle Wie sunk a lengthy putt from off the green on the final hole to win the Ladies Professional Golf Association's (LPGA) Women's World Championship by one stroke.

Wie's last LPGA tournament win was at the 2014 U.S. Women's Open.

With four players in contention to win the tournament on the last hole at Sentosa Golf Club, Wie separated herself from the pack when she birdied the 72nd hole for a final round of 7-under 65 to finish at 17-under 271.

Jenny Shin (65) made her only bogey of the day on the last hole to finish in a four-way tie for second at 16-under with third-round leader Nelly Korda (71) and Danielle Kang (70), who both missed birdie putts that would have forced a playoff, and Brooke Henderson (67).

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

Difficulty level: Medium

#98335

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 #76262 (Easy)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

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

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