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TENNIS

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Haroun's moment of glory at 2017 Athletics Worlds



Qatar's Abdallelah Haroun (right) celebrates his bronze medal with gold medalist Wayde van Niekerk of South Africa (centre) and silver medalist Steven Gardiner of Bahamas on the podium for the men's 400m event at the 2017 IAAF World Athletics Championships in London yesterday. (Reuters)



Qatar's Abdallelah Haroun celebrates after the men's 400m final race in London on Tuesday.

2017 IAAF WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Warholm storms home to 400m hurdles gold

American Phyllis Francis wins 400m gold, Felix manages bronze, Miller-Uibo fourth

AFP
 London

Karsten Warholm of Norway won the men's 400 metres hurdles world title yesterday to give his country their first gold in the event.

The 21-year-old produced a stunning performance to lead from start to finish to win in 48.35 seconds with Turkey's Yasmani Copello taking second.

"I don't know how I feel man, I can't believe it," gasped Warholm.

America's Olympic champion and race favourite Kerron Clement took the bronze.

Warholm, a former decathlete, deployed similar tactics to his semi-final bursting from the blocks and tearing away with Clement content to run at the pace that has brought him two world titles as well as the Olympic gold.

The Norwegian, who was also Scandinavia's first world champion in the event, had tied up in the semi-final but this time he showed no signs of fatigue.

He came to the final hurdle with Clement having eased himself to within striking distance of him and looking dangerous.

However, it was the 31-year-old American who faltered when it mattered, stumbling over the final obstacle being passed by the fast-finishing European champion Copello and was fortunate to have just enough left in his legs to take third.

Warholm celebrated by donning a 'Viking helmet' on his lap of honour.

Qatar's Abderrahman Samba was seventh with a time of 49.74 seconds.

FRANCIS SHOCKS FELIX, MILLER-UIBO FOR WORLD 400M GOLD

In the last race of the evening, American Phyllis Francis ripped up the form book to claim a shock gold in the women's 400m.

The race had been billed as a straight duel between multi-medalled American Allyson Felix, the defending champion, and Olympic champion Shaunae Miller-Uibo.

But clear leader Miller-Uibo tied up in shocking fashion with 20 metres to run to allow hard-charging Francis, 25, win with a personal best of 49.92 seconds.

Bahrain teenager Salwa Eid Naser claimed silver in a national record of 50.06, with Felix taking bronze, just 0.02sec adrift, as Miller-Uibo went from first to fourth in the final strides.



(From left) Qatar's Abderrahman Samba, US athlete Kerron Clement and Norway's Karsten Warholm compete in the men's 400m hurdles final at the 2017 IAAF World Championships in London yesterday. Warholm won the event. (AFP)



Turkey's Yasmani Copello celebrates after finishing second in the men's 400m hurdles final in London yesterday. (AFP)



Phyllis Francis of the US reacts to her women's 400m final win. (Reuters)

Qatar's Bader and Barshim get ready for Worlds action

QNA
 London

Qatar's **Ahmed Bader** will start his participation today at the 2017 IAAF World Athletics Championships in London, which concludes on Sunday. Bader will participate alongside 22 other athletes divided into two groups (A, B), with the 12 best efforts qualifying for tomorrow's finals. The 21-year-old, who became the first Qatari ever to take part in the Olympic javelin competition, has hit the ground running, qualifying for the 2017 World Championships in London after topping the competition in the 16th GCC Athletics Championship in April. Bader, who was the youngest competitor in his discipline in Rio 2016, has kept himself equally busy this year. Pushing himself in a two-month long training camp in Finland, competing in Arab and Asian championships, and taking part in the Diamond League series for the first time ever in his home town Doha in May. Bader will relish his opportunity to compete with the more experienced athletes, especially because he has been chosen by the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) for the Olympic

Here - Tokyo 2020' project with an eye on winning medals at the the next Olympic Games in the Japanese capital.

The other athletes, who are part of the project, include Mutaz Barshim, Abdallelah Haroun, Abderrahman Samba and Ashraf Elseify. Bader will be up against some of the best javelin throwers in the world, with Germany's Johannes Vetter topping them all with an effort of 94.44m at this year's Swiss International Athletics Championships.

Two-time Qatari Olympic medalist Barshim, who won silver in Rio last year and bronze at 2012 London Games, will be in action starting tomorrow.

Barshim seems to be in amazing form this year, having won all four of the Diamond League competitions he participated in, including at home in Doha. He is one of the few athletes, who have come close to beating the world record of 2.45m set by Cuban legend Javier Sotomayor. Barshim has said time and again that the world record has been on his mind but winning gold is of utmost importance. A big clash is expected between some of the best high jumpers in the world, including Barshim, Ukraine's Bohdan Bondarenko and Canada's Derek Drouin.



2017 IAAF WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Lavillenie misses pole vault gold again as Kendricks wins

Frenchman had to settle for fourth worlds bronze on countback

DPA
London

Neither a return to London's Olympic Stadium nor a surprise 800-metre gold from compatriot Pierre Ambroise Bosse eventually helped French pole vault great Renaud Lavillenie get the elusive world title.

Lavillenie fouled his first jump over 5.89m just seconds after Bosse had crossed the finish line on Tuesday – and after Poland's Piotr Lisiek and American Sam Kendricks had cleared.

He managed the height in his second attempt, but it was to no avail, as Kendricks then soared 5.95m to get gold – and Lavillenie had to settle for a fourth worlds bronze on countback against the title holder Lisiek on a cool evening.

"I cheered for Bosse, it helped me keep my motivation," said Lavillenie, adding on his own event: "Between the gold and bronze there was only a fraction."

Lavillenie won Olympic gold 2012 in the same stadium and two years later sensationally bettered Sergey Bubka's seemingly invincible world record to 6.16m.

But he had to suffer a shock Olympic defeat against Brazil's Thiago Braz last year, during which he was mercilessly booed by the Rio crowd. Having missed several months with a back injury, his expectations were not high.

He entered Tuesday's competition at 5.65m – with no-heighting 2013 champion Raphael Holzdeppe already out and the youngest-ever field event finalist at the worlds, 17-year-old Swede Armand Duplantis, missing three times after clearing 5.50m.

But it was the Olympic silver medalist Kendricks who held his nerve after



Sam Kendricks of the US competes in the men's pole vault final at the IAAF World Championships in London on Tuesday. (AFP)

soaring over the still-magical 6m barrier for the first time in June.

Kendricks cleared every height on his first attempt, which would have made him the winner even if he hadn't also managed the 5.92m in his last attempt.

Lavillenie missed twice over 5.95, then saved the last attempt for 6.01m but missed – giving Kendricks the gold.

"I've finally got that world title and I could not be happier," Kendricks said. "I've enjoyed 10 straight victories this year, it is a blessing to get another today," Kendricks said. "I compete against these guys all the time so we are no strangers to one another. It was another fantastic competition today and I had to jump high to take the gold."

But Lavillenie said that given the injury setbacks, getting on the podium was a success after all.

"My main goal this year was to get on the podium, from almost nothing," Lavillenie said. "The last few months were difficult for me. I knew I might not get to the highest level but I wanted to make it to the podium."

SPOTLIGHT

Qatar's hammer thrower Elseify aims high in London and beyond

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Team Qatar's Ashraf Elseify has been training relentlessly towards one goal – reaching the finals of the IAAF World Athletics Championship. Elseify is Qatar's hammer throw prodigy and was the first junior hammer thrower to ever defend his world championship title back-to-back in 2012 and 2014 – setting a world junior record in the process.

Elseify went on to finish sixth at the Rio Games – his first ever participation in the flagship event, and has only gained momentum since. Last May, he snagged a bronze medal in the Islamic Solidarity Games in Baku.

"In Rio I learned that I should not be afraid. At the start of the competition I was afraid and stressed, but I learned how to conquer those feelings. I learned to be more focused and to trust myself," Elseify said.

Since Rio, Qatar's rising hammer thrower has dedicated his time to perfecting his skill. Ashraf has spent a large part of the season so far in training camps – one in USA for two months, another in Africa for one month, and recently two camps in Poland – all to be ready to represent Qatar against some of the best athletes ever in London 2017, the third biggest sporting event in the world.

Speaking ahead of his participation in London, Elseify said, "I feel incredibly proud and excited to compete in London and I hope to represent Qatar to the absolute best of my abilities. The Qatar Athletics Federation has always supported me on all levels and in every way – I am extremely grateful for that and I hope

to make Qatar proud."

The cornerstone of Elseify's approach to sporting success is his unshakable commitment to the fundamentals: "There are three things any champion should always be committed to maintain their performance and improve: train well, sleep well, and eat well. The most important thing in training is to have a clear and organised schedule and to have a clear goal and to just keep training."

His hammer throw dreams will not stop at winning a medal in London. The Aspire Academy graduate aims to continue building on his success at every major athletics event, eventually leading him to his ultimate ambition – breaking the world record.

Speaking on his career, Elseify said: "I'm satisfied with my performance so far, although I wanted to win medals in my previous competitions. I have so much optimism in my new coach and I'm really keen to achieve greater success. I will work hard to win a medal in the next IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha 2019, and in Tokyo 2020 Olympics, but my ultimate goal is to break the world record."

Augmenting Elseify's drive and focus on his sport is his family, who have supported him every step of the way.

"My family always encourage me to do my best. They provide me with everything I need in the house, they prepare my food and they understand what an athlete needs. My mother always keeps up with my competitions and she watches me on TV," he said, adding, "They are my biggest motivation."

Elseify was scheduled to compete in the hammer throw qualification round yesterday, with the final to take place on Saturday.



Kenya's Kipruto targets steeplechase world record in Brussels

Reuters
London

Kenya's Olympic and newly-crowned world 3,000 metres steeplechase champion, Consensus Kipruto, said yesterday he would attempt a world record at the final Diamond League in Brussels on September 1.

The 22-year-old Kipruto won silver in Moscow in 2013 and in Beijing in 2015 behind compatriot Ezekiel Kemboi. He continued his country's dominance of the event with a courageous victory at the World Championships in London on Tuesday, just weeks after recovering from an ankle injury.

"Now that I have the Olympic and world titles, I think I am ripe for the world record, which I will attempt in Brussels on September 1," Kipruto told Reuters.

"I think I am still strong enough. I am not promising that it will happen, but trying something is not bad. I want it now (world record)."

Qatar's Saif Saaeed Shaheen set the world steeplechase record of

7:53.63 on September 3, 2004 at the same Van Damme Memorial event in Brussels.

Kipruto's ambition looks ambitious since his best time this season is 8:04.63, although he has a personal best of 8:00.12.

American Olympic silver medalist Evan Jager, who took bronze in London behind Kipruto and Morocco's Soufiane Elbakkali, has the world leading time of 8:01.29 and a personal best of 8:00.45.

Kenya's twice Olympic and four-time world champion Kemboi only managed 11th place in London in his last steeplechase before he launches a road race career in two weeks' time with a 10km before a half marathon in December and marathon in April. Kipruto said Kemboi had left steeplechase for good.

"Today (Tuesday), after the race, Kemboi handed me the (steeplechase) baton. He did the same in Rio (at the Olympics) but after he was disqualified he changed his mind. Today, he did it and meant it. I will keep the baton and ensure we don't lose it (the title) during my reign," he said.

UPDATE

Makwala cleared to run, qualifies for 200m semi

Reuters
London

Botswana's Isaac Makwala was cleared to run in the men's 200 metres at the World Athletics Championships yesterday by the IAAF which had previously barred him for medical reasons – and celebrated his reprieve by qualifying for the semi-finals.

Makwala was prevented from running in Monday's opening 200 metres heat and Tuesday's 400m final after falling victim to an outbreak of sickness that has hit scores of competitors.

The 30-year-old, seen as a leading contender in both events, had insisted he was fit enough to race while the sport's world governing body had said he had an infectious disease and needed to be quarantined.

But yesterday the IAAF said the quarantine period had ended and Makwala could run in the semi-finals in the evening – provided he first

achieved the qualifying time of 20.53 seconds in an individual time trial before the main session.

Although he was forced to run in much worse conditions than the competitors had in the first round two days ago with the rain teeming down in the London Stadium for much of Wednesday, Makwala sped round the wet track on his own in 20.20 seconds.

It meant he had qualified comfortably for the semi-finals to be staged two and a quarter hours later.

Cheered by spectators who were still coming into the stadium for the evening session, Makwala prayed before the start and, after glancing at the clock at the end of the race, went into a series of celebratory press-ups on the track.

"Following a medical examination which has declared him fit to compete, we have agreed under our existing rules that assuming he makes the qualification time, he will run in the 200m semi-final round this evening," the IAAF said in a statement.

HORSE RACING

Hats off to another successful edition of Qatar Goodwood Festival

By Sports Reporter
Doha

More than 100,000 horse-racing fans attended the prestigious 2017 Qatar Goodwood Festival during the course of the five-day event, helping maintain its reputation as one of the major sporting highlights of the 'British Summer'.

Despite some wet weather, a sell-out crowd of more than 25,000 race-goers made it to the last day as top jockeys and horses competed in one of the highlights of the UK's flat racing season.

Qatar Airways group chief executive Akbar al-Baker said, "Qatar Airways' partnership with the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) has proved another winning combination for the Qatar Goodwood Festival, crowning a successful season

for race-goers and horses alike.

"The UK is a very important market for us, so our association with the Qatar Goodwood Festival is always an excellent opportunity to engage with our premium customers and showcase Qatar Airways' five-star products and services including our First Class seat, available on our A380 service between Doha and Heathrow."

QREC general manager Nasser Sherida al-Kaabi said, "The success of the Qatar Goodwood Festival is always helped enormously by the partnership of Qatar Airways, which helps raise the profile of this magnificent event. We look forward to extending our partnership with Qatar Airways to ensure the airline becomes a firm fixture in the years to come."

Goodwood Estate Sports managing director Adam Waterworth said, "The partnership between

Qatar Airways and the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club makes the Qatar Goodwood Festival a favourite with race-goers. And despite some inclement weather the sun came out on the last day and the meeting finished on a real high. That's what Goodwood is all about – great racing, great weather, and a fantastic atmosphere."

In this edition of the festival, world-famous jockey Frankie Dettori rode Al Shaqab Racing's Al Jazi, trained by Francois Rohaut, to a victory in the L'Ormarins Queens Plate Oak Tree Stakes.

Meanwhile, Tayf was the winner of the Qatar International Stakes. Tayf is owned by His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani, trained by Alban de Mieuille and ridden by Olivier Peslier.

It was also a photo-finish at the Qatar Airways competition to find the best hat worn on Ladies' Day.

Leading style influencer Hermione Olivia chose an off-white hat adorned with lilies for its elegant simplicity, and its lucky owner won of a pair of return Business Class tickets from the UK to Doha, plus five-star hotel accommodation provided by the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club. Entrants competed on Instagram using the hashtag #QatarAirways.

Multiple award-winning Qatar Airways was this year awarded Airline of the Year by the prestigious Skytrax World Airline Awards. It was the fourth time that it won this global accolade. Qatar's national carrier offers a choice of 72 non-stop flights per week from London Heathrow, Manchester, Birmingham and Edinburgh to Doha and onwards to a network of more than 150 destinations worldwide. Qatar Airways will also start flying to Cardiff next year.



Despite some wet weather, a sell-out crowd of more than 25,000 race-goers made it to the last day as top jockeys and horses competed in one of the highlights of the UK's flat racing season.

SPOTLIGHT

Isco's magic strike wins Super Cup for Real Madrid

It is all down to hard work. We know there is a lot of talent in this team and there is so much hunger too, they always want more: Real Madrid coach Zidane



Real Madrid's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the UEFA Super Cup final against Manchester United, at the Philip II Arena in Skopje.

AFP
Skopje

A delightful goal by Isco proved the difference as Real Madrid survived a Manchester United fightback to win 2-1 and lift the UEFA Super Cup in the Macedonian capital Skopje on Tuesday.

Casemiro put the reigning European champions in front on 24 minutes on a steamy summer's night in the Balkans and Isco doubled their lead seven minutes into the second half after a one-two with Gareth Bale.

The gulf in class between Madrid – for whom Cristiano Ronaldo appeared as a late substitute – and Europa League winners United that Jose Mourinho had feared was all too evident and it looked like the Spaniards would go on to win by a wider margin.

But Romelu Lukaku pulled one back just past the hour, marking his competitive debut for United with a goal and sparking a big improvement from the

Premier League club in the final stages. It was to no avail, with Zinedine Zidane's side winning this trophy for the second year running and the fourth time overall.

It is the eighth time in nine years that a Spanish club has won the Super Cup. "It is all down to hard work. We know there is a lot of talent in this team and there is so much hunger too, they always want more," said Zidane after lifting more silverware.

"Today was an almost perfect match, and the first half was spectacular."

BALE HANDED START

While Ronaldo started on the bench for Madrid having only commenced pre-season training at the weekend, Bale was included in the first XI.

United boss Mourinho caused a stir on Monday when he claimed he would make a bid to take the Welshman to Old Trafford if he were not a starter at the Philip II Arena.

Despite the presence of £75 million (\$97 million) signing Lukaku up front, with Paul

Pogba behind, United often gave the impression that they could do with some extra inspiration in the first half.

Having missed much of last season's run-in due to injury, Bale is fit again, but it was Casemiro who emerged as the unlikely main threat going forward for Real in the first half.

The Brazilian midfielder almost opened the scoring in the 16th minute, getting in front of Matteo Darmian to head a Toni Kroos corner against the bar from six yards.

The breakthrough came just past the midway point in the first half as Dani Carvajal was afforded the time to flight a ball over Victor Lindelof – another United debutant – for Casemiro to stretch and volley past David de Gea.

De Gea, formerly a Madrid transfer target, then needed to intervene to save a Karim Benzema snap-shot that followed a driving run into the area by Luka Modric, as Zidane's side were restricted to a one-goal lead at the break.

Mourinho sent on Marcus Rashford for Jesse Lingard at the start of the second

half, yet it was at the other end that the chances kept coming.

De Gea repelled a Kroos piledriver but there was nothing he could do to stop Isco making it 2-0 in the 52nd minute.

Surrounded by red shirts just inside the area, Isco escaped their attentions by playing a one-two with Bale before coolly finishing past De Gea.

Bale then struck the bar, and all this was going on without Ronaldo, who appeared from the bench to warm-up, raising hysterical cheers from the sizeable number of locals with sympathies for the Spanish side.

United had a mountain to climb and were not helped when Lukaku blazed over after Keylor Navas pushed a Pogba header into his path.

Lukaku did not make the same mistake twice, converting the rebound when a Nemanja Matic drive was not convincingly dealt with by Navas, but the goalkeeper redeemed himself with a vital late save to deny Rashford.

And Real, with Ronaldo on for the closing stages, held out.

PLAN

Guardiola returns to City drawing board

AFP
London

Rattled by a chastening first season in England, Pep Guardiola has gone back to the drawing board in an attempt to fashion Manchester City into Premier League champions.

Expectations were sky-high when Guardiola alighted in Manchester after years of being courted by City, but a title challenge failed to materialise and his side did not make a mark in any of the cup competitions. They return to the fray this weekend having spent around £200 million (\$261 million, 221.3 million euros) on players and Guardiola believes an exciting new team is taking shape.

"With all respect to the players, last season we were one of the oldest teams in the Premier League. We didn't buy full-backs for five, six years," said Guardiola.

"We decided last season we could change the team to make the team younger for the next four or five years.

"Danilo is 26, (Benjamin) Mendy is 23, Bernardo (Silva) is 22, Ederson is 23, so we bought players who are going to be stable for the next years."

There were some promising signs last season – an opening salvo of 10 straight wins, a stunning Champions League victory over Barcelona – but City never found any consistent form.

Guardiola seemed unprepared for the rude physicality of English football and was derided for saying he was "not a coach for the tackles" after a one-sided 4-2 defeat at Leicester City.

City's football was, occasionally, dazzling and they were only outscored by champions Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur, but finding an effective defensive configuration gave Guardiola a constant headache.

John Stones looked shaky following his big-money move from Everton and Guardiola's dissatisfaction with his full-back options saw midfielders Fernand-



inho and Jesus Navas deployed in the wide defensive positions.

There should not be any shoe-horning of players into unfamiliar roles this season after Guardiola signed three top-level full-backs – Kyle Walker, Benjamin Mendy and Danilo – at a combined cost of around £124 million.

AGUERO-JESUS CONUNDRUM
Guardiola hopes to have put his goalkeeping problems to bed as well, having reacted to Claudio Bravo's travails by bringing in Brazil goalkeeper Ederson from Benfica in a £35 million deal.

Bernardo Silva, meanwhile, arrived from Monaco, further strengthening a stellar attacking department that also contains Sergio Aguero, Gabriel Jesus, Leroy Sane, David Silva, Kevin De Bruyne and Raheem Sterling.

"Manchester City have the best team on paper," ex-England midfielder Owen Hargreaves told the Premier League official website.

"It took a bit of an adjustment for Pep Guardiola, but City are my favourites."

Back-up goalkeeper Willy Caballero, full-backs Pablo Zabaleta, Bacary Sagna and Gael Clichy and wingers Jesus Navas and Nolito have all left, while the unwanted Joe Hart has gone out on loan again to West Ham United.

Guardiola has tested out a three-man defence in pre-season, with Stones lining up alongside Nicolas Otamendi and captain Vincent Kompany, whose ability to remain fit will once again be under scrutiny.

ANALYSIS

Everton invest but top six will be tough



This file photo shows Everton's new signing, Wayne Rooney (R) posing for a photograph with manager Ronald Koeman.

Reuters
Manchester

Everton have invested heavily in new talent as they bid to break into the Premier League's elite, but they will need to find a way to compensate for the loss of striker Romelu Lukaku.

Ronald Koeman's side finished seventh last year, a significant improvement on consecutive 11th place finishes, and Lukaku's 25 goals were central to their success.

But the Belgian striker's move to Manchester United, in a reported 75 million-pound (\$99 million) move, has left a hole in the attack at Goodison Park that will be tough to fill.

Wayne Rooney has moved in the opposite direction to Lukaku, returning to the club he supports and where he made his name as a teenager.

But the 31-year-old is no longer an out-and-out striker and is more likely to contribute from deeper or wider positions. Spain Under-21 international forward Sandro Ramirez has been recruited from Malaga.

The former Barcelona striker looks a smart acquisition, but it remains to be seen if he can deliver the quantity of goals that will be needed if Everton are to achieve their aim of breaking into the top six.

Koeman may well look to bring in a more classic target-man

striker before the transfer deadline.

But the Goodison Park faithful can take encouragement from the new arrivals in other positions.

Davy Klaassen has arrived from Ajax.

The 24-year-old Dutch international should bring some crisp passing and creativity to the midfield.

The impending departure of midfielder Ross Barkley may sadden fans who enjoyed watching a local talent.

But with Kevin Mirallas, Morgan Schneiderlin and Tom Davies, Koeman has plenty of good options in midfield.

England centre-half Michael Keane showed at Burnley last season that he can take care of the best strikers in the league and should create a solid partnership with Ashley Williams at the back.

The goalkeeper position has been a troubled one for Everton of late, and the fee of 25 million pounds, rising to 30 million, spent on 23-year-old Jordan Pickford from Sunderland, while a British record for a keeper, may prove to be a wise investment.

All in all, Everton look to have a stronger squad than last season.

But they aren't the only club that has, on paper at least, strengthened their squad.

"Everyone is trying to get the best players," Koeman said recently.

BOTTOMLINE

'United can benefit from loss'

AFP
Skopje

Jose Mourinho insisted that Manchester United had emerged from their trip to Skopje for the UEFA Super Cup reinforced despite the scoreline flattering them in a 2-1 defeat to Zinedine Zidane's Real Madrid.

The Portuguese manager had expected his side to struggle against the reigning European champions and they could have conceded more than just the goals scored by Casemiro and Isco, one in each half.

Casemiro hit the bar with Tuesday's game at the Philip II Arena still goalless, and Gareth Bale struck the frame of the goal in the second half.

But on a sweltering night in the Macedonian capital last season's Europa League winners improved in the final stages after Romelu Lukaku reduced the deficit, and substitute Marcus Rashford almost equalised late on.

"I always say the Champions League is one thing and the Europa League is another, and the Champions League winner



Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho and their players look dejected after losing the Super Cup final.

obviously has a different potential," said ex-Real coach Mourinho, whose current team are back in Europe's elite club competition this season.

"So for us to come here and do the positive things we did, I

think we have to keep that positive feeling into the new season, and into the Champions League in September.

"I think this Super Cup was a great experience for us."

Mourinho, who gave away his

runners-up medal to a young fan, sought solace in the fact that the Old Trafford club will not need to come up against Madrid in the Premier League.

"We have top teams with different qualities. There are no replicas of (Luka) Modric, (Toni) Kroos, Isco or Casemiro," he said. United won the League Cup as well as the Europa League last season but are under pressure to improve after labouring to a sixth-place finish in the Premier League.

They begin their campaign at home to West Ham United on Sunday and summer signings Victor Lindelof, Lukaku and Nemanja Matic will all hope to have done enough in Skopje to keep their places.

Mourinho was especially pleased with ex-Chelsea midfielder Matic, saying the Serb "moved the ball well and gave balance to the team to start building from the back".

NO MOVE FOR BALE?

Lukaku also earned praise from his manager after the £75 million (\$97 million) recruit from Everton scored on his competitive debut, but United's attack

looked like it could still do with the extra quality a player like Bale would bring.

Mourinho had mischievously suggested he would interpret Bale as being for sale and would therefore make a move for the Welshman if he did not start for Real.

But Bale did start, setting up Isco's goal as well as hitting the bar before being replaced on 74 minutes.

Mourinho later told BT Sport that it was "game over" as far as that move was concerned.

For all his success in the game, Mourinho has still never won the Super Cup, while Zidane has now won the trophy two years running.

Real have now lifted the Super Cup on four separate occasions but what is really striking is the success enjoyed by Zidane in his time as coach.

This was his sixth trophy since being appointed in January last year, just 19 months ago.

"There were big celebrations in the dressing room, we don't get tired of winning," said the Frenchman, whose side will defend the Champions League crown and La Liga this season.

SPOTLIGHT

Player power set to shape Reds' transfer dealings

'Player power is enormous. Because a manager does not want a disillusioned player who can upset equilibrium in the dressing room and create disharmony'



File picture of Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp reacting during the English Premier League match against Manchester United at Old Trafford.

Reuters
London

Three days before Liverpool start their Premier League campaign, the club are embroiled in two extraordinary transfer stand-offs that show how players are shaping their futures by wielding increased power.

British and Spanish media have reported that midfielder Philippe Coutinho wants to leave Anfield to join Barcelona, while Virgil van Dijk is keen to join Liverpool from Premier League rivals Southampton.

Each player is under contract until 2022, having signed extensions to their original contracts, and both clubs want them to stay.

But that does not mean the deals are dead, even though neither player has the sort of buyout clause that allowed Brazil forward Neymar to leave Barca, prompting the Spanish club to come calling for Liverpool's Brazil midfielder.

"Ninety nine times out of 100 it is a power game, a case of who blinks first," sports legal expert Richard Cramer of FrontRow Legal told Reuters.

"Player power is enormous. The reality is a club may make the right noises but

player power is strong because a manager does not want a disillusioned player who can upset equilibrium in the dressing room and create disharmony. Players and agents are very experienced at forcing a situation."

Former Liverpool player Steven Gerrard believes that in Coutinho's case everything depends on how far the Brazilian is prepared to go to force a move.

"It comes down to Philippe Coutinho and his decision and what he's prepared to do, what type of war he's prepared to create to get out, because Liverpool won't make it easy for him," Gerrard, who is now Liverpool's academy coach, told BT Sport.

Such "wars" are increasingly common in football and Van Dijk sparked his own this week after several weeks spent training away from the first team.

He has now requested a transfer and revealed his unhappiness by releasing a public statement.

"I have been left frustrated by the club's position that I am not for sale and am disappointed that enquiries from multiple top clubs have been consistently rebuffed," said Van Dijk, who is fit again after an injury cut short his 2015-16 season.

Although the Dutch international did

not mention Liverpool in his statement, Southampton reported the Merseyside club to the Premier League earlier in the transfer window for an alleged illegal approach to the centre back.

Liverpool subsequently apologised and said they had ended their interest in the player.

However, British media say they are keen to rekindle it should Southampton agree.

That may not be possible given the original "tapping up" allegation.

Under Premier League rules, negotiations over personal terms can only begin once a fee with the seller is agreed, but few clubs adhere to the protocol.

SENSITIVE DEALS

The two deals are sensitive for Liverpool, who are treading a fine line between keeping their own key player and acquiring another, particularly after their failure to sign Nabi Keita, who Red Bull Leipzig have refused to sell - at least for now.

In most cases players and agents use their power to force moves.

FrontRow Legal's Cramer does not believe much can be done to make contracts more enforceable unless players are made to sit them out in the reserves, an unsatisfactory result for all parties.

"Players are very highly valuable commodities. You would not want any of your most valuable assets doing nothing," he said, adding that most players eventually get their way.

Precedent suggests that, for all Liverpool's bullishness, they will end up selling Coutinho, with Fernando Torres, Javier Mascherano, Xabi Alonso, Luis Suarez and Raheem Sterling all having left the club in similar circumstances.

The one exception was Liverpool's former captain and talisman Gerrard, who almost joined Chelsea in 2005 after saying he wanted to leave.

But as a Liverpool-born player, his situation was clouded by loyalty to his home-town club.

"It's very, very difficult," Gerrard said of Coutinho's situation. "Especially South American players who always go on record and say it's a dream of theirs to play for Barcelona."

Van Dijk appears certain to leave Southampton, although his destination may depend on whether they will sell to a club who already have four ex-Saints players in the first team.

Chelsea may therefore be a more palatable alternative.

The transfer window closes at the end of August.

Qatar futsal squad announced for AFC Championship qualifiers

Qatar futsal team coach Ahmed al-Mannai announced a 24-player squad for the AFC Futsal Championship 2018 qualifiers to be held in October.

The draw for the AFC Futsal Championship placed Qatar in Group B for the West Asia region alongside Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.

There are 29 teams in the qualifiers and they were divided according to geographical regions.

The qualifiers will be held

separately in four regions: Western Asia, Eastern Asia and Asean, as well as the joint qualifying for the Central Asia and Southern Asia regions.

The top four teams from the West, Asean, Central and South, the top three teams from East Asia, and the host nation, will make up the 16 teams who will reach the finals. Iran were the champions of the previous edition of the in Uzbekistan last year after defeating the hosts 2-1 in the final.

Top 10 EPL transfers 2017-18

Ahead of Arsenal's game with Leicester City in the new Premier League season on Friday, we select the 10 biggest transfers of the close season:

ROMELU LUKAKU
Everton to Manchester United
*£75 million (\$97.5 million, 83 million euros) rising to £90 million**

After four increasingly prolific seasons at Everton, Belgium striker Lukaku has been given another shot at the big time with Manchester United. Lukaku, 24, has been brought in to replace Zlatan Ibrahimovic and will hope to do a better job of impressing manager Jose Mourinho than he managed during their time together at Chelsea.

ALVARO MORATA
Real Madrid (ESP) to Chelsea
*£58 million**

With Diego Costa having been very publicly frozen out by manager Antonio Conte, Chelsea broke their transfer record to sign 24-year-old Spain striker Morata. He made an inauspicious start to his Chelsea career by squandering his spot-kick in a Community Shield penalty shootout loss to Arsenal.

BENJAMIN MENDY
Monaco (FRA) to Manchester City
*£52 million**

Saddled with an ageing group of full-backs, Pep Guardiola found it difficult to play the kind of thrusting football he loves in his maiden campaign as Manchester City manager. He has taken remedial action during the close season, most notably forking out £52 million to make France left-back Mendy the game's most expensive defender.

ALEXANDRE LACAZETTE
Lyon (FRA) to Arsenal
*£46.5 million rising to £52.6 million**

France striker Lacazette had been poised to join Atletico Madrid, only for the Court of Arbitration for Sport to uphold a transfer ban against the Spanish club.

Arsenal stepped in, breaking their transfer record to sign the 26-year-old, who was the top-scoring Frenchman in Ligue 1 in each of the last three seasons.

KYLE WALKER
Tottenham Hotspur to Manchester City
*£45 million rising to £50 million**

The second of Manchester City's three new full-backs (the other being Brazilian Danilo), Walker arrived from Spurs after Dani Alves opted to join Paris Saint-Germain over rejoining forces with Guardiola.

BERNARDO SILVA
Monaco (FRA) to Manchester City
*£43 million**

Portuguese playmaker Silva pitched up at City after his 11 goals and 12 assists inspired Monaco to Ligue 1 glory and a place in the Champions League semi-finals.

The 22-year-old is expected to line up on the right flank for City, as he did at Monaco, but is likely to have been earmarked as the long-term successor to his namesake David Silva.

TIEMOU BAKAYOKO
Monaco (FRA) to Chelsea
*£40 million**

The third player to have left Monaco for England, France midfielder Bakayoko will make Chelsea's midfield an even more intimidating prospect. Tall and muscular, the former Rennes player will provide a redoubtable physical presence alongside the buzzing N'Golo Kante.

NEMANJA MATIC
Chelsea to Manchester United
*£40 million**

Deemed surplus to requirements at Chelsea following Bakayoko's arrival, Matic moved to United to link up with Mourinho, who previously brought him back to Chelsea from Benfica in 2014. A stylish but steely holding midfielder, the 28-year-old Serbia international will provide a counterweight for the forward runs of last year's star signing, Paul Pogba.

EDERSON
Benfica (POR) to Manchester City
*£35 million**

The goalkeeping situation gave Guardiola constant problems during his first season at the Etihad Stadium, with Claudio Bravo proving an inadequate replacement for Joe Hart, who was loaned out to Torino.

Guardiola moved to remedy the problem by signing 23-year-old Brazilian Ederson, who became the world's second most expensive goalkeeper after Gianluigi Buffon.

MOHAMED SALAH
Roma (ITA) to Liverpool
*£34 million**

A bright light in a gloomy transfer window for Liverpool, Egyptian winger Salah did not get a look-in during his previous spell with Chelsea, but he excelled in Serie A with Fiorentina and Roma, scoring 35 goals in 81 games.

* denotes fee as reported by British media

BOTTOMLINE

'No PSG contact over Sanchez'

AFP
London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said yesterday he has had no contact with Paris Saint-Germain regarding Alexis Sanchez, who will miss the start of the season through injury.

Sanchez, 28, has been linked with a move to PSG, who have just completed a world-record 222 million euros (\$260 million) swoop for Barcelona superstar Neymar.

But Wenger said he had not heard from PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi and referred to French media reports suggesting PSG are more interested in signing Monaco's Kylian Mbappe.

"It's a long time I didn't speak to Nasser, because it's certainly very busy to complete the transfer of Neymar," Wenger told a press conference at Arsenal's London Colney base.



File picture of Arsenal striker Alexis Sanchez.

Asked if he expected al-Khelaifi to get in touch, Wenger replied: "No, no. I think if you read the French papers, they are

on Mbappe's case to finish their transfer market."

Wenger was coy, though, when he was asked if any bids

had been tabled for Sanchez. "I can't tell you that at the moment," said the Frenchman, whose side open their Premier League campaign at home to Leicester City tomorrow.

"I just think we are not open - what I said to you many times - to any offers, anyway."

Sanchez, who has also been linked with Manchester City, has not played for Arsenal in pre-season after being granted extra time off after playing at the Confederations Cup with Chile.

Wenger said the forward had sustained an abdominal injury and was likely to miss both Friday's game against Leicester and the trip to Stoke City.

"He has a little abdominal strain that he caught on Sunday morning in training, before he came to Wembley (for last Sunday's Community Shield)," Wenger said.

"He had a scan two days ago and he's out for a while. I don't know if it is two weeks or one

more week, but he will not be available. I think he will not play at Stoke, yes."

Wenger added: "For us Alexis Sanchez is a loss, of course. But we have all the other players prepared in pre-season and they are all ready."

"It can happen in pre-season and anyway, I don't think I would have included him on Friday night. I don't think I would have started him."

Speaking after Arsenal beat Chelsea on penalties at Wembley, Wenger revealed he was looking to trim his squad before the transfer window closes, but he said no departures were currently imminent.

"No," he replied when asked if any players were poised to leave.

"Yesterday I had the managers' meeting and was talking with the other managers in the other clubs. It looks like everywhere there is many, many players and a bit of congestion at the moment everywhere."

'Lagging' FA damaging development of football in China, says official

Chinese football is being held back by poor running of its football association, a senior FA official has admitted in unusually forthright terms, saying "there is no vision or foresight".

The Chinese Super League (CSL) has hit international headlines with a wave of big-name foreign signings but the national team ranks a lowly 77th in the FIFA world rankings, with their 2018 World Cup hopes effectively over.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has stated his aim to make China a genuine force in international football, and the government is throwing money at the project.

But Li Yuyi, vice chairman of the Chinese Football Association (CFA), said the ruling body needed to shape up fast.

"The reason Chinese football lags behind is mainly because the management of the Chinese Football Association is lagging behind," he told state broadcaster CCTV. "First, what needed to be done in 2017 was only assigned to (someone) in 2017. Without a budget, how can anything be done?"

"Second, in our country, we go back and forth to report and discuss, which could take half-a-year. Like this there is no vision and foresight.

"Without these, how can anything be done?"

The CFA has been criticised by fans, coaches and players this season over a number of decisions. In May, in a bid to curtail spending, it announced a 100 percent surcharge on transfer fees paid by debt-laden clubs for foreign players.

TENNIS

Federer cruises, Schwartzman shocks Thiem in Montreal

Swiss star, who celebrated his 36th birthday on Tuesday, ousted No. 116 Polansky



Diego Schwartzman of Argentina celebrates after his victory over Dominic Thiem of Austria during the Rogers Cup in Montreal, Canada, on Tuesday. (AFP)

AFP
Montreal

Roger Federer got his US Open preparations off to an imperious start at the ATP Montreal Masters yesterday, dismantling Canada's Peter Polansky in straight sets to advance to the third round. The Swiss star, who celebrated his 36th birthday on Tuesday, overwhelmed his world number 116-ranked opponent to win 6-2, 6-1 in 53 minutes.

Federer is riding high after a spectacular year which has netted him both the Australian Open and Wimbledon crowns. On evidence of yesterday's performance, few would bet against him adding the US Open to that haul after a masterful performance that left Polansky groping at shadows throughout.

Federer took control immediately against Polansky, holding his opening service game comfortably before quickly going 0-40 up in the second game. A Polansky double fault gave Federer the break

and the Swiss was soon 3-0 up after holding serve to love in the next game.

Polansky held his next two service games but never looked like breaking Federer's serve as the veteran moved into a 5-2 lead. Federer then broke Polansky to take the first set, following a signature backhand with a deft forehand volley that left the 29-year-old Canadian scrambling.

Federer was soon in control in the second set, scoring an early break and holding twice to move 3-0 up before a further break made it 4-0. Polansky earned a stay of execution after holding serve in the sixth game to make it 5-1, but Federer raced into the next round with a comfortable hold, finishing with an emphatic overhead smash. Federer will face either American Jack Sock or Spain's David Ferrer in the third round.

On Tuesday, Argentina's Diego Schwartzman saved four match points to shock third-seeded Dominic Thiem 6-4, 6-7 (7/9), 7-5 in the second round. World number 36 Schwartzman seized the initiative against the seventh-ranked Austrian, who fell at the first hurdle after

enjoying a first-round bye.

On the defensive early, Thiem held on to level the match at a set apiece on his fifth set point of the second-set tiebreaker. And the 23-year-old appeared to have gained control when he powered to a 5-2 lead in the third set.

But Schwartzman wouldn't go away, saving two match points on his serve at 3-5, another in the next game and yet another as he served to take the set to 5-5. Schwartzman then broke to serve for the match.

He fell behind 0-40, but won the last five points of the match for his first win over a top-10 player and a berth in the third round.

Schwartzman's wasn't the only great escape of the day. Canadian teenager Denis Shapovalov saved four match points en route to a three-set victory over Rogerio Dutra Silva in their first-round encounter. The 18-year-old trailed 4-6 in the second-set tiebreaker but saved all four match points he faced to force a third set. Shapovalov broke Brazil's Dutra Silva in the seventh game of the third and went

on to close out a 4-6, 7-6 (10/8), 6-4 victory. "It's matches like this I live for and that I play for," said Shapovalov, who earned a second-round meeting with former US Open champion Juan Martin del Potro of Argentina.

Shapovalov was one of a wealth of young talents to shine on Tuesday. South Korean 21-year-old Chung Hyeon withstood 16 aces to beat 2014 semi-finalist Feliciano Lopez 6-1, 4-6, 7-6 (7/3).

After the third set went to the tiebreaker without a break of serve, the 56th-ranked Chung built a 4-2 advantage and went on to secure the victory in two hours and 16 minutes. He next faces ninth-seeded Belgian David Goffin, a 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 winner over Japan's Yuichi Sugita.

Croatian 20-year-old Borna Coric breezed past Russian lucky loser Mikhail Youzhny 6-2, 6-4 to set up a second-round meeting with top-seeded Rafael Nadal. Coric has won two of three prior encounters with the Spanish great, who won a 10th French Open title this year and can regain the world number one ranking with a run to the semi-finals this week.

ROGERS CUP

Muguruza sails into third round

Reuters
Toronto

Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza tamed Kirsten Flipkens 7-5, 6-2 to reach the third round of the Rogers Cup on a blockbuster day at the Canadian hardcourt event with eight of the world's top 10 in action.

Muguruza, the world number four, led the day-long parade of top seeds onto court and needed 85 minutes to dispatch the Belgian qualifier before turning the stadium over to newly-minted Czech world number one Karolina Pliskova who will play her first match as the top-ranked player against Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

Despite an unthreatening world ranking of 82, Flipkens represented a tricky first test for Muguruza with the Spaniard holding only a slight 3-2 edge in their head-to-head meetings. Both players were making their third appearance at the Canadian event with Flipkens having found more success after advancing to the third round in 2013.

Muguruza had managed just one match win in her two previous visits. "It (first set) was tough, Kirsten is such a talented player. I'm very happy that I finally did it," said Muguruza in a courtside interview.

"I tried to reduce the mistakes I made in the first set and I was a little more lucky there, I just wanted it so much."

Muguruza was tested during an uneven opening and served for the first set at 5-4 before double faulting to hand Flipkens a break. The world number four hit back with a break of her own and then held serve to clinch the opening set, despite 30 unforced errors. Muguruza looked much more like the player who

dropped only one set on her way to the Wimbledon title after that and collected the early break in the second set to take control of the contest.

American teenager Catherine Bellis continued her brilliant form on the North American hardcourts by taking down eighth seeded Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-4, 7-5 to reach the third round. The 18-year-old arrived in Toronto after reaching the semi-finals last week at Stanford.

On Tuesday, Eugenie Bouchard's mid-season nosedive continued as the Canadian was swept aside 6-3, 6-4 by Croatian qualifier Donna Vekic despite having home advantage and the backing of an excited crowd in a first round clash.

With only one match win since her French Open second round exit, Bouchard was hoping a visit home would result in a return to the victory column. But she drew little inspiration from the crowd as she added to a long list of disappointing efforts, committing 32 unforced errors and seven double faults while being broken six times by a 21-year-old making a her first appearance in the main draw.

Bouchard, ranked as high as number five and hailed as the next big thing in women's tennis when she reached the Wimbledon final and the semi-finals at the Australian Open and Roland Garros in 2014, has seen her ranking plummet to 70 in the world and needed a wildcard entry into her home tournament.

Former world No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki opened her campaign with a 6-3, 6-0 second round rout of Ekaterina Alexandrova. The Dane, who captured the Canadian trophy in 2010, is still looking for her first title of the season after being in five finals.

Polish 10th seed Agnieszka Radwanska, the Rogers Cup winner in 2014, kicked off her North American hardcourt campaign with a regulation 6-3, 6-3 win over American CoCo Vandeweghe, who lost the final in Stanford on Sunday to compatriot Madison Keys. Russian 16th seed Elena Vesnina was also an easy winner, dispatching another American Alison Riske 6-3, 6-3.



Garbine Muguruza of Spain plays a shot during her win over Kirsten Flipkens of Belgium at the Rogers Cup in Toronto. (USA TODAY Sports)

RUGBY ROUND-UP

Etzebeth to continue as skipper

AFP
Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Eben Etzebeth will continue to skipper the Springboks until injured first-choice captain Warren Whiteley returns, coach Allister Coetzee said in Port Elizabeth yesterday. South Africa open their Rugby Championship campaign against Argentina on August 19 at Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium in the eastern coastal city. Lock Etzebeth debuted as skipper in a 35-12 victory over France two months ago that wrapped up a season-opening 3-0 series success after a disastrous eight-loss 2016 campaign. "Eben did an excellent job against France in Johannesburg when he had to step in at short notice after the late withdrawal of Warren," Coetzee said. "He enjoys the respect of his team mates and also commands respect on and off the field. Eben is also well supported by a strong leadership group within the squad."

Etzebeth is a skilled lineout jumper, strong ball-carrier and fiery competitor in the loose who won the first of 57 caps against England in 2012 as a 20-year-old. Loose forward Whiteley sustained a groin injury during the France series and initial expectations that he would be out of action for six to eight weeks proved overly optimistic.

He may be available only for the final two rounds of the southern hemisphere championship from late September at home to Australia and world champions New Zealand. After home and away Tests against the Pumas on successive weekends, the Springboks have a one week break before tackling the Wallabies and the All Blacks away.



WOMEN'S WORLD CUP WILL BREAK ATTENDANCE RECORDS, SAYS WORLD RUGBY BOSS

World Rugby Chairman Bill Beaumont has said the excitement surrounding the Women's Rugby World Cup in Ireland will result in the tournament breaking attendance records. With 12 countries competing for the trophy, the pool matches in Dublin have already been sold out.

The governing body expects the tournament, which began yesterday and ends with

the final at Belfast's Kingspan Stadium on Aug. 26, to be the best-attended women's rugby event ever.

"The excitement across Ireland and beyond is phenomenal," Beaumont said. "It all points to what will be a defining, record-breaking Rugby World Cup."

Defending champions England beat Spain 56-5 in their opening encounter in Pool B earlier yesterday, and face Italy next. New Zealand also scored a easy win over Wales 44-12 in Pool A match.

TENNIS ROUND-UP

No. 1 Murray ruled out of Cincinnati with hip injury

AFP
Cincinnati

World number one Andy Murray will miss next week's ATP Masters Series event in Cincinnati with a nagging hip injury that also forced him out of this week's Montreal event. The move brings into question Murray's status for the US Open, which starts August 28 in New York, and even if he is able to play, it remains to be seen how well he can perform after missing the two major hardcourt warm-up events for the Flushing Meadows fortnight.

"Unfortunately I won't be playing in Cincinnati as I continue my recovery," Murray said. "I always enjoy playing there and I look forward to returning next year. I'm continuing to work hard on the court with the aim of being in New York."

The 30-year-old Scotsman, who has topped the rankings since last November, could be overtaken this week by French Open champion Rafael Nadal if the Spaniard reaches this week's Montreal semi-finals. Nadal will be the number one seed next



week in Cincinnati no matter how he fares in Canada this week.

It will be the first time since 2010 that Nadal, who won at Cincinnati in 2010, has been top seed there.

Wimbledon and Australian Open winner Roger Federer will be the second seed. He has won seven Cincinnati titles, including crowns in each of his past two appearances there in 2014 and 2015. This marks the first year since 2009 that Nadal and Federer are the two top seeds in Cincinnati.

CILIC, QUERREY JOIN LAVER CUP TEAMS

World number six Marin Cilic and 20th-ranked Sam Querrey have joined the teams for September's inaugural Laver Cup in Prague, the organisers said.

The 28-year-old Cilic, the 2014 US Open champion, will join Team Europe led by Swedish legend Bjorn Borg and also comprising Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Dominic Thiem.

"I know how well Roger (Federer) is playing this season so it will be nice to be on the same team in Prague," Cilic said. "To be representing Team Europe is a huge honour for me."

The 29-year-old Querrey will join Milos Raonic, Jack Sock and John Isner on Team World, captained by John McEnroe.

Borg and McEnroe have yet to announce two captain's picks to complete their six-member teams for the new tournament to be played in Prague's O2 Arena on September 22-24.

Named after Rod Laver, the last man to achieve the calendar Grand Slam in 1969, the Laver Cup will be held every year except in an Olympic year, with four matches each day — three in singles, one in doubles.

MLB

Lamb's grand slam lifts Diamondbacks to easy win

Iannetta had two hits and a homer for Arizona, which moved one-half game ahead of the Colorado Rockies

Reuters
Phoenix, Arizona

Jake Lamb had two homers and five RBIs, and his go-ahead grand slam in the seventh inning lifted the Arizona Diamondbacks to a 6-3 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers at the Major League Baseball at Chase Field on Tuesday.

Lamb, batting .143 in 91 at-bats against lefties this season, pulled a breaking ball off the right field foul pole against Tony Watson (5-4) for a 6-3 lead. Chris Iannetta had two hits and a homer for Arizona, which moved one-half game ahead of the Colorado Rockies to lead the NL wild-card race.

RED SOX 2, RAYS 0

Chris Sale struck out 13 batters in eight innings to lead Boston to its seventh straight victory. Sale (14-4) gave up two hits and one walk on 112 pitches (80 strikes). His 229 strikeouts are the best in the major leagues. Craig Kimbrel struck out all three batters he faced in the ninth inning for his 28th save.

INDIANS 4, ROCKIES 1

Yan Gomes' three-run homer with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning capped a four-run rally and lifted Cleveland over Colorado. The winning pitcher was Corey Kluber, who threw his second consecutive three-hit complete game. He retired 26 of the last 27 batters he faced. Kluber (10-3) struck out 11 and did not walk a batter. He struck out the side in order in the ninth inning.

MARINERS 7, ATHLETICS 6 (10 INNINGS)

Leony Martin launched a tiebreaking home run with two outs in the top of the 10th inning in Seattle's victory over Oakland. Martin connected off reliever Josh Smith (2-1) into the right field seats for his second home run of the season, capping a huge comeback win for the Mariners, who trailed 5-1 after three innings. Seattle moved into a three-way tie for the second wildcard spot in the American League with Kansas City and Tampa Bay.

MARLINS 7, NATIONALS 3

Giancarlo Stanton broke a tie with a three-run homer in the fifth, and Vance Worley allowed one run in six innings as Miami beat Washington. Derek Dietrich was 2 for 4 with a home run and three RBIs for the Marlins. Worley (2-2), former property of the Nationals, scattered six hits for his second win in six days against Wash-



Los Angeles Dodgers right fielder Yasiel Puig leaps to catch a fly ball hit by Arizona Diamondbacks right fielder JD Martinez in the sixth inning in Phoenix, Arizona. (USA TODAY Sports)

ington. He struck out two and walked three.

BLUE JAYS 4, YANKEES 2

Josh Donaldson hit a pair of two-run homers, and JA Happ pitched into the sixth inning for his second straight victory as Toronto defeated New York. Happ (5-8) allowed one run, four hits and four walks while striking out five in 5 2/3 innings. Roberto Osuna pitched a perfect ninth to earn his 29th save of the season.

GIANTS 6, CUBS 3

Buster Posey supplied early offense with a

three-run homer in the first inning as San Francisco beat Chicago. Ty Blach (8-7) allowed two runs while scattering seven hits and striking out three. He went at least seven innings for the fifth straight game and also supplied an RBI single.

METS 5, RANGERS 4

Rookie Chris Flexen earned his first major league win and collected his first career hit when New York belted three home runs to snap a four-game losing streak. Flexen (1-1) allowed three runs on four hits and three walks while striking out four over 5 2/3 innings.

He also laced a double to left field in the fifth.

ANGELS 3, ORIOLES 2

Parker Bridwell allowed just one run in seven innings against his former team, and Andrelton Simmons and CJ Cron had two hits apiece as Los Angeles snapped a three-game slide on Tuesday night.

Bridwell (6-1) allowed six hits and didn't walk a batter while striking out four.

It was the rookie's seventh quality effort in 10 starts in 2017. The Los Angeles Angels are 10-1 in the 11 games he has pitched this season.

TWINS 11, BREWERS 4

Max Kepler and Eddie Rosario each hit two home runs, and Brian Dozier belted a go-ahead grand slam in the fourth inning as Minnesota routed Milwaukee.

Dozier also drove in a run later in the game to cap his season-high five-RBI game.

Twins starter Adalberto Mejia exited in the fourth inning after experiencing left lateral upper arm pain.

WHITE SOX 8, ASTROS 5

Kevan Smith doubled, homered and drove in four runs, and Chicago held off Houston. Avisail Garcia, Jose Abreu and Tim Anderson added two hits apiece as the White Sox snapped a six-game losing streak. Derek Holland (6-11) earned his first victory since June 13, allowing three runs and a season-high seven walks in 5 2/3 innings.

CARDINALS 10, ROYALS 3

Yadier Molina and Jedd Goyork each homered and drove in three runs as St. Louis routed Kansas City. Molina went deep leading off the fourth and contributed a two-run single in a six-run fifth. Goyork capped the big inning with a three-run shot. Randal Grichuk also homered for the Cardinals, who have scored 34 runs in their past three games.

PHILLIES 5, BRAVES 2

Zach Eflin pitched seven strong innings, and Philadelphia continued its dominance over Atlanta. Eflin (1-3), recalled from Triple-A Lehigh Valley to make his first big-league start since May 28, allowed two runs and seven hits. He also went 1-for-3 with an RBI as the Phillies improved to 10-2 against the Braves this season.

PIRATES 6, TIGERS 3

Chad Kuhl faltered after a strong start but pitched — and hit — well enough to win his second consecutive decision as Pittsburgh defeated Detroit. Kuhl (5-7), held the Tigers scoreless on two hits through the first five innings before Detroit scored three runs in the sixth.

Kuhl, who came up to the Pirates in 2016, drove in the first runs of his major league career with a two-run single.

PADRES 7, REDS 3

Austin Hedges and Yangervis Solarte homered, and Luis Perdomo allowed two runs in six-plus innings as San Diego beat Cincinnati. Jose Pirela went 4-for-4 with two doubles, helping the Padres improve to 4-1 this season against Cincinnati. Pirela is 6-for-8 in the series with two doubles, two homers, and three RBIs.

FIBA ASIAN CUP BASKETBALL

Qatar lose to Iraq, Philippines stun favourites China

By Sports Reporter
Beirut, Lebanon

Qatar were beaten by Iraq 66-75 yesterday at the FIBA Asian Cup 2017 basketball tournament. The victory put Iraq in a strong position to advance to the knockout stages.

Despite a surge from Qatar in the fourth quarter, Iraq stayed in control from start to finish, led by Kevin Galloway's 18 points, 8 rebounds, 3 assists and 3 steals, Abdulrahman Saad was Qatar's top performer with a game-high 23 points.

Meanwhile, two years after their infamous final loss in Changsha-Hunan, the Philippines dealt sweet vengeance against perennial tormentors China with an 86-97 victory.

The Philippines have had a painful history facing China at the continental level, and by all indications, yesterday's game was supposed to be another notch in China's favour. Entering this matchup, China had won 6 of their last 9 meetings with the Philippines at the senior men's level.

With 2015 All-Star Five member Guo Ailun leading the way, China were heavily favoured against Gilas Pilipinas, who were without prized naturalised player Andray Blatche and who recently lost key centre June Mar Fajardo to injury.

Yesterday though, the Philippines were in overdrive. Coach Chot Reyes's wards looked every bit like the favourites. They were throwing triple-teams at China, forcing turnovers, running in transition and hitting their three-point bombs. The Filipinos channelled all the pent up frustration of the past and turned it into energy that they used to the hilt.

The duo of Jayson Castro and Terrence Romeo proved to be magical again for the Philippines, with Asia Cup newcomers Matthew Wright, Raymond Almazan and Christian Standhardinger also holding their own. Castro had 13 points and 7 assists, while Wright drained 2 triples en route to 12 points. Aguilar, for his part, was a defensive dynamic, recording 5 blocked shots.

This result pushed the Philippines as favourites to top Group B, and it will be inter-



Qatar's Ali Saeed Efran attempts to score during a Group B game against Iraq at the 2017 FIBA Asia Cup in Beirut, Lebanon, yesterday

esting to see how they approach their next matches against the Qatar and Iraq.

Iran sent a message to the rest of Group A with a dominant 101-54 performance over India. Iran jumped out to a 21-point first quarter lead and never looked back, as they faced little resistance from the Indian side. Hadadi led the victors with 20 points and 8 assists, whilst India were led by Amjyot Singh Gill's 10 points, as the only player in double figures.

On Tuesday, hosts Lebanon rode an impressive performance from Wael Arakji to get a 72-66 win over Korea in the final game on opening day of the tournament. Arakji had 22

points, 5 rebounds, 3 assists and 2 steals, as Lebanon held off a late charge from the Korean side. Korea were led by 16 points-a-piece from Dongseop Lim and Sekeun Oh.

New Zealand steamrolled past Kazakhstan 70-49. New Zealand put the game out of reach in the third quarter, where they outscored Kazakhstan 25-15 and cruised the rest of the way.

The 23-year-old Derone Raukawa led the Tall Blacks with 17 points and 6 rebounds, with Finn Delaney adding a 15-point, 10-rebound double-double. Alexandr Zhigulin top scored for Kazakhstan with 9 points.

FOCUS

Qatar's al-Attiyah elected Asian Equestrian president

QNA
Jakarta

The President of Qatar Equestrian Federation Hamad Abdulrahman al-Attiyah was elected as President of the Asian Equestrian Federation (AEF) in the elections held yesterday in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. Al-Attiyah managed to win at the expense of his UAE rival Ghanim al-Hajri in the presence of 33 members of the AEF. Al-Attiyah received 20 votes against five votes for al-Hajri.

Al-Attiyah will complete the remaining term of the council, which expires next year, after the resignation of the former AEF president. The president of the Qatar Equestrian Federation suggested a strong and successful programme that could make radical changes in the AEF to reach the desired level.

Al-Attiyah's programme aims to bring about reforms that restore Asian equestrian, modernise

the AEF and develop its administrative and technical structure. Two months ago, at the extraordinary meeting of the AEF held in Kyrgyzstan, Qatar succeeded to obtain the approval of the majority of the members for holding an emergency General Assembly of the continental federation, within 60 days, to elect a new president.

QATAR SWIMMERS TO PARTICIPATE IN EINDHOVEN SWIMMING WORLD CUP

Qatar swimmers Abdul Aziz Hassan al-Obaidi and Abdulrahman Hisham Mohammed will participate in the third series of the FINA Swimming World Cup 2017 short-course (25 metre) in the Dutch City of Eindhoven on August 11 and 12.

The duo had participated in the second series of the World Cup in Berlin, Germany last Sunday and Monday, where they achieved new records. Abdul Aziz broke his own record in 200m backstroke with a time of 2:13.77. Abdulrahman also improved his personal best in the 100m breaststroke registering a time of 1:09.84.



Qatar Equestrian Federation president Hamad Abdulrahman al-Attiyah beat his UAE rival Ghanim al-Hajri to take the helm of Asian Equestrian Federation in the elections held in Jakarta yesterday.

PREVIEW

Spieth, McIlroy favoured at soggy PGA Championship

Spieth would become the youngest golfer to complete a career Grand Slam by winning in Charlotte

AFP
Charlotte, North Carolina

Jordan Spieth and Rory McIlroy make their bids for golfing history when the 99th PGA Championship tees off today at Quail Hollow with heavy rain and storms in the forecast.

World number two Spieth, who won his third major title two weeks ago at the British Open, would become the youngest golfer to complete a career Grand Slam by winning the year's last major.

The 24-year-old American, who also won the 2015 Masters and US Open, could become only the sixth man to sweep the four major titles in a career after Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods, Ben Hogan, Gary Player and Gene Sarazen.

Spieth would be 24 years and 17 days old on Sunday, about six months younger than Woods — the youngest so far to win all four majors — was when he won the 2000 British Open to complete his career slam. And Spieth could become the first player to complete a career slam with a victory at the PGA Championship.

Fourth-ranked McIlroy, a 28-year-old from Northern Ireland, could become only the third player to win five majors before turning 30, joining Nicklaus and Tiger Woods.

But McIlroy, missing only the Masters to complete his own career Grand Slam, hasn't won a major since the 2014 PGA Championship.

What he has done, however, is win twice at Quail Hollow and lost another in a playoff. And shown he can play well in wet conditions, notably in taking his first major title at the 2011 US Open at Congressional. Spieth shies from the favourite role, saying, "I'd say Rory is probably the guy to beat."

Las Vegas oddsmakers agree, giving McIlroy a 7-1 chance with Spieth at 8-1. Asked what odds he'd give himself, McIlroy cited two wins in eight starts at Quail Hollow — "8-2, decent odds."

"I've won a couple times. I like PGA Championship setups. They are fair," McIlroy said. "If I'm the favourite, I'm the favourite. I'm happy with that, means I'm playing well."

McIlroy credits his improved form in recent weeks, a share of fourth in last month's British Open and of fifth in last week's World Golf Championships event in Akron, with confidence from casinos. "I think it's partly to do with



Jordan Spieth of the United States signs autographs during a practice round ahead of the PGA Championship at Quail Hollow Club in Charlotte, North Carolina. (AFP)

the upturn in form that I've had over the last few weeks and then my history on this golf course," he said. "I think it's a little bit of both."

Changes have been made to the layout since McIlroy's victories in 2010 and 2015, when he broke his own course record with a 61 in the third round. "I think the changes are really good," McIlroy said. "It makes the first six holes a lot more challenging. I still feel like the golf course gives you plenty of chances. It's going to play long this week with the weather. It will probably play a couple of strokes harder than it used to play."

The closing three-hole stretch at Quail Hollow, "The Green Mile," offers water and hazards galore in a classic tough finishing run. "It will be an exciting finish if there's a few guys up around the lead at that point," McIlroy said.

World number one Dustin Johnson says he has once more found the form

that delivered him three consecutive titles in February and March before a fall and back injury on the eve of the Masters derailed his campaign.

And he's happy to have it wet so the course plays longer with the greens holding better.

"That there is going to cut the field in half," Johnson said. "It's hard. It's long. You can't fake it around here. Everything has got to be good. It's a little soft. The greens will be a little more receptive. That doesn't make it any easier. You've still got to make your shots."

And everyone will be watching Japan's Hideki Matsuyama after his closing 61 to win the WGC Akron title on Sunday. "What Hideki did was pretty impressive," McIlroy said. "He's playing well and he hits it plenty long to contend around here. His confidence is high coming into this week. I'm pretty sure he'll be a factor this week."



Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland lines up a putt during a practice round. (AFP)

Tiger likely to enter first-time DUI offender programme

Palm Beach, Florida: Golfer Tiger Woods is expected to enter a programme for first-time DUI offenders to resolve charges filed against him after police found him asleep at the wheel of his parked car alongside a Florida road, a prosecutor said yesterday.

The former world No. 1 golfer was not in court as his lawyer entered a not-guilty plea to a charge of driving under the influence stemming from Woods' arrest in May. But Woods, 41, is expected to appear at the Palm Beach Gardens courthouse for an Oct. 25 hearing to plead guilty to a lesser charge of reckless driving, according to Adrienne Ellis, a chief assistant state attorney for Palm Beach County.

The reckless driving plea would allow Woods to take part in a 12-month probation program that would involve community service, DUI school, a substance abuse evaluation, possible treatment and other conditions.

Woods would avoid a DUI conviction if he completes the programme. His attorney, Douglas Duncan, declined to discuss the case with reporters at the courthouse yesterday. Police found Woods stopped on the side of a Palm Beach-area road in his Mercedes-Benz at about 3 am on May 29.

He had "extremely slow and slurred speech" after being awakened by a Jupiter police officer but was cooperative and told officers he takes several prescriptions, including Xanax, according to a police report.

Woods, who had been heading away from his home on the exclusive Jupiter Island, could not remember where he was going and told police he was returning from Los Angeles. A blood test showed he had the painkiller Vicodin and the antidepressant Xanax in his system but no alcohol.

He was charged with driving under the influence and improperly stopping his vehicle. In a statement after his arrest, Woods apologised to fans and blamed the incident on prescription medication he was taking to manage pain from a recent back surgery.

SPOTLIGHT

Els, Mickelson credit Tiger with helping them reach 100 majors

AFP
Charlotte, North Carolina

Ernie Els and Phil Mickelson will each make his 100th major start today at the PGA Championship, and both credit Tiger Woods with helping them boost their fitness and longevity. US left-hander Mickelson, a five-time major winner, and Els, a four-time major champion from South Africa, paid tribute to the injured 14-time major champion on Tuesday at Quail Hollow.

"Had Tiger not come around, I don't feel I would have pushed myself to achieve what I ended up achieving, because he forced everybody to get the best out of themselves," Mickelson said. "He forced everybody to work a little bit harder. He forced everybody to look at fitness as a big part of the game of golf, and I think that has actually helped me with longevity. He was a big influence on that, so I don't think I would have had the same level of success had he not come around."

Els, a runner-up to Woods in the 2000 US and British Opens, agreed, saying Woods's 1997 Masters victory was so impressive it derailed his own major chances for a time. "I was ready to win quite a few, if you know what I mean, and then when Tiger came in '97 and him winning the Masters in the way he did, that threw me off a little bit," Els said.

"I thought I was really one of the top players, which I was, but that was a pretty special display of golf. I had quite a few runs with him in majors. It wasn't really very close. This guy is so special and he absolutely changed the game. He got us to really elevate our games. But I could have had a couple more, definitely, without him around."

Els won the 1994 and 1997 US Opens and the 2002 and 2012 British Opens. Mickelson won the 2004, 2006 and 2010 Masters, the 2005 PGA and the 2013 British Open. Els was elected to the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2011, Mickelson the following year.

"I think it will take a while to kind of sink



Phil Mickelson (left) of the United States and Ernie Els of South Africa ahead of their 100th major championship at Quail Hollow Club in Charlotte, North Carolina. (AFP)

in for the two of us, but it's pretty cool," Els said of becoming golf centurions. "It just goes by so fast. You don't think about it," Mickelson said. "It has been a lot of fun. I know we both want to win a couple more."

Playing in 100 majors, 64 shy of the record set by Jack Nicklaus, was an astounding feat to Rory McIlroy, preparing for his 36th major appearance. "That's pretty impressive," McIlroy said. "That's (25) years of playing majors. Wow. It would be nice to get to that number one day. That's pretty good longevity right there."

Each man was asked to pick one shot from his majors as his best, Mickelson naming his blast from the pine straw around a tree at the 13th hole at Augusta on the way to victory in 2010 and Els with his second shot at 17 to help seal his second US Open title at Congressional. "Lefty" and "The Big Easy" sized up each other's legacy as well, Mick-

elson citing Els' work with autism charities as well as his golfing skills. "What he's done for Els for Autism, I think that's the legacy he's leaving where he's changing the lives and impacting a lot of lives that go through autism," Mickelson said. "As a player, obviously he's got the sweetest, smoothest, most beautiful, aesthetically pleasing golf swing you could ever imagine. It was a pleasure to watch. It was tough to emulate."

Els compared Mickelson to some of the masters of the sport. "Phil reminds me of an Arnold Palmer, a Seve Ballesteros, a bit of Fred Couples, a guy with a lot of talent," Els said.

"Some places he hits the ball, people want to see how he gets out of there. And 90% of the time, he gets out of there and probably will make a birdie. I think his fighting spirit speaks for itself. He's a pretty good guy and a hell of a golfer."

FOCUS

Top-ranked Johnson back on form after Masters mishap

AFP
Charlotte

Top-ranked Dustin Johnson says he feels almost as good at the PGA Championship as he did the last time he showed up at a major one hour's drive from his hometown. And maybe this time he'll actually get to play.

The 2016 US Open winner is playing this week at Quail Hollow, north of his hometown of Columbia, South Carolina. The same distance to the south is Augusta, Georgia, where Johnson was a huge favourite in April until a fall on the eve of the Masters forced him to withdraw with a back injury. "I was playing as good as I've ever played and consistently every day," Johnson said. "I was as good as I ever felt and confidence probably as high as it has ever been. But things happen. Just when you feel like you get on top, something happens that knocks you down."

"But I'm fighting back and I feel like the game is as good as it was before then. It has finally coming back into form. I felt like I got some things worked out in the swing that were just holding me back a little bit. My body feels great. I'm looking for a really good week this week."

Johnson, 33, had won three events in a row going into the Masters, becoming world number one after taking Riviera and adding World Golf Championships Mexico and Match Play titles. Then came his stumble down a small set of stairs at a rental home in Augusta.

His trip to the driving range before his late tee time turned into a reality television drama that ended with him walking to the tee, shaking hands with his scheduled playing partners and then walking away. "I think I knew before I even went," said Johnson of his Augusta practice swings.

"I was just trying my hardest because I wanted to play so badly.

It is frustrating what happened when I was playing so well, but there's nothing I can do about that. Things happen, and so now I've just got to fight and practice and work hard to get back to where I was. I'm driving it really well again."

Asked for a number grade, Johnson said he was a 3 when he returned in May. "It wasn't that good, but then it went down and got worse after that," Johnson said. "But I feel like I'm about an 8 1/2 right now. I'm going to continue to work hard on it and hopefully we're going to have a good week. I'll be there on Sunday."

Johnson has battled back before, overcoming the heartache of a penalty for grounding his club in an ill-marked sand hazard that cost him the 2010 PGA Championship at Whistling Straits to win a major last year.

He says he isn't owed a PGA Championship. "I don't think it owes me one," he said. "It was my fault. I grounded a club in what they still say is a bunker."



Dustin Johnson of the United States. (AFP)

SPOTLIGHT

Ranatunga urges ICC to probe Sri Lanka board chief

Sri Lanka lost by an innings and 53 runs in the second Test against India on Sunday, after being crushed in the first match by 304 runs



Ranatunga is upset with Sri Lanka's capitulation in the Test series against India, who won the first two matches by big margins.

AFP
Colombo

Former skipper Arjuna Ranatunga has blamed Sri Lanka's string of humiliating defeats on the country's cricket chief and demanded his investigation by the International Cricket Council.

In what could be the opening shots of a new bid to head Sri Lanka Cricket, Ranatunga, 53, told AFP there was no "proper discipline" in the national team which has had a horror run of results.

The team lost by an innings and 53 runs in the second Test against India on Sunday, after being crushed in the first match by 304 runs. They are now fighting to avoid a whitewash in the three-Test series.

Sri Lanka also suffered an early exit from the Champions Trophy, and lost a one-day series at home to bottom ranked Zimbabwe last month.

Ranatunga accused Sri Lanka Cricket president Thilanga Sumathipala, 52, of

being involved in gaming — a claim Sumathipala denies — and said he should not be allowed to hold office.

"There is no proper discipline in the team... (but) no point in blaming the cricketers when they get involved in all these gambling things. First they have to get the officials in order," Ranatunga told AFP. There have been reports of attempts to approach Sri Lankan players for alleged match-fixing.

Several officials, umpires and players have been suspended or fined for involvement in match-fixing or refusing to cooperate with investigations.

Ranatunga said the International Cricket Council should investigate Sumathipala over alleged gambling links and the conduct of the Sri Lankan board.

"I want to know if the ICC has a backbone to check if these people (Sri Lanka Cricket management) are in compliance with ethics standards," Ranatunga told AFP.

There was no immediate comment from the ICC. But Sumathipala denied the allegation and accused Ranatunga of a

smear campaign in a bid to take over the board.

Sumathipala said Sri Lanka's sports ministry and the ICC had both cleared him to hold office at SLC, as well as at the Asian Cricket Council and ICC.

"I deny any involvement personally, directly or indirectly with gaming business," Sumathipala told AFP.

He also slammed Ranatunga, Sri Lanka's minister of petroleum, for accusing President Maithripala Sirisena's government of failing to protect the game.

"If he wants to criticise the government, he must first resign," Sumathipala, said adding that allegations are frequently made against the board when the national team performs badly.

"Every time the game is affected at the middle, Sri Lanka cricketers are not performing to the expectation, we hear this kind of noise coming from the same quarter," Sumathipala said.

He added that Ranatunga was hoping to oust him as Sri Lanka's cricket chief, a position he tried and failed to secure in elections in January 2016.

"The same man (Ranatunga) is continuously making every effort undemocratically, unethically to hold office of Sri Lanka Cricket, even when he has been democratically defeated more than once," Sumathipala said.

Ranatunga and his younger brother Nishantha stood against Sumathipala at last year's board elections and lost. The next elections are due in five months.

Since retiring from the game, Ranatunga has entered politics and he was an unelected cricket administrator in 2008.

Authorities have not responded to his demand that an interim committee run Sri Lanka Cricket.

"I thought OK, if the government thinks this is right — and I am part of this government — I tried to take a step back and allowed them (the board) to run. They have messed up everything," Ranatunga said.

Last month Ranatunga also demanded an investigation into the country's 2011 World Cup final defeat by India, which was accompanied by allegations of match-fixing.

CRITICISM

England's top order has 'worst ever' batsmen: Fleming

Reuters
Sydney

Former Australia quick Damien Fleming says England's top six contains some of the worst batsmen he has seen play Test cricket and believes the home pace attack will run through them in the Ashes series at the end of the year.

While Fleming conceded that all-rounders Ben Stokes and Moeen Ali, as well as wicket-keeper Jonny Bairstow, would cause problems for Australia he was scathing in his assessment of Keaton Jennings, Tom Westley and Dawid Malan.

"England needs three decent batsmen in their top six," Fleming, who played 20 Tests and 88 one-dayers when Australia were in their pomp in the 1990s, told Melbourne's RSN radio.

"Watching the South African series, they're some of the worst batsmen I've ever seen play Test cricket."

England beat South Africa 3-1 in the just-completed series but Fleming said the retention for the Ashes of opener Jennings and top order batsman Westley would offer plenty of opportunities for the Australian bowlers.

"(Jennings) scored 127 runs at an average of 15. I used to bat nine in Test matches and I would just be happy with that, averaging 15. Just be happy. He's opening the batting," Fleming added.

"I don't like his technique, closed grip, he's going to nick people that can angle the ball across him and bowlers that can actually get the ball to shape back in, that gap between bat and front pad. This is an opening batsman."



"Westley has a similar technique. He is squared up, he has hands that are a long way in front of his body with a closed grip. How does he hit the ball through the off side? He's going to nick off or get in trouble with the ball that comes in."

"Where are 80% of the deliveries going to be to Jennings and Westley? Outside off stump, maybe shaping away. They don't have a technique to cope with that."

Westley and Malan made their Test debuts in the third Test against the Proteas, with the former taking over at "first drop" from the injured Gary Ballance, who did not escape Fleming's brutal analysis.

"How did Gary Ballance play Test cricket again after that last series two years ago there?" Fleming said, referring to the batsman's axing after two Tests of the 2015 Ashes.

"Young Malan, 35 runs at an average of eight. There's real opportunities for Australia to run through the top order."

New PCB chairman Sethi eyes international tours

Lahore: Newly elected Pakistan cricket chief Najam Sethi vowed yesterday to bring international competition back to the terror-hit country after years of isolation.

Sethi made the promise after being elected chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for a three-year term. The new chief, whose first term as chairman in 2013 was marred by court wrangling, said bringing international cricket back to Pakistan would be a challenging but worthwhile goal.

"We need to show patience

because it is related to the security situation in the country," Sethi told media. Barring a limited-over series against Zimbabwe in 2015, Pakistan has not hosted foreign squads since a militant attack targeted the visiting Sri Lankan team in 2009.

Sethi said he hoped the planned World XI tour next month would pave the way for future competition in the country.

"We hope to bring a World XI for a three-match Twenty20 series and the next two-three months will bring more good news," said Sethi.

EAGER

Filling in for Jadeja exciting: Yadav

AFP
Pallekele

India's Kuldeep Yadav said yesterday he felt both excited and nervous before the final Test against Sri Lanka as the left-arm wrist spinner prepared to fill in for suspended star bowler Ravindra Jadeja.

Yadav is expected to make the starting XI in the Test at Pallekele starting Saturday in place of Jadeja, who was handed a one-match ban for dangerous play in India's last Test against Sri Lanka.

The 22-year-old spinner made an impressive Test debut against Australia in India in March before going on to claim eight wickets in five one-day international appearances between June and July against the West Indies.

"If I get a chance to play in Sri Lanka I will be very happy because I have been working hard and this will be a result of that. So obviously excited," Yadav told reporters.

"But also there is nervousness that I should be able to perform."

Yadav joined the squad for the three-Test series in Sri Lanka, but the presence of world-number one Test bowler Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin denied him a slot in the starting lineup.

Despite being overshadowed, the Kanpur-born player said exposure to these two star spinners



had served him well.

"Definitely you will have to wait for your chance if the number-one and number-two spinners are in the same squad as you," said Yadav.

"It is good that I have worked with them and I have been in the team with them for last 6-7 months... I try to stay with them mostly and keep talking to them and they help me a lot."

Yadav, one of the few left-arm unorthodox spinners alongside Sri Lanka's Lakshan Sandakan and South African Tabraiz Shamsi, said the style was gaining in popularity.

"When I started there were hardly any," he said, adding cricket academies were honing more unorthodox bowlers.

"It is a happy feeling that people have recognised this skill."

BOTTOMLINE

England hero Ali wants Ashes role for Saqlain

AFP
Manchester

England star Moeen Ali wants Saqlain Mushtaq's coaching role made permanent so he can continue to work with him in the upcoming Ashes series following his record-breaking feats against South Africa.

The 30-year-old Ali, an off-spinner and left-handed batsman, became the first man to score more than 250 runs and take 25 wickets in a four-Test-match series during England's 3-1 win over the Proteas.

Afterwards, Ali was unstinting in his praise of spin coach Saqlain.

The former Pakistan off-spinner is, however, currently employed by the England and Wales Cricket Board on a consultancy



basis only and Ali said: "If you are going to have batting, fielding and fast-bowling coaches, it would be nice to have a spin-bowling coach for pretty much all the games.

"If I do get on that plane for the Ashes, hopefully I'll have Saqqy sitting next to me," he added. "I'd like him to be there. He can help me out." Ali has often labelled himself a "second spinner".

But his bowling has improved markedly under Saqlain's guidance.

"Saqqy has been amazing for me in terms of helping with my fields, helping me understand my bowling a lot more than I had done previously — and I think that has been the biggest difference," said Ali after bowling England to a 177-run win in the fourth Test at Old Trafford with more than a day to spare on Monday. Hashim Amla's 83 held England up but a toilet break gave Ali a chance to consult Saqlain and he subsequently had the star batsman lbw.

It was the start of an Ali burst that yielded three wickets for five

runs in 11 balls.

"He (Saqlain) gave me the option of putting a silly point in," Ali said. "Maybe it put something in the batter's mind in terms of playing forward."

"I bowled a bit shorter, he went back. I think that made the difference."

"There is always something new with Saqqy. The basics are the same, but he has found a few variations in my bowling which I am working on."

"He is brilliant with my mind-set," explained Ali, who ended the match with two wickets in two balls after finishing England's victory in the third Test at The Oval with a hat-trick.

"Before, I just bowled. I didn't really think too much," added Ali, who finished with five for 69 on Monday. "I let the captain set the field. Saqlain has helped me understand my action, field set-

tings and the type of batsmen," said Ali, who took 10 wickets in England's first Test win at Lord's.

Ashes-holders England have three Tests at home to the West Indies before they travel to Australia, with Ali hinting at a full-time role for Saqlain by saying: "That's not too far from the future." The South Africa series also saw Ali make valuable runs, as exemplified by his unbeaten second-innings 75 at Old Trafford. "I feel a lot more confident in my ability," he said.

"I feel like it was building... I had been batting well over the last year, and the bowling was coming."

Although he won both the man-of-the-match and series awards on Monday, Ali took no part in some of the celebrations that followed England captain Joe Root lifting the Basil D'Oliveira Trophy.