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U.S. skater close to gold

United Press International
SARAJEVO, Yugoslavia — Merely a step or two short of perfection, Scott Hamilton put a virtual lock on a figure skating gold medal Tuesday night, helping to overshadow lackluster performances by the Mahre twins earlier in the day.

Hamilton, the three-time world champion who hasn't been beaten since 1980, stumbled ever so slightly on the camel spin during his short program at the Zetra Arena, but still goes into Thursday night's free skating final with a comfortable lead over Jean-Christophe Simond of France. "I bobbed the camel a little," said Hamilton, who was second behind Canadian Brian Orser in the short program markings, consisting of seven elements in two minutes. "The combination felt good, the double axel felt good, all the spins were good. I got a little excited out there and the camel wasn't exactly what I wanted to do."

Hamilton said he had been unable to warm up properly because he's been so caught up in all the other activities of the Olympics. "So," he continued, "it was 'calm down, let's remember what we're out here for' and I went downstairs and got mad. I got really mad and all the veins in my head were standing out. I was looking really pretty."

The continued strong showing by Hamilton, plus the medal expected later Tuesday night from Judy Blumberg and Michael Seibert in the ice dance, lent encouragement to the United States forces following the failure of the men to make an impression in the giant slalom.

Phil Mahre, winner of the overall World Cup championship the last three years, could do no better than eighth in the giant slalom and his brother Steve was 17th.

Max Julen of Switzerland, taking heart from the whistling of some 12,000 Yugoslavs who envisioned a gold medal for one of their own, was the surprise winner of the giant slalom, the first alpine event of these Games for the men. The Yugoslavians, nevertheless, were delighted to take the silver on a pressure performance by Jure Franko, while Andreas Wenzel of Liechtenstein earned the bronze.

Also winning gold medals Tuesday were Canadian Gaetan Boucher in the men's 1,000-meter speedskate and Eirik Kvalfoss of Norway in the 10-kilometer biathlon. Nick Thometz of Minnetonka, Minn., fifth in the 500 meter speedskate, again missed out on a medal by finishing fourth.

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill H.



British ice dancers glide to gold medal

United Press International
SARAJEVO, Yugoslavia — Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean of Britain mesmerized both judges and audience to win the Olympic Ice Dance gold medal Tuesday, earning the highest marks ever awarded in figure skating.

The Britons' flawless and hypnotic routine to the haunting Ravel's "Bolero" won a total of 12 perfect marks from six from the judges. Three of the arbiters gave sixes for technical merit, the other six awarding 5.9, but all nine judges agreed Torvill and Dean's artistry merited the highest possible mark.

That straight set of sixes brought the British couple's tally in the three parts of the ice

dance competition to 19, a figure never achieved by any skater or skaters in a championship before.

Natalia Bestemianova and Andrei Bukin of the Soviet Union, as expected, took the silver medal and won almost as much applause as Torvill and Dean for their exciting and quick-stepping free dancing to the balalaika and bells accompaniment of Russian folk dances.

The second Soviet pair, Marina Klimova and Sergei Ponomarenko, in less expected fashion, also skated a fluent routine to snatch the bronze medal from Americans Judy Blumberg and Michael Seibert. Both couples finished with the same final points, 7.0 placements, but

the Soviets' higher technical dance decided the medal.

Blumberg and Seibert danced to Rimsky-Korsakov's

cheherazade was beautifully coordinated but rated lower than Klimova and Ponomarenko's more athletic and exact number.

From the opening bars of "Bolero", with Dean kneeling on the ice and then lifting Torvill over his shoulder to start their routine, crowd of 15,000 was enthralled. Four minutes later after a sweeping and display and a breathtaking triple twist at the end, the Britons had unquestionably cured the gold even before marks went up.

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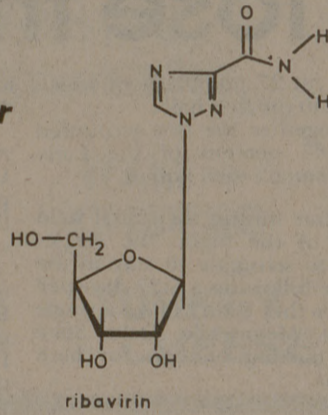
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Seattle skier now 'A' team

United Press International
SARAJEVO, Yugoslavia —Only minutes before, elf-like 20-year-old Debbie Armstrong had conquered mighty Jahorina, one of the steepest, most beautiful mountains in all Yugoslavia.

Now, completely surrounded six deep and hopelessly encircled the way Custer must have been, the curly blonde, blue-eyed Seattle skier was on top of the world, yet she couldn't move an inch.

If she did, she risked being crushed by the surging mass of humanity around her. She was struggling to keep from slipping on the uneven, icy snow beneath her, yet she still answered all the questions fired at her by the media. She wasn't going to miss so much as a second of all this because it assuredly had to be one of the fulfilling moments of her young life.

As a class B member or second-stringer on the United States Ski Team, and the "baby" of the group in terms of seniority, she had made her very first major victory one that she and many others would always remember and talk about by not only winning the women's giant slalom but the first gold medal for the United States in these Olympic Games as well.

Armstrong took a lot of the heat off America's male Olympians, who haven't done a whole lot more here than go shopping and take pictures. Until Debbie came

through, the only medal the United States had to show was a silver one in the pairs figure skating won by Kitty and Peter Carruthers.

What made Armstrong's victory all the sweeter was that her 24-year-old teammate, Christin Cooper of Sun Valley, Idaho, picked up the silver medal for second place in the giant slalom, and Tamara McKinney of Squaw Valley, Calif., barely missed making it an entirely unexpected 1-2-3 sweep for the Americans by finishing fourth, only four-tenths of a second behind the third place finisher, France's Perrine Pelen.

Armstrong's combined time for her two runs was 2:20.98; Cooper's 2:21.38, and McKinney's 2:21.83. The fourth U.S. girl in the race, Cindy Nelson of Reno, Nev., wound up way back in 18th place with her 2:24.88 clocking, but she might've made the biggest and most important contribution of all. She's Armstrong's roommate in the Olympic Village and she never let up on her before the competition.

"Cindy Nelson has been absolutely great," were virtually the first words out of Armstrong's mouth after she realized she had won the race. "She kept giving me a kick in the pants. Everytime I turned around, she'd say, 'You can do it, Armstrong. You know it, and I know it.' She never let me forget I had the ability to win. She was my personal confidence builder."

When Nelson came over to congratulate Armstrong after finishing her own run, the two girls embraced each other with that special kind of warmth and affection that only comes from putting in back-breaking hours of hard work together.

"Can you imagine?" Armstrong bubbled. "Me, winning?"

"Well, kid, you sure picked the right time and the right place to do it," said the 28-year-old Nelson, a 14-year member of the team the rest of the members call "Granny."

All of them took to her immediately cause of her good nature and sheer eagerness when she first joined the team years ago and they all felt for her when she broke her leg in Schladming, Austria, 1982 after having been named to the World Championship team. Everyone likes Debbie, and that's fair enough cause Debbie likes everybody, also.

"You should've heard her in the chute before we started today," Cooper laughed. "She was babbling away, let's have fun, let's have fun."

"That's right," confirmed Armstrong who had been pegged more as a downhill specialist and had to almost beg to part in the giant slalom. "Sure, it was a lot of work, but it was also a lot of fun."

Hogs still riding high after upset

United Press International
The Arkansas Razorbacks are on one of their highest highs in history and the TCU Horned Frogs are at the opposite end of the emotional spectrum.

So there are not expected to be many surprises in Fayetteville Wednesday night.

The most interesting thing about the Arkansas-TCU matchup will likely be how much of a letdown the Razorbacks have and if they do not have one then the Frogs will really be in trouble.

The Hogs and Frogs will make up one of three Southwest Conference games on the slate Wednesday evening.

Arkansas will be going after its 20th win, which would mark the eighth straight year the Razorbacks have reached that plateau.

This will be the first time Arkansas has been in action since its Sunday upset win over No. 1 North Carolina in Pine Bluff. That victory concluded a three-week, elevated the Razorbacks into the No. 13 spot in the national rankings and raised their confidence level for upcoming games with Houston and for what will almost certainly be its seventh straight appearance in the NCAA tournament.

TCU, meanwhile, has won just two of 11 conference games despite a talented assortment of young players.

Wednesday night's other games find the Baylor Bears at SMU and Rice at Texas. On Thursday evening the fourth-ranked Houston Cougars will host third-place Texas Tech.

SMU is hoping to use this mid-week round of games as a lever to jump back into third place in the league standings. The team that finishes third wins a bye past the opening round of the SWC's post-season tournament.

The Mustangs are 7-4 while Texas Tech is 7-3 in the league race. SMU will also be going after its 20th win, something the school has not achieved since 1967, and since Baylor has won only five games all year the Mustangs should get it.

Baylor, however, hopes to see

some playing time Wednesday night from junior guard, Stern. He was leading the team in scoring when he broke right foot on Friday, Jan. 12, during a practice session.

The Rice Owls will be vored to even their conference record at 6-6 against the Horns, who have won just in their last 22 league games. If Rice does beat Texas Tech, mark only the third time in last 13 years the Owls have as many as six conference games in one year.

Rice has all but clinched home court advantage in the SWC tournament, something the Owls have never done. Now they are trying to get ahead of Texas A&M in the fifth spot.

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