

Biles is Time's Athlete Of The Year

LOS ANGELES – Four-time Olympic gold medallist Simone Biles earned **Time** magazine's **Athlete Of The Year** honour, the publication said yesterday.

The 24-year-old gymnast traveled to the **Tokyo Games** this year with the intent of rewriting the recordbooks but instead brought about a groundbreaking, global conversation around athletes' mental well-being.

She dropped out of the opening event in Tokyo, citing concerns for her mental health and a case of

the "twisties," a frightening and dangerous form of mental disorientation while completing one of her gravity-defying feats.

She later returned to the competition, winning a bronze medal on the balance beam after earning the support of her fellow athletes in gymnastics and beyond.

"It showed us that we are more than the sport, that we are human beings who also can have days that are hard," her teammate, Sunisa Lee, told **Time**. "It really humanised us." (Reuters)



Simone Biles (GP)

Skateboarding on the rise

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The Skateboard Association of Barbados is moving to certify five more instructors.

The association held its first certification programme on Wednesday and will continue tomorrow at the National Sports Council.

Executive officer of the association, Jade Niccolls, told **Weekend Sport** that certificates will be presented to five new instructors.

Jay Mandarino, president and chief executive officer of the International Skateboard Certification Programme (ISCP) and Stance, Kicks, Axels, Transfers and Zen (SKATZ) in Canada, will be in attendance and will assist in making the presentations.

Niccolls described skateboarding as one of the fastest growing sports for fitness, self-improvement and confidence for any age group.

"Mandarino's team has assisted many organisations in 35-plus countries with over 250 skate parks, programming and training sessions for staff to offer skateboarding lessons. They have several facilitators and train [people] around the world," the executive officer said.

She has, however,

called for the construction of more skate parks in Barbados, as the sport is growing quickly.

"In this COVID environment, where we cannot have more than 40 people training at any one time, and it can be a bit frustrating," she lamented.

Jade was the first Barbadian woman to be part of the training team and said she was thankful for the opportunity.

Teaching girls

She has competed competitively in skateboarding for ten years and has represented Barbados in surfing and triathlons.

The holder of a bachelor's degree in graphic design, Niccolls is the head of Girl Skate Barbados, a school that teaches girls to skate and has more than 50 students from diverse backgrounds.

"It is seen as a male-dominated sport, that's why I am trying to show that girls can skateboard too and am trying to encourage more of them to come forward and learn," she said.

Pointing out that there are several skateboarding competitions year-round in Barbados, she said the certification of the instructors is timely.

The skateboard instructor said the team is preparing for the Olympics in 2028.



Executive officer of the Skateboard Association of Barbados, Jade Niccolls, is working to get more girls involved in skateboarding. (Picture by Shanice King.)

Napoli knock Leicester out of Europa League

NAPLES – Leicester City were made to pay for their slack defending as hosts Napoli advanced in the **Europa League** at their expense with a 3-2 victory at the **Diego Armando Maradona Stadium** in Italy.

The Foxes had started the evening in pole position to advance from Group C but will now drop into the **Europa Conference League** knockout play-offs in February.

Adam Ounas' early fourth-minute goal set the tone for an error-strewn display from Brendan Rodgers' side, with Caglar Soyuncu's ill-advised pass contributing heavily to Algeria winger Ounas scoring his first goal for Napoli since April 2019.

Ryan Bertrand was at fault as Luciano Spalletti's side extended their lead, playing Andrea Petagna onside, with the forward in turn squaring for Eljif Elmas to tap home in the 24th minute.

But Leicester responded in superb fashion with Jonny Evans driving in an immediate response in the 27th minute after a free-kick was only partially cleared.

Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall levelled matters in the 33rd minute with a superb left-foot volley from the edge of the penalty area.

However, another defensive lapse, proved decisive.

Bertrand, Harvey Barnes and Timothy Castagne were all guilty of not marking tightly enough as Giovanni di Lorenzo picked out Elmas, who allowed the ball to run across his body before driving it into the bottom right corner after 53 minutes. (BBC SPORT)

Sports on programme

LAUSANNE – The sports of skateboarding, sports climbing and surfing that first featured at the 2020 **Tokyo Olympics** have been included in the initial sports programme for the 2028 **Games** in Los Angeles, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said yesterday.

Weightlifting, boxing and modern pentathlon were not among the 28 sports, however, and must meet certain criteria in 2023 to be included, IOC President Thomas Bach told an online news conference at the end of an executive board meeting. (Reuters)