

Road to Rio Olympics a bumpy one for Franklin

BY STEVE KEATING
REUTERS

OMAHA, Nebraska — Missy Franklin was the 17-year-old darling of American swimming in 2012, returning home from the London Olympics with four gold medals and being hailed as the sport's brightest young star.

OLYMPIC SWIMMING

Four years on, Franklin is headed back to the Olympics having qualified in two individual events, the 200 meters freestyle and 200 backstroke, at the U.S. trials and is assured of another spot on the 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -200 relay team.

But the trials, which ended Sunday, have not gone completely according to plan for Franklin, who has struggled to find the form that made her one of the sport's biggest names.

She failed to top the podium in any individual

event in Omaha, qualifying for the 200 freestyle as runner-up behind the new queen of women's swimming, Katie Ledecky, and the 200 backstroke behind first-time Olympian Maya DiRado.

Franklin will have a shot at defending her 200 backstroke title in Rio but not her signature event, the 100, after laboring to a seventh place finish in the final.

With her trials over, even the usually optimistic Franklin said things could have gone better.

"I've been saying I don't think I swam it as well as I could have," said Franklin. "But you know what? I got a spot, and that's all I needed to do."

She will have to do much more in Rio if she hopes to come close to clearing the bar she set for herself in London, where she also won a bronze in the 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -200 freestyle relay.

"One of the things I've

been trying to do this whole year is not compare myself to where I was in 2012," said Franklin.

"I think coming in a lot of people thought I had to do the same thing that I did in 2012, and that's not what I came here intending to do.

"I came here to be the best of who I am right now not, not the best of who I was four years ago."

Franklin returned from London as the fresh-faced future of American swimming. Sponsors flocked to her and young girls wanted to be her.

She followed up her dazzling Olympic debut with a haul of six gold medals at the 2013 world championships in Barcelona, but the road to Rio not been smooth.

Franklin, who has battled back problems, left college to turn professional last year and returned home to Colorado to work with her childhood coach



ROB SCHUMACHER | USA TODAY SPORTS

Missy Franklin dives off the starting block during the women's 200m backstroke preliminary heats in the U.S. Olympic swimming team trials at CenturyLink Center on Friday.

Todd Schmitz.

She lives in her parents' basement.

"I learned a lot at this meet about how to deal

with that (expectations), and I don't think that all kind of hit me until I got here," explained Franklin. "I still need to prepare for

that, even though I may not be feeling it at the time, so if I come in and all of the sudden I do feel that pressure, I know how to handle it."

Spencer wins Super Late Model race at Oxford Plains

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

OXFORD — Dennis Spencer Jr. of Oxford returned to victory lane at Oxford Plains Speedway Saturday night, claiming his first Super Late Model victory since returning to action last year.

AUTO RACING

Spencer led the early stages of the race before yielding the top spot to Scarborough's Mike Fowler, then stalked the new frontrunner for several laps before powering around him in the outside groove in the closing laps.

Fowler and Derek Griffith of Hudson, New Hampshire, were second and third-place finishers, respectively. Trevor Sanborn borrowed the Benjamin 17 and raced to a fourth-place finish, in front of Hebron's Alan Wilson.

OTHER OXFORD RESULTS (Top 5 per class)

— **Allen's Coffee Flavored Brandy Street Stock (30 laps):** 1. Matt Dufault, Turner; 2. Kim Tripp, Oxford; 3. Calvin Rose, Jr., Turner; 4. Zach Emerson, Sabattus; 5. Andrew Breton, Sabattus; **MacDonald Motors of Bridgton Bandits (20 laps):** 1. Michael McKinney, Berlin, N.H.; 2. Tyler Green, Turner; 3. Charlie Hall, Oxford; 4. Jacob Hall, Oxford; 5. Cam Childs, Leeds; **INEX Legends Cars (25 laps):** 1. Austin Teras, Windham; 2. Chris Burgess, Buckfield; 3. Kyle Hewins, Leeds; 4. Ben Tinker, New Gloucester; 5. Roger Edgecomb, Hiram; **Ariens/Gravelly/Dave's Small Engines Figure 8 (15 laps):** 1. Jon Lizotte, Lewiston; 2. David Smith, South Paris; 3. Kyle Kilgore, South Paris; 4. Eric Hodgkins, Minot; 5. Greg

Durgin, South Paris; **Outlaw (25 laps):** 1. Gary Babineau, Hollis Center; 2. Steve Moon, Gray; 3. Caleb Emerson-Mains, New Gloucester; 4. Billy Childs, Leeds; 5. Andy King, Portland; **Runnin' Rebel (20 laps):** 1. Rick Montminy, Auburn; 2. Cam Childs, Leeds; 3. Dustin Salley, Poland; 4. Shaun Hinkley, Oxford; 5. Brandon Varney, Auburn; **Cruisers (20 laps):** 1. Michael McKinney, Berlin, N.H.; 2. John Childs, Leeds; 3. Mikel Martin, Auburn; 4. Paul Rowe, South Paris; 5. John Poulin, Auburn; **Sport Trucks (20 laps):** 1. Mark Grantham, Casco; 2. Corey Williams, Sumner; 3. Ajay Cates, Biddeford; 4. Kyle Hewins, Leeds; 5. Ryan Farrar, Livermore Falls; **Ladies (20 laps):** 1. Shelby Shurtleff, Dixfield; 2. Maggie Ferland, Poland; 3. Carleigh Vaughn, Naples; 4. Susan Veinott, Greene; 5.

Anne Chartier, Mexico

Almirola edges Allgaier for Xfinity win

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Aric Almirola won his second NASCAR XFINITY Series race by much less than a nose.

But to the driver of the No. 98 Fred Biagi-owned Ford, that was a vast improvement over his first victory in the series when he wasn't even in the car when the race ended.

In Friday night's Subway Firecracker 400 at Daytona International Speedway, Almirola was inches ahead of Justin Allgaier off the final corner in overtime when NASCAR called the eighth caution of the race and froze the field because of a wild wreck on the backstretch involving polesitter David Ragan.

Though Almirola was credited with a 2007 win at the Milwaukee Mile, where

he started the race in place of Denny Hamlin, who was commuting from the Sprint Cup venue at Sonoma. But Hamlin took the checkered flag after taking over the car, and Almirola has never felt the win was rightfully his.

"I'm so glad to be back in Victory Lane here at Daytona," Almirola said. "This is such a special place for me. I won my first Cup race here two years ago, and for me, this is my first XFINITY win. I know I have a win, but there's always been an asterisk next to it..."

"I hated the fact that I got credit for that. When they called me the winner, I didn't want any of the credit. (Crew chief) Dave Rogers actually got the trophy. They tried to give me the trophy, but I didn't want it. I didn't think I deserved to win the race, because I wasn't in the car when the race was over.

"But tonight I was. Tonight we went to Victory

Lane, and I'm here, and I was in the car" "so this is my first XFINITY win."

Winterport Dragway

Super Pro/ Pro Final: 1. Randy Therrien, Unity; **Super Pro Eliminator:** 1. Randy Therrien, Unity 2. Dustin Calder, New Brunswick 3. Paul Henckel, Old Orchard Beach; **Pro Eliminator:** 1. Randy Therrien, Unity 2. Wayne Chadwick, South China, Semifinalist, Jim Collins, Waterville, Semifinalist Russell Calder, Welshpool; **Bikes /Sleds:** 1. James Colman, Saco 2. Jon Weeks, Waterville, Semifinalist, Dennis Greene, Clinton; **Street Eliminator:** 1. Mark Norwood Jr, Ellsworth, 2. Bob Cote, Long A TWP, Semifinalist, Bill Dammier, Deer Isle; **Jr. Dragster Race:** 1 Jaylee Soucy, Monmouth 2. Jonathan Condon, Chelsea, Semifinalist, Bree Williams, McAdam, Semifinalist, Kerrigan Shorey, Lamoin



JASEN VINLOVE | USA TODAY SPORTS

NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver Denny Hamlin (11) and Brad Keselowski (2) race side by side during the Coke Zero 400 at Daytona International Speedway on Saturday.

NASCAR

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three victories, so he's certain to be among the favorites when the postseason begins.

But his Saturday victory also provided a huge dose of confidence for Keselowski, who had never won at Daytona — along with Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway one of NASCAR's two restrictor-plate tracks — in 14 previous starts. Making his Daytona struggles more puzzling is the fact that he has four career victories at Talladega.

"The wins are never easy to come by, and I think this one means a lot to me for sure because looking at our past here, it hasn't been all that rosy," Keselowski said. "I was telling (team owner) Roger Penske when I was in victory lane and the fireworks were going off, usually I'm loading up the car and about to go to the airport, so it's nice to be here and have a great finish."

He didn't expect much from Saturday's race. "It seemed like it was never going to happen," said crew chief Paul Wolfe. "You keep getting the questions, 'How do you guys win at Talladega and not do it at Daytona?' I got that question a lot this weekend. It's great."

Keselowski said the team has usually tried to take what worked at Talladega to Daytona. Race after race, year after year, that didn't work. He finished 20th at the season-opening Daytona 500,

then won at Talladega for a fourth time in May.

"From the get go, we've been really strong at Talladega and we've used that approach (at Daytona)," Keselowski said. "And we've been awful."

This time, he and Wolfe tried something different when they arrived for Daytona's summer race. The Toyota's setup was completely different from what won at Talladega.

It was good enough to lead 115 of the race's 161 laps.

"Sometimes you need to look in the mirror and you need to do something different," Keselowski said. "That might sound easy to come to. But there are a lot of roadblocks and barriers for a team to do that. I'm proud we could do that and put this together."

Keselowski's five restrictor-plate victories are the most on the Cup circuit since 2009 (Dale Earnhardt Jr. had three).

"Talladega looks real good, Daytona not so much," said Keselowski, the 2012 Cup champion. "There's a lot of great drivers on these plate races and a lot of variables to put them all together. Those numbers could shift a lot of ways fairly easily, so it's hard to make a comparison."

"But when we have a great car like we did today, I feel like I can compete and make a run for it. You've always got to have the car, but when you have the car, you've got to make the most of it, and we were able to do both."

Johnson wins Bridgestone Classic

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

Two weeks after coming from behind to win the U.S. Open, Dustin Johnson did it again in another big event.

Johnson closed with a 4-under-par 66 to edge Scott

PRO GOLF

Piercy by one shot and win the World Golf Championships-Bridgestone Classic on Sunday in Akron, Ohio. Johnson completed the tournament in 6-under 274 at Firestone Country Club.

Piercy, the co-leader after the third round, finished with an even-par 70 for a 275. He tied for second behind Johnson in the U.S. Open at Oakmont Pennsylvania Country Club.

The other third-round co-leader, top-ranked Jason Day of Australia, stumbled down the stretch Sunday and fell into a tie for third place at 277 after a 72. He ended his day, in order, with a bogey, a double bogey, a par and a bogey.

Jordan Spieth (final-round 67), Matt Kuchar (66) and Kevin Chappell (67) also wound up at 277.

Johnson earned his 11th career PGA Tour win and second of the year, both in his past two events.

"I feel like my game is where it has been all year," he said. "I felt like I've been playing really solid all year. I've been driving it great and wedging it good, I just haven't been putting as well as I'd like to. But the last couple of weeks I've just putted a little bit better."

Tied for seventh were William McGirt (70), South Africa's Charl Schwartzel (70) and Sweden's David Lingmerth (72).

Zach Johnson (65), Rickie Fowler (67), Australia's Adam Scott (67), and Brandon Grace (68) shared 10th place.

Henderson, 18, wins in Portland again

PORTLAND, Oregon — A year ago, Brooke Henderson could do no wrong in the



MICHAEL CHRITTON | AKRON BEACON JOURNAL | TNS

Dustin Johnson hits from the rough on the 17th hole on the final day of the Bridgestone Invitational golf tournament on Sunday, at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio. Johnson won the tournament by one stroke.

Cambia Portland Classic.

On Sunday, she did just enough right to hold off playing partner Mariajo Uribe and Stacy Lewis and win the event for the second year in a row.

Henderson, an 18-year-old Canadian, sputtered on and off but shot a final-round, 1-under-par 71 at Columbia Edgewater Country Club for a 14-under 274 and a four-stroke victory.

Lewis, 31, of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., fired a 69 to take second.

Uribe, a 26-year-old Colombian, gave Henderson a run before faltering on the back nine. Her closing 75 was good for a tie for fourth with 2014 Portland winner Austin Ernst (73), both at 280. Uribe played the last seven holes in 6 over.

Henderson, ranked No. 2 in the world, won \$195,000 from the purse of \$1.3 million in the 45th consecutive year the LPGA has played in Portland.

Henderson won her first LPGA title on the same course last year, blitzing the field by eight shots with a 21-under total.

This year, she looked more human, especially over the weekend, as she shot 70 on Saturday — the first time she failed to be in the 60s on the 6,476-yard, tree-lined layout.

"I didn't putt very well — kind of a weird day of golf," Henderson said.

All three of Henderson's LPGA wins have come in the Pacific Northwest. She beat world No. 1 Lydia Ko in a playoff in the KPMG Women's PGA Championship three weeks ago at Sahalee Country Club in Sammamish, Wash.

Henderson began Sunday's final round with a two-shot lead on Norway's Suzann Pettersen and a three-stroke edge on Uribe. At the turn, Henderson was two ahead of Pettersen and Uribe. Then things got interesting, at least briefly.

Uribe pulled even with an 18-foot birdie putt on the 14th; she and Henderson were 14 under at that point.

Uribe bogeyed the par-5 12th, however, while Henderson got up and down from a greenside bunker for a birdie.

Henderson gave one back when she failed to make a sand save on the next hole.

However, Uribe missed the fairway on the par-5 15th and bogeyed to slip two shots behind again.

The clincher for Henderson came on the par-4 17th. She and Uribe both drove into a bunker, then flew their approach shots over the green. Henderson rammed in a par putt from the fringe, while Uribe took 6 — and Henderson walked to the 18th tee three ahead of Lewis and four better than Uribe.

Pettersen took herself out of it with a double bogey 6 on No. 11. She finished with a 72 and was third at 279.