

Oskar goes to the Olympics

With skateboarding set to make its debut in the Olympics at Tokyo, a Swede known for his creative routines might be the sport's breakout star

ASSOCIATED PRESS
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OSKAR ROZENBERG nonchalantly drifts around the skate park before unleashing a series of high-energy tricks — mounting a wall, sliding down a railing with his arms outstretched, vaulting a stairwell, accelerating into a ramp and giving it some air.

"I'm just warming up," the two-time skateboarding world champion and Olympic hopeful says over his shoulder as he floats away.

His long, dark hair flowing beneath his black cap and over his hoodie, the 23-year-old Rozenberg is in his element, and in his own world... as he seeks out every line, every dip and every hollow of the indoor park to satisfy his creative needs.

He gets particularly excited talking about his current favorite trick, the backside nose blunt. "You go up on the edge of the

quarter pipe, you do a backside 180 turn and you land on the nose. Then you pop in, back into the transition," Rozenberg said. "It's such a flowy trick. It's just vibey."

If that's akin to a foreign language, it might not be six months from now.

Skateboarding is coming to the Olympics for the first time at this year's Tokyo Games and Rozenberg, a stand-out Swede in a field mostly dominated by Americans and Brazilians, might be its breakout star.

"Oski," as he is fondly referred to, is a skateboarder best known for his outrageous creativity and for thinking on his feet, or, in his case, his wheels. He will arrive in Tokyo as the world champion of the Vans Park Series Pro Tour after his win in Salt Lake City in September.

"He is spontaneous," said John Magnusson, who works for the Swedish Skateboard Association and will be Rozenberg's coach in the run-up to the Tokyo Games.

"He maybe has the first two tricks planned and then he goes for whatever. When Oski flows it all together, he is unbeatable because he is that good."

Rozenberg's strength may yet prove to be his weakness when it comes to the Olympics. The edgy, rebellious, somewhat under-world pursuit of skateboarding is about to enter the mainstream, joining the more structured world of traditional sports.

It will freshen up the Olympics, for sure, and appeal more to younger viewers, but will the popularization of skateboarding mean it loses its counter-cultural status? There are also concerns that judging in the Olympics will be more about box-ticking rather than a desire for expression and creativity, potentially dampening its appeal... and the medal chances of Rozenberg, with his off-the-cuff style.

He thinks, however, that skateboarding being added to the Olympic program has "more pos-



Oskar Rozenberg first came across skateboarding at the age of 9, when he and his father bumped into friends at a newly-built skate park in Malmo, Sweden. AP

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OSKAR ROZENBERG
ON THE DYNAMICS OF THE SPORT

itives than negatives."

"It pushes the sport into a different direction it hasn't really been in before," Rozenberg said. "It's kind of new territory."

"A lot of other sports are about jumping a centimeter longer or a centimeter higher than what you did last year. But skateboarding is the opposite of that. There is so much you can do. I think it will ac-

tually bring a new aspect to sports." Rozenberg first came across skateboarding at the age of 9, when he was on a bike ride with his father and bumped into friends at the newly built skate park in Malmo, Stapelbaddsparken.

He tried it out, went back the next day, and "was there every day for four years."

"I think what attracted me the most was the group of people and how everyone took care of each other, and how all of a sudden I was able to hang out with people five or 10 years older than me," Rozenberg said. "There wasn't an age barrier. Everyone was just hanging out."

He liked the easy-going nature of skateboarding. "When I was playing football, I remember being a bit sick of it, always having to come to practice on time and do this or that in practice," he said. "Skateboarding was the complete opposite. It's like everything was on your own conditions."

Rozenberg attended a one-of-a-kind high school, Bryggeriets Gymnasium, that had skateboarding on the curriculum and was located inside one of the top skate parks in Malmo. Rozenberg said this background means he has a "different story" to the big skaters from America who grew up in California and had "all the best skate spots, all the best parks, all the contacts that you need in terms of sponsors."

"I think a lot of skaters who are coming up right now who are from Europe are adding a new dimension to skateboarding," he said. "The skate spots here are so different to the skate spots in America, so that naturally forms a different environment, a different type of skater." Rozenberg's idols include Tony Hawk, a skateboarding pioneer from the 1980s who had a series of computer games... one of which Rozenberg remembers completing on one New Year's Eve. Another is modern-day American skater Grant Taylor.

Cilic, Coric to line up for Davis Cup tie against India

SHAHID JUDGE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 11

Croatia are expected to field their top players - Marin Cilic and Borna Coric - and against India in their Davis Cup World Group qualifier in Zagreb next month.

This is the seventh time in as many years that the Indian team has made it to the qualifier stage of the elite team competition, but is yet to make it to the World Group. The tie will be played on March 6 and 7, with the Croatians set to field the same team that won them the 2018 title.

"We can confirm that our team captain Vedran Martić expects to have the same team we had against France in the 2018 Davis Cup finals in Lille," Igor Rajkovic, the press officer at the Croatian Tennis Association told *The Indian Express*. "It means the singles rubbers should be contested by Borna Coric and Marin Cilic."

It is still unclear who will be nominated for the doubles match, as Croatia has three players ranked in the Top 20 as of this week - Ivan Dodig, Mate Pavić and Nikola Pietrangeli. The official nomination will be published 10 days before the tie."

As such, the singles rubbers will be contested by former world no. 12 Borna Coric (currently ranked 31) and 2014 US Open champion Marin Cilic (currently ranked 37, but who has reached as high as No. 3 in the

world). As for the sole doubles rubber, Dodig, the world no 10 (former no. 4) is the highest-ranked player from the Balkan country in contention for the tie, along with no. 15 Pavić (former world no. 1) and world no. 20 Mektić (formerly no 5).

The All India Tennis Association (AITA), who have named a six-member team for the five-man tie, has also named its strongest team available. However, only one Indian singles player in the current line-up has been in the top 100 before, and the highest-ranked doubles player is Rohan Bopanna at 41.

The Indian line-up includes former world no. 75 Prajnesh Gunneswaran (currently at 124), Sumit Nagal (126) and Ramkumar Ramanathan (180). As for the doubles rubber, Bopanna leads the line followed by world no. 56 Divij Sharan and India's sixth-highest ranked doubles player, veteran Leander Paes (124), who is on his farewell season.

Paes, now 46, was part of the tie when the two countries clashed in the Davis Cup back in 1995 - the only previous encounter between the two teams. The former world no. 1 doubles player had pulled off an upset over Goran Ivanisevic to help the hosts earn a 3-2 win at New Delhi.

Since then though, Croatia has won the title in 2005 and 2018 while the Indians, this time, will hope to pull off an upset to make it to the World Group for the first time since 2011.



The singles rubbers will be contested by former world no. 12 Borna Coric, and 2014 US Open champ Marin Cilic (in pic). Reuters

Ronaldo, Ibrahimovic set for Italian Cup clash

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
MILAN, FEBRUARY 11

CRISTIANO RONALDO and Zlatan Ibrahimovic are set to go head-to-head in Thursday's Italian Cup semi-final, first leg between Juventus and AC Milan at the San Siro. Both Ronaldo and Ibrahimovic scored at the weekend in defeats as Juventus fell 2-1 at Hellas Verona, while AC Milan threw away a two-goal lead in a 4-2 defeat by city rivals Inter. "It wasn't the result we wanted," said the 35-year-old Ronaldo despite becoming the first Juventus player to score in 10 successive league games, just one game short of the Serie A record.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has scored 23 goals in all competitions this season. Ibrahimovic, 38, has scored three goals since re-

turning to Milan last month.

The Swede headed in the second goal on Sunday after setting up the first, but Inter hit back with four second-half strikes.

"I showed that I can still make a difference, even at 38," he said. But Inter striker Romelu Lukaku will be looking to upstage the two other former Manchester United players against Napoli in the other last-four first leg on Wednesday.

Gennaro Gattuso's Napoli, despite their current slump, ousted holders Lazio in the quarter-finals. "There's a new king in town," a jubilant Lukaku wrote on Twitter after scoring the fourth goal for Inter in Sunday's derby.

"We run this town." The Belgian was replying to Ibrahimovic's pre-derby post saying that "lions don't compare themselves to humans".

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NOOREH (IP - NF) Dir: Ashish Pandey Kashmiri/22 Mins		HELLARO (IP/ NFA - FF) (UA) Dir: Abhishek Shah Gujarati/123 Mins	
Schedule Phase - I			
Date	Show I Time 11:00 AM	Show II Time 02:30 PM	Show III Time 05:30 PM
13.02.2020	SUPER 30 (IP - FF) Dir: Vikash Bahl Hindi/154	IRAVILUM PAKALILUM ODIYAN (IP - NF) (UC) Dir: Novin Vasudev Malayalam/ 28 Mins JALLIKETTU (IP - FF) (UC) Dir: Lijo Jose Pellissery Malayalam/91	SON RISE (IP/NFA - NF) (UA) Dir: Vibha Bakshi Hindi/ 49 Mins IN THE LAND OF POISON WOMEN (IP/ NFA - FF) Dir: Manju Borah Pangchenpa/105
14.02.2020	GULLY BOY (IP - FF) (UA) Dir: Zoya Akhtar Hindi/155	BRIDGE (IP - NF) (UC) Dir: Bikramjit Gupta Hindi/ 19 Mins IEWDUH (IP - FF) (UC) Dir: Pradip Kurbah Khasi, Jaintia, Garo, Hindi / 94	A THANKLESS JOB (IP - NF) Dir: Vicky Barmecha English/ 21 JYESHTHOPUTRO (IP - FF) Dir: Kaushik Ganguly Bengali/126
15.02.2020	PADMAAVAT (NFA - FF) (UA) Dir: Sanjay Leela Bhansali Hindi/163.28 Mins	SHABDHIKUNNA KALAPPA (IP - NF) (UC) Dir: Jayaraj Malayalam/14 Mins KOLAAMBI (IP - FF) (UC) Dir: T K Rajeevkumar Malayalam/130	MAMATVA (IP - NF) (UC) Dir: Kirti Brij/ 31 Mins KENJIRA (IP - NF) (UC) Dir: Manoj Kana Paniya/101
16.02.2020	MAYA (IP - NF) (UC) Dir: Vikas Chandra Hindi/ 19 Mins MAI GHAT: CRIME NO 103/2005 (IP - FF) (UC) Dir: Ananth Narayan Mahadevan Marathi/104	THE SECRET LIFE OF FROGS (IP/ NFA - NF) Dir: Ajay Bedi & Vijay Bedi English/54 Mins NIRBAN (IP - FF) Dir: Gautam Halder Bengali/107	EK JE CHHILO RAJA (IP/ NFA - FF) (UA) Dir: Srijit Mukherji Bengali/125 Mins
17.02.2020	ELEPHANTS DO REMEMBER (IP - NF) Dir: Swati Pandey, Manohar Singh Bisht & Viplove Rai Bhatia English/ 37 UYARE (IP - FF) Dir: Manu Ashokan Malayalam/125	PAREEKSHA (IP - FF) (UC) Dir: Prakash Jha Hindi/120	RANGANAYAKI (IP - FF) (UC) Dir: Dayal Padmanabhan Kannada/114
18.02.2020	OTHTHA SERUPPU SIZE 7 (IP - FF) Dir: Radhakrishnan Parthiban Tamil/120	CHILDREN OF THE SOIL (NFA - NF) Dir: Ranadeep Bhattacharyya Hindi/ 4 Mins SARKARI HIRIYA PRATHAMIKA SHALE KASARGODU (NFA - FF) Dir: Rishab Shetty Kannada/ 149.16 Mins	LETTERS (IP - NF) Dir: Nitin Shingal English/ 28 Mins ANANDI GOPAL (IP - FF) Dir: Sameer Sanjay Vidwans Marathi/134
19.02.2020	GADHUL (IP - NF) Dir: Ganesh Shivaji Shelar Marathi/ 25 Mins F2 (FUN & FRUSTRATION) (IP - FF) (UA) Dir: Anil Ravipudi Telugu/149	THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS TIGER (NFA - NF) (UA) Dir: Subbiah Nallamuthu English/ 45 mins AWE (NFA - FF) (UA) Dir: Prasanth Verma Telugu/ 115 Mins	BAHATTAR HOORAIN (IP - FF) (UC) Dir: Sanjay Puran Singh Chauhan Hindi/81
20.02.2020	JYOTI (NFA - NF) Dir: Rashmi Deo & Yogesh Soman Marathi/ 26 mins BHONGA (IP/ NFA - FF) (UA)	BOUMA (IP - NF) (UC) Dir: Debatma Mandal Bengali/ 14 Mins PHOTO-PREM (IP - FF) (UC)	BADHAAI HO (IP/ NFA - FF) (UA) Dir: Amit Sharma Hindi/125

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