

SPORTS

GOLF

All fall down

Ishikawa, Ikeda, Fujita lose at Match Play C'ship; Woods also knocked out

Compiled from news services

MARANA, Ariz.—Ryo Ishikawa's disappointing start to the season continued Wednesday as the Japanese teen was eliminated by Charl Schwartzel of South Africa in the first round of the Match Play Championship.

Schwartzel emerged victorious after 20 holes on a day that saw Japanese interest in the competition end early, with Yuta Ikeda and tournament debutant Hiroyuki Fujita also stumbling at the first hurdle.

Ishikawa, who missed the cut on his PGA season debut at last week's Northern Trust Open, played bogey-free golf for the first 13 holes, posting four birdies, but still could not shake Schwartzel.

The 19-year-old was just one up through 13, but the tide turned in Schwartzel's favor when Ishikawa made his first bogey on the 14th.

Schwartzel took the lead for the first time with an up-and-down for birdie at the short par-4 15th but spurned a chance to win it in regulation when he three-putted the 18th.

But Schwartzel prevailed on the second extra hole as Ishikawa bogeyed, missing the green on the approach and failing to save par with an eight-foot putt at Dove Mountain.

"I'm crushed," Ishikawa said. "The match could have gone either way."

"I am in better shape than I was last week so it was worth playing albeit only the first round. I want to keep chipping away ahead of the Masters."

Ikeda, the only Japanese player to make the cut at the Riviera last week, was beaten 2 and 1 by Spain's Miguel Angel Jimenez, who at 47 is the oldest player competing.

"Jimenez still manages to dig in and save par even when his shots veer off course, and he just played well," said Ikeda. "I think I kept up for the most part, but I simply didn't make enough birdies."

Fujita suffered three consecutive bogeys



Ryo Ishikawa plays an approach on the second hole during his first-round loss to Charl Schwartzel at the Match Play Championship on Wednesday.

from the ninth, checking out with his compatriots and Tiger Woods after a 5-and-3 loss to Sweden's Robert Karlsson.

"I really wanted to win and never gave up, but those three bogeys really stung," shrugged Fujita.

Woods was knocked out when he followed a crucial birdie with a shocking shot into the desert and lost to Thomas Bjorn.

It was only the second time that Woods,

the No. 3 seed, had been eliminated in the first round.

Moments after he made an 8-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole to extend the match, he hit a 3-wood so far to the right that it landed in a desert bush. It took two shots just to get it back onto the grass. After badly missing an 18-foot bogey putt, he conceded to Bjorn.

"I blew it," Woods said.

Twice he had simple chips on the back nine and failed to convert them into birdies, losing his lead on the 13th and falling behind on the 15th. He missed a 10-foot birdie on the 17th that he figured he should make "every time."

And then came No. 1, the first extra hole. "It's easy to put the ball in the fairway and I couldn't even do that," Woods said, so visibly upset that he was stumbling over

his words.

The other top seeds didn't have that much trouble.

Top-ranked Lee Westwood never trailed in his 3-and-2 victory over Henrik Stenson, while PGA champion Martin Kaymer had the shortest match of the opening round, a 7-and-6 win over 19-year-old Seung-yul Noh of South Korea.

Phil Mickelson, the No. 4 seed who only decided to play this World Golf Championship two weeks ago, won 6-and-5 over Brendan Jones.

Ian Poulter became the first defending champion in nine years to be eliminated in the first round, despite having difficulty remembering any bad shots he hit. All he could recall was Stewart Cink making one big putt after another—seven of them from the 6-foot range or longer—to win in 19 holes.

Cink never led in the match until a 6-iron into 4 feet on No. 1, the first extra hole.

"This is a big win for my confidence because I don't know if there's a tougher player in the field in match play than Ian Poulter," Cink said. "It's a big win for me."

Poulter didn't make a single putt over 5 feet.

"He didn't miss a putt," Poulter said. "That's what you have to do. I did that last year. I didn't this year and got punished for it."

(Kyodo News, AP)

Arimura leads in Singapore

SINGAPORE (AP)—Japan's Chie Arimura overcame strong winds to shoot a 4-under 68 and take a one stroke lead after the first round of the HSBC Women's Champions on Thursday.

South Korea's Choi Na Yeon shot a 69, while world No. 1 Yani Tseng of Taiwan finished the day in a group of four players with 70 to remain in contention at the Tanah Merah Country Club.

The 23-year-old Arimura, ranked 19th in the world, was steady throughout the round, shooting a 34 on the front and back nines with a total of five birdies.

ATHLETICS

Gebrselassie pulls out of Tokyo race

The Daily Yomiuri

World record-holder Haile Gebrselassie won't be running in Sunday's Tokyo Marathon after all.

Gebrselassie, generally regarded as the greatest long-distance runner in history, injured both knees in a fall during training and has withdrawn from the race, his management company informed organizers, who made the announcement Thursday.

"It seems he tried his best to be ready up to the last minute," organizing committee chairman Tadaaki Hayano said at a press conference. "It's very disappointing."

Gebrselassie's first appearance in the Tokyo race had been temporarily in doubt when he stunningly announced his retirement after failing to finish the New York City Marathon in November due to an unrelated knee injury.

But the 37-year-old Ethiopian rescinded that decision, much to the relief of Tokyo organizers. That relief lasted until Thursday, when his management company relayed the bad news.

The extent of his current injury was unknown. Gebrselassie, a two-time Olympic champion in the 10,000 meters, had been expected to leave Ethiopia on Wednesday.

Gebrselassie, who set the world record of 2 hours 3 minutes 59 seconds in Berlin in 2008, has run one marathon in Japan, winning in Fukuoka in 2006. He has won nine of 13 career marathons.

Sunday's race still features a strong field that includes Kenyans Felix Limo, Paul Biwott and Salim Kipsang. Japan's Masakazu Fujiwara returns to defend his title.

SOCCER

Nagatomo unused as Inter falls to Bayern

Compiled from news services

MILAN—Yuto Nagatomo's dream of playing in the Champions League will have to be realized another day as the Japanese international remained on the bench in Inter Milan's 1-0 home defeat to Bayern Munich on Wednesday.

Nagatomo had played in four consecutive matches in the Serie A for the reigning European champions.

But with Romanian defender Cristian Chivu back from suspension on this night, Nagatomo was an onlooker as Mario Gomez snatched a 90th-minute winner for the German giant in the first leg of their last 16 clash.

The Japan leftback, who moved to Inter from Cesena on the stroke of the Jan. 31 transfer deadline, tipped his hat to Bayern's Dutch winger Arjen Robben.

Gomez tucked in the rebound off a stinging shot from Robben, who only returned to action last month from an injury he aggravated at the World Cup, where the Nether-

lands played Japan in the group phase.

"The atmosphere was entirely different," Nagatomo said. "Robben was amazing, just like always. He's brilliant. He's such a threat."

"I learned a lot from watching everyone else play. It gave me a few things to think about for playing against Robben, if and when I get in."

Inter now have lost all three meetings with Bayern in Milan, although they have a win and a draw from two games versus the Bavarian club at Munich.

Coach Leonardo said a one-goal defeat to Louis van Gaal's side was perfectly acceptable ahead of the second leg on March 15. The final is at London's Wembley Stadium on May 28.

"A 1-0 result in the first game was well within our expectations," said Leonardo, the former Kashima Antlers icon. "We'll devote everything we have in trying to reach the quarterfinals."

Van Gaal described as "wonderful" a match that suggested his team is close to finding the form that took it to last season's final and won it a domestic double.

"Inter surprised me, they played to win and that is very beautiful," said Van Gaal. "The whole world has seen a wonderful game and I think both sets of fans could be

happy with this game.

"In last year's final, Inter attacked less but got a better result. But that's football." (Kyodo News, Reuters)

Marseille holds Man Utd

MARSEILLE, France (AP)—Marseille and Manchester United canceled each out in a closely contested match of few chances on Wednesday, drawing 0-0 in the last 16 of the Champions League.

Only Marseille goalkeeper Steve Mandanda was really tested in the first leg, plunging low to his right to keep out United midfielder Darren Fletcher's shot in the ninth minute and later diving at Nani's feet in the second half.

"A goal away from home is always important. We didn't do that, that's a disappointment for me," United coach Alex Ferguson said.

"At this stage of the competition, away goals count. But you have to say Manchester United at home, we have a good chance. I don't care if it's 10-9."

Marseille started the second half well, but United goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar had a quiet night at Stade Velodrome with the French champions lacking the final pass to unlock the defense.

Marseille coach Didier Deschamps or-

ganized his team well, cutting off the supply line to United forward Dimitar Berbatov and forcing Wayne Rooney to drop deep to get into the game.

"Our passing wasn't as good as it normally is," Ferguson said. "Marseille made sure they weren't going to lose a goal. They're very strong defensively, a very powerful team. Marseille didn't pose many problems for us. Nothing really happened to be honest, and I don't think it was a good match to watch."

Deschamps got what he wished for before the match—no goals conceded—and is optimistic about his team's chances at Old Trafford on March 15.

"It's half the job not to concede goals at home. I'm proud of what my players did tonight because they rose to the challenge," Deschamps said. "It will be a different story in three weeks at Old Trafford, but we will have to go there without fear."

Friendly likely to be played

Kyodo News

Japan Football Association chief Junji Ogura said Wednesday he does not expect the huge earthquake that has hit New Zealand to affect the national team's upcoming home friendly against the Kiwis.

"I don't think there will be a problem,"



Bayern Munich's Mario Gomez scores past Inter Milan goalkeeper Julio Cesar during the first leg of their Champions League round-of-16 game on Wednesday.

Ogura said of the friendly penciled in for March 29 in Tokyo. Ogura also said he has sent a letter of condolence to New Zealand Football.

Japan plays Montenegro in Shizuoka in its first home fixture of the year on March 25 before the four-time Asian champion meets the All Whites four days later at National Stadium.

Meanwhile, Ogura said unrest in the Middle East could lead to further rescheduling of Asian qualifiers for the 2012 London Olympics.

"[The trouble in the Middle East] is something that will probably be brought up at the Asian Football Confederation board meeting in March," said Ogura.

Singapore's 1st-round Olympic qualifier away to Yemen has already been postponed due to antigovernment demonstrations. Japan is set to join the Olympic qualifying campaign from the second round in June.

■ Arsenal beats Stoke. PAGE 21

RUGBY UNION

English cyclists reach Japan en route to World Cup

By Rich Freeman

Daily Yomiuri Sportswriter

As many families in Japan will testify, moving to another side of the world can be pretty stressful at the best of times.

Imagine if that move involves a 28,000-kilometer cycle ride through 28 countries. But that's exactly what rugby enthusiasts Tom Hudson and Jodie Burton are doing, though things have progressed beyond being a simple, if slightly extreme, way of getting from London to their new life in Melbourne.

Sixteen thousand, two hundred kilometers and 10 months into their trip, the couple met up with The Daily Yomiuri earlier this week at the Yokohama Country & Athletic Club to explain why they were now going to end their journey in Auckland on the day of the Rugby World Cup final.

"We had decided to emigrate and were thinking of how we could get there," said Burton, who spends her time out of the sad-

dle updating the pair's Web site (cyclingtotherugbyworldcup.com), which details all the charity work the two have done along the way.

"When I was younger I had read a book about a guy that cycled to Fremantle in Australia and thought that was so cool."

Boyfriend Hudson had also read a book by Ben Fogle and James Cracknell about rowing the Atlantic, and considered doing something similar.

But Burton told him he couldn't do anything without her by his side, and as a result the adventure was born.

"We wanted to have some project behind the ride and as New Zealand was close to our final destination, we decided to make it the Rugby World Cup the final piece," said 29-year-old Hudson, who plans to write a book about their trip.

The couple hope to raise £28,000 along the way for two charities (Rays of Sunshine and Tag Rugby Trust) as well as spread the word of rugby in countries not generally

associated with the oval-shaped ball.

"We wanted to do something life-changing," said Hudson. "Rugby is a sport that teaches good principles such as integrity, teamwork and honesty, and we want to use the sport to help strengthen communities."

That message is also represented in a scroll of honor they are carrying with them, along with all the camping equipment needed for 17 months on the road.

"We want to obtain a signature from each nation that we cycle—an iconic figure, a legend of the people—to show that countries of different regions, beliefs and cultures, can stand side by side together in harmony," they wrote on their Web site.

While some of the countries along the route are traditional strongholds of the sport, places such as Iran, Azerbaijan and Pakistan are not. But that didn't mean there was any shortage of opportunities to play and talk about the game played in heaven.

Hudson did an International Rugby Board Level Two Coaching course in La-

hore, while the pair was amazed to see a number of women play in specially adapted burqas in Tehran.

Having spent three months crossing China, during which time they both developed frostnip, and then cycling through a freezing South Korea, the pair said Japan was like a holiday.

Fast-tracking from Shimonoseki to Nara, the cyclists spent a couple of days in the ancient capital before heading north, sleeping in parks and beaches along the way.

"We woke up one morning with 50 or so people doing their morning exercises around our tent," said Hudson. "But the instructor was brilliant and when we told him we were from England the first thing he said was 'England, rugby.' That was a first to have the two associated like that."

A broken rim slowed them down a little—amazingly the first real mechanical problem they have encountered other than

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Rich Freeman/Daily Yomiuri photo

English cyclists Tom Hudson and Jodie Burton meet up with members of the Kurumi rugby club at the Yokohama Country & Athletic Club during the Japan leg of their 28,000-kilometer bike ride to the Rugby World Cup final in New Zealand.