

# Germany's Xiaona knocks out top seed Zhu of China

Upsets galore at Qatar TT Open; Long ends Li Ping's run

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO  
DOHA

IN continuation of what has turned out to be a tournament of upsets, Germany's Shan Xiaona knocked out the World No.2 and top-seeded Zhu Yuling of China in the second round of the Seamaster 2017 \$220,000 ITTF World Tour Qatar Open women's singles in Doha on Friday.

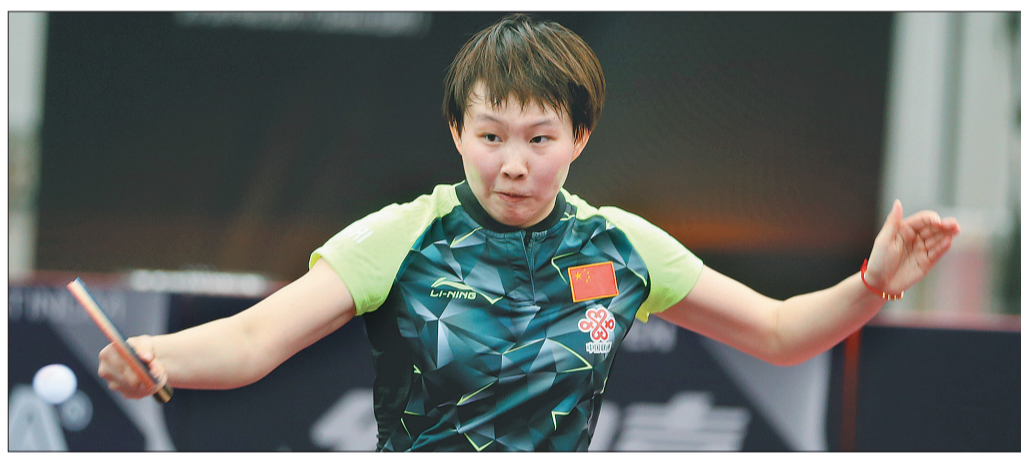
The 34-year-old China-born German player, ranked 22, was in devastating form as she trounced Yuling, a semi-finalist at the 2013 World Table Tennis Championships, (11-8, 6-11, 11-9, 12-10, 11-7) at the Ali Bin Hamad Al Attiyah venue.

Adopting her fast attacking pen-hold grip skills to good effect and staying close to the table at all times, Xiaona minimised the amount of time available for the top seed to extol her top spin skills with good positioning and fast return strokes to the amazement of the Chinese fans who thronged the venue in large numbers.

"I think I played well against Zhu Yuling today, my receive of her serves was good. She was slower getting into the game as well and wasn't playing her best level. Our last encounter ended with me losing three-four at the Japan Open last year, it was very close, it was a pity that I lost but that made me realise that I still have a chance," Xiaona said after the match.

In yet another great performance, Poland's Natalia Partyka, a five-time Paralympic Games gold medalists, defeated Yang Haeun of South Korea 4-0 (11-9, 12-10, 11-5, 13-11) to book her place in the quarter-finals where she will next face Xiaona on Saturday.

Partyka, who entered the main draws via the qualifiers, has continued to surprise all with her consistent feat at the tournament so far considering



Germany's Shan Xiaona (top) in action during her women's singles match against Zhu Yuling of China (left) at the Ali Bin Hamad Al Attiyah Arena in Doha on Friday. (RAFAEEK PALAYOOR)

that there is a gap of over 50 places on the current between her and the Korean.

While Partyka, who was born without a right hand and forearm, stands at No.78, Haeun is at 27.

"It is been a wonderful experience so far for me and I am happy that things are working the way I wanted. The match was not easy but I am happy I won in the end. I hope to continue in this form and go as far as possible," said Partyka, who became the world's youngest

ever Paralympian when she competed at the Sydney Paralympics at 11 years of age.

In the other matches of the day, Qatar's Li Ping was knocked out by world No.1 Ma Long of China 4-1 (11-7, 7-11, 11-4, 11-6, 11-9) in their Men's Singles Round of 16 match while Portuguese Marcos Freitas booked his place in the quarters after defeating Tomislav Pucar of Croatia 4-3 (7-11, 11-6, 8-11, 11-3, 11-3, 11-6, 11-6).

The Chinese superstar, Long, will face the world No.

14 Freita in the quarter-finals on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Japanese partnership formed by Masataka Morizono and Yuya Oshima and the Swedish duo of Kristian Karlsson and Mattias Karlsson have booked their semi-finals tickets of the men's doubles.

Morizono and Oshima defeated Belgium's Robin Devos and Cedric Nuytinck, the No.7 seeds (11-4, 12-10, 11-8) in the quarters while Karlsson and Karlsson ended the hopes of

fellow qualifiers the French partnership of Tristan Flore and Emmanuel Lebesson (11-8, 5-11, 11-7, 11-2).

"We played fast towards their backhands as much as possible; that made it very difficult for them to move; we focused on making sure that we served well and received well. They have good services; they use the reverse service often, it was important we returned positively," said Morizono after the match.

The 2017 Qatar Open is the 21st edition of the annual event.

Winners in both the men and women categories of the singles will walk away with \$25,000 each while finalists get \$12,600. Each semi-finalist will earn \$6,600.

In the doubles events, \$8,000 are up for grabs for winners in both categories while finalists will earn \$4,000.

# Svitolina ends Kerber's hopes, to play Wozniacki in Dubai final

AGENCIES  
DUBAI

NO.7 seed Elina Svitolina of Ukraine conquered top seed Angelique Kerber of Germany for a third straight time - the second time in 2017 - to advance into the biggest final of her young career with a 6-3, 7-6(3) victory at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships.

Svitolina kicked off the season by knocking out Kerber, then No.1, at the Brisbane International, but pulled off a hat trick of wins over the two-time Grand Slam champion on Friday, overcoming a rain delay and a late surge from an experienced - if slightly hampered - opponent to advance after one hour and 39 minutes of play.

"It was really tough," she said during her on-court interview. "(Kerber) obviously had a medical timeout, so it was in and out all the time. The rain made it even tougher to stay focused, so it was a very tricky match. Hopefully Angelique has nothing serious with her knee and gets better soon."

In control late in the second set, Svitolina saw her lead slip as Kerber won three straight games to serve for a decider. Digging in her heels, the Ukrainian youngster was riding a big wave of confidence - and an 11-match winning streak after taking home her fifth career title at the Taiwan Open - and broke back to roar through the ensuing tie-break.

"I was just trying to hit the ball, move my legs, think posi-

tively, and fight for every ball."

Winning the final would have taken Kerber back to the top of the world rankings that she held after winning the US Open in September until Serena Williams wrested it back in claiming Australian Open glory last month.

Standing between Svitolina and the biggest title of her career is former World No.1 Caroline Wozniacki, who reached her first final in Dubai since 2011 earlier in the day; Svitolina won their only previous meeting in three gruelling sets.

Wozniacki reached her second final in as many weeks as she beat Anastasiya Sevastova 6-3, 6-4.

Denmark's former World No.1, currently 15th, took just 90 minutes to beat her Latvian opponent and move into the title match at the Aviation club.

Wozniacki lost to Czech Karolina Pliskova in the Doha final last weekend.

"It's been a pretty good couple of weeks for me, I'm very happy with how I have been playing. Very happy how I have managed to get through these two weeks," Wozniacki said.

"It's been very tiring mentally. The fact that I have just been staying in there and keep grinding, I'm kind of proud of that."

"She definitely was a tricky opponent. I knew going into it that she was going to be difficult. She mixes the pace up. She really tries to break your rhythm. I was really pleased with how I was playing. I tried to stay aggressive and tried to mix it up, as well."



Angelique Kerber of Germany looks on during her semi-final match against Elina Svitolina of Ukraine in Dubai on Friday. (AFP)

# Irving, James lead Cavaliers past Knicks

AP  
CLEVELAND

CARMELO Anthony was still a member of the New York Knicks when he awoke from his afternoon nap.

Once the game started on Thursday, the Cleveland Cavaliers made sure the Knicks' nightmarish season continued.

LeBron James recorded his 48th career triple-double and Kyrie Irving scored 23 points, leading the Cavaliers to a 119-104 victory over the Knicks, who hung on to Anthony and Derrick Rose at the trade deadline.

James scored 18 points and had 13 rebounds with 15 assists for his sixth triple-double of the season.

Anthony, the subject of trade rumors because of a strained relationship with Knicks President of Basketball Operations Phil Jackson, scored 20 points, going 9 of 25 from the field.

"I'm at peace," Anthony

said. "I've been at peace. I'm happy I won't be talking about trades or any of this stuff the rest of the season."

Anthony anticipated he would remain with the Knicks.

"Nobody likes to be in limbo, especially when it's involving you, but that's not the way it is in this sport," he said.

"Obviously, we all knew kind of what was going on out there, but nothing happened."

Kyle Korver scored 20 points for Cleveland, which is 8-1 in February and has beaten New York 10 straight times. The defending NBA champions were 7-8 in January.

"We got back to playing our type of basketball," James said. "I've always felt good about our team, but it was just about the way we were playing. I feel really good about the way we're playing right now."

Courtney Lee had 25 points for New York, which has lost six of seven and is 12th in the Eastern Conference playoff race.



Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James drives to the basket against New York Knicks' Carmelo Anthony in the first half of their NBA basketball game in Cleveland on Thursday. (AP)

# O'Keefe slices through India as Aussies take control in 1st Test

Offie takes six wickets in 24 deliveries; India lose 7 wkts for 11 runs; Aussies stretch lead to 298

REUTERS  
PUNE

LEFT-ARM spinner Steve O'Keefe picked up a career-best six for 35 to help Australia take command of the first Test against India after 15 wickets fell on a bowler-dominated second day of the contest on Friday.

Playing only his fifth Test and first in India, O'Keefe took all his wickets in the space of 24 deliveries, including three in an over, to trigger a spectacular collapse and help Australia bundle out India for 105 in their first innings.

Australia took a first innings lead of 155, a significant advantage on a spin-friendly track at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium, which is making its debut as a Test centre.

The touring side, who have lost their last nine tests in Asia and were considered underdogs before the start of the 4-match series, reached 143 for four at stumps in their second innings, an overall lead of 298 runs.

Captain Steve Smith was unbeaten after a chance-filled 59, during which he was dropped three times, with all-rounder Mitchell Marsh 21 not out.

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin picked up three quick wickets to boost India's hopes of restricting Australia to a low second innings total but Smith and Matt Renshaw (31) then added 52 for the fourth to boost the touring side.

Replying to Australia's 260, the world's top-ranked side, unbeaten in their previous 19 Tests, lost their last seven wickets for 11 runs as



Australia's Steve O'Keefe (3rd left) celebrates the wicket of India's Ajinkya Rahane on the second day of the first Test at the MCA Stadium in the western Indian city of Pune on Friday. (REUTERS)

O'Keefe ran through their batsmen to pick up his maiden five-wicket haul.

India's meltdown started after lunch when opener Lokesha Rahul fell to O'Keefe's bowling. Rahul, who was top scorer for his side with 64, collapsed immediately after playing the shot, clutching his left shoulder and looking as if he was in pain.

The dismissal ended a fourth-wicket stand of 50 between Rahul and Ajinkya Rahane and what followed was a procession of batsmen returning to the pavilion.

Two deliveries later, Rahane was out for 13 off O'Keefe, who also dismissed

wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha in the same over.

Off-spinner Nathan Lyon picked up Ashwin in the next over before O'Keefe wrapped things up with the dismissals of Ravindra Jadeja, Jayant Yadav and Umesh Yadav.

Australia paceman Mitchell Starc earlier ripped through India's top order with two wickets in three balls.

Cheteshwar Pujara was dismissed for six, while India captain and batting mainstay Virat Kohli was despatched for a two-ball duck on a wicket favouring both pace and spin.

Following Kohli's lead, Australia skipper Steve Smith used O'Keefe as early as the second over on the dry pitch.

O'Keefe was largely ineffective with the new ball, however, before right-arm paceman Josh Hazlewood came on to break India's opening stand in his first over when he induced Murali Vijay into edging a catch behind for 10.

Starc dismissed Pujara with a rising delivery that brushed the batsman's glove and sailed through to wicketkeeper Matthew Wade.

The sparse crowd appeared indifferent to Pujara's dismissal as they anticipated the arrival of the popular Kohli, who recently became the first batsman to hit four double-centuries in as many consecutive series.

Onlookers were stunned to silence two balls later when the right-hander chased a full and wide delivery from Starc to offer up a routine slip catch for his fifth duck in 93 innings and first since August 2014.

## SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA (1ST INN: OVERNIGHT 256-9)		Extras: (1nb)	
Nathan Lyon lbw b U Yadav	0	Total: (All out, 40.1 overs)	105
Josh Hazlewood not out	1	Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-44, 3-44, 4-94, 5-95, 6-95, 7-95, 8-98, 9-101, 10-105.	
Extras: (6b, 9nb)	15	Bowling: Mitchell Starc: 9-2-38-2 (1nb), Steve O'Keefe: 13.1-2-35-6, Josh Hazlewood: 7-3-11-1, Nathan Lyon: 11-2-21-1.	
TOTAL: (All out, 94.5 overs)	260	<b>AUSTRALIA (2ND INNINGS)</b>	
Bowling: Ishant Sharma: 11-0-27-0 (1nb), Ravichandran Ashwin: 34.5-10-63-3, Jayant Yadav: 13-1-58-1 (5nb), Ravindra Jadeja: 24-4-74-2 (2nb), Umesh Yadav: 12-3-32-4 (1nb).		David Warner lbw b Ashwin	10
<b>INDIA (1ST INNINGS)</b>		Shaun Marsh lbw b Ashwin	0
Murali Vijay c Wade b Hazlewood	10	Steve Smith	batting 59
Lokesha Rahul c Warner b O'Keefe	64	Peter Handscomb c Vijay b Ashwin	19
Cheteshwar Pujara c Wade b Starc	6	Matt Renshaw c Sharma b J Yadav	31
Virat Kohli c Handscomb b Starc	0	Mitchell Marsh	batting 21
Ajinkya Rahane c Handscomb b O'Keefe	13	Extras: (3lb)	3
Ravichandran Ashwin c Handscomb b Lyon	1	TOTAL: (For 4 wickets, 46 overs)	143
Wriddhiman Saha c Smith b O'Keefe	0	Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-23, 3-61, 4-113.	
Ravindra Jadeja c Starc b O'Keefe	2	Bowling: Ravichandran Ashwin: 16-3-68-3, Ravindra Jadeja: 17-6-26-0, Umesh Yadav: 5-0-13-0, Jayant Yadav: 5-0-27-1, Ishant Sharma: 3-0-6-0.	
Jayant Yadav st Wade b O'Keefe	2	Toss: Australia.	
Umesh Yadav c Smith b O'Keefe	4		
Ishant Sharma not out	2		