

JAPAN GIRLS EQUALLY GRAND AT TOYOTA JUNIOR GOLF WORLD CUP
Mexico ties Japan for girls' lead; Park pushes Korea atop boys' race

TOYOTA CITY, Japan (June 19, 2024) — In the days before the 30th Toyota Junior Golf World Cup got underway, Japan's Mamika Shinchi boldly expressed confidence that her team was on a par with last year's record-smashing girls' trio.

So how did this new Japanese team fare in Wednesday's opening round? All three turned in cards of 5-under-par 67.

Now that's unity. And strength.

"I saw that before I went into the scoring area," said Shinchi, who was the last player of her team to finish. "I saw that everybody was so close together, and I was very happy."

Unlike last year, though, Japan finds itself in anything but a runaway as play finally got underway after a Day 1 washout. Mexico, propelled by Clarisa Temelo's 66 that left her with a share of the individual lead, joined the host nation atop the leaderboard at 10-under 134.

"It's incredible to be able to compete at a tournament of this level," said Temelo, whose 66 was joined by a 68 from teammate Larissa Carrillo. "To be at the top with Japan today is amazing for us."

Things are no less crowded in the boys' division, where Gunwoong Park's 6-under 65 lifted Korea above a crowded pack for a one-shot advantage over Japan and the United States. Sweden and Argentina were another shot back.

"It was a good result today," Park said, "but we need to continue to try our best until the final round. We'll see how it goes."

Bright sunshine and warm temperatures greeted golfers after Tuesday's planned opening round had to be scrubbed by incessant rain. The result was a parade of low scores on both sides.

Temelo's leading 66 was matched by Jasmine Koo of the United States, equaling the best girls' opening round in tournament history and one off the single-round record. Likewise, Park was one shot off matching the lowest opening round on the boys' side.

"Making 6-under anywhere is a really good round," Temelo said. "I'm really happy with my results today and hope that I continue to play this well."

And as far as team scoring, Japan and Mexico each finished Wednesday just two shots off the record-setting pace by last year's Japanese powerhouse.

"First of all, everybody played well today," Shinchi said of her teammates, "But to make that possible, we are very close. Our daily lives are together."

Shinchi and teammate Aina Fujimoto, for example, always room together when the team travels to tournaments. And Fujimoto lives alongside Nana Hidari at the dormitory of the boarding school they attend in Fukuoka.

From there, it's only natural to do everything together.

"Like yesterday, we were having putter competitions (while waiting out the rain)," Shinchi said. "It's a great group."

So when everyone shoots 67, whose score doesn't count? Shinchi giggled and, after a moment of thought, raised her hand.

No such dilemma among the Mexico squad, where Temelo heated up on the back nine to notch six birdies in a seven-hole stretch on her way to 66.

“My first nine, I was just focused on getting pars,” she said, “then my last nine I was thinking I can get closer to the pin. I made some really good shots, then made the putts.”

Her best hole, perhaps, came at the par-5 16th. Temelo reached the green in two, then watched her eagle attempt from just shy of 20 feet roll over the edge of the hole. She tapped in for her fifth birdie in that sizzling stretch.

Koo was one of just three girls to go bogey-free on Wednesday, carding five birdies in her first 12 holes and closing with one more at the tough par-4 18th.

“I was telling myself I need to birdie the last hole — I just have to,” said Koo, back at Chukyo Golf Club after being part of the U.S. squad that was runner-up to Japan last year.

“I knew if I got (my drive) in the fairway within about 100 yards, it was about a 50 percent birdie rate. I got it in the fairway, the hit (my approach) to about eight feet. Then when I made my putt, my coach (Alyssa Waite) went wild. That was a lot of fun.”

Park zoomed to the top of the boys’ leaderboard with five birdies on his opening nine, including four in a row just before making the turn. He added another at No. 3 — his 12th hole — before cooling off. He bogeyed twice down the stretch, though they were sandwiched around an eagle.

“My putting felt better than I thought, so the score came out well,” Park said. “Our strategy is to play consistently and minimize mistakes.”

Wednesday’s biggest turnaround, perhaps, was authored by Team USA’s William Jennings. After hitting his first drive of the day into the trees for a triple-bogey, he went 6-under the rest of the way to finish with a 69 and make his score count.

“I stayed pretty calm throughout the round,” Jennings said. “It’s kind of disappointing to start triple (bogey) on the first, but I knew there were a lot of birdies out there. I just needed to stay patient and try to turn it back around.”

The Toyota Junior Golf World Cup is the final stop of a process that began with 70 national teams entered in regional qualifiers across six continents. The boys’ field features 12 teams competing for the championship; nine teams advanced to the girls’ finals.

More information about the Toyota Junior Golf World Cup Supported by Japan Airlines can be found online at WJGTC.org, including a video library that includes interviews with former participants.

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BOYS TEAM STANDINGS

1. Korea	134 (-8)
t2. United States	135 (-7)
t2. Japan	135 (-7)
t4. Sweden	136 (-6)
t4. Argentina	136 (-6)
6. Zimbabwe	140 (-2)
7. England	141 (-1)
8. Mexico	142 (E)
9. Canada	143 (+1)
10. Colombia	144 (+2)
t11. Australia	145 (+3)
t11. South Africa	145 (+3)

GIRLS TEAM STANDINGS

t1. Japan	134 (-10)
t1. Mexico	134 (-10)
t3. United States	136 (-8)
t3. Thailand	136 (-8)
5. Spain	140 (-4)
6. Australia	143 (-1)
7. Peru	148 (+4)
8. South Africa	152 (+8)
9. Netherlands	154 (+10)

BOYS INDIVIDUAL STANDINGS

1. Gunwoong Park, Korea	65 (-6)
t2. Mao Matsuyama, Japan	67 (-4)
t2. Billy Davis, United States	67 (-4)
t2. August Petersson, Sweden	67 (-4)
t5. Seiji Hokaiwado, Japan	68 (-3)
t5. William Jennings, United States	68 (-3)
t5. Felipe Suarez, Argentina	68 (-3)
t5. Julio Goti, Argentina	68 (-3)
t5. Jackson Byrd, United States	68 (-3)
t10. Keegan Shutt, Zimbabwe	69 (-2)
t10. Kota Takeda, Japan	69 (-2)
t10. Vincent Cervantes, Mexico	69 (-2)
t10. Jaehyun Park, Korea	69 (-2)
t10. Neo Berg, Sweden	69 (-2)

GIRLS INDIVIDUAL STANDINGS

t1. Jasmine Koo, United States	66 (-6)
t1. Clarisa Temelo, Mexico	66 (-6)
t3. Nana Hidari, Japan	67 (-5)
t3. Aina Fujimoto, Japan	67 (-5)
t3. Mamika Shinchi, Japan	67 (-5)
t3. Pimpisa Rubrong, Thailand	67 (-5)
t7. Sarah Hammett, Australia	68 (-4)
t7. Larissa Carillo, Mexico	68 (-4)
9. Prim Prachnakorn, Thailand	69 (-3)
t10. Anna Cañado, Spain	70 (-2)
t10. Nikki Oh, United States	70 (-2)
t10. Balma Davalos, Spain	70 (-2)
t10. Thitikarn Thapasit, Thailand	70 (-2)